



VOL. XIX. HANDBOOKS OF
PRACTICAL GARDENING

THE BOOK OF
TOWN & WINDOW
GARDENING

BY

MRS. F. A. BARDSWELL.

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HANDBOOKS OF PRACTICAL GARDENING—XIX
EDITED BY HARRY ROBERTS

THE BOOK OF TOWN AND WINDOW
GARDENING



A WINDOW BOX IN JUNE

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THE BOOK OF TOWN & WINDOW GARDENING

BY

MRS F. A. BARDSWELL



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

TOWN-GARDENING

	PAGE
London in summer-time—Bought flowers <i>versus</i> growing plants—Plants that do well in towns—Gardens of the suburbs—Some of their joys	I

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY WINDOW-BOX

Spring gardening in the window-box—Bulbs : gold, white, and blue—Moss carpets, dainty beds—Flowers that grow well together—Some combinations—Encouragements	8
---	---

CHAPTER III

“THE SEASON” WINDOW-BOX

Not to start summer flowers too soon—Not to buy plants that have been forced—Not to be like everybody else— <i>Asparagus Sprengeri</i> —A kitchen window-box—Herbs—The watched pot—Prize window-boxes at Exeter—The nursery window-box—Seed Song	14
--	----

CHAPTER IV

BALCONY-GARDENING

Pot-plants—Climbers—Tubs—London in June—The pleasant balcony—Practical hints	20
--	----

CHAPTER V

ROOF AND BACK-YARD GARDENS IN THE CITY

	PAGE
St. Andrew's Rectory garden, Doctor's Commons—"Struggles in Smoke"—Roof-jungle at the Home for Working Boys, at Bishopsgate Street, E.C.—Amateur gardening among the slates and chimney-pots—City gardens—Tempting the sea-gull, land-bird, and butterfly	26

CHAPTER VI

PLANTS FOR THE CITY POOR

Window-box Society, St. Cuthbert's Lodge, Millwall—Mr. Cadbury and his operatives—Town board schools—Gardening at Crook's Place Board School, Norwich—Country board schools in England and in Germany—Helping the poor—Miss Jekyll and the factory lad	31
--	----

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNER

Choosing the window-box—Making it—Placing it—Filling it—The hanging basket—Cleansing—Watering—The Fern window-box—Virginia Stock	36
--	----

CHAPTER VIII

FOLIAGE PLANTS FOR TOWNS

The window-box and the man in the street—The advantages and merits of the foliage-plants—Which to order	44
---	----

CHAPTER IX

FOG, FLOWERS, AND FOLIAGE

Air—Fog—What urban fog is made of—Darkness—Poison—An analysis from Kew—Can we counteract effects of fog?—Mr. Toope at Stepney—Fog-filters—What plants suffer least?—Professor Oliver's report on ferns in fogs—Bulbous plants—Precautions—Coal-smoke Abatement Society—Resolutions	48
--	----

CONTENTS

vii

CHAPTER X

THE LADY DECORATOR AND THE FLOWER-GIRL

	PAGE
Arranging flowers—Balls, dinner-parties, weddings—Fashions in flowers—Dyed flowers—Flowers as symbols—Primrose Day—Floral trophies—The early and mid-Victorian bouquet—Street-selling flower-girls—Buttonhole-making—A skeleton parasol in France	55

CHAPTER XI

THE SMALL SUBURBAN GARDEN

A good word for it—The motor-car—Corner houses—Making the most of a small garden—Turf—Trees—Back and front gardens—Individuality—Good taste	62
---	----

CHAPTER XII

“NEXT DOOR”—A PARENTHETICAL CHAPTER

Garden etiquette in Suburbia—Codes and customs—Barriers—Brides—Music—Children—Bonfires—The family wash	71
--	----

CHAPTER XIII

GRASS, GROUND, OR GRAVEL

The new suburban garden—The restful garden— <i>Country Life</i> on English and Continental suburban gardens—The lawn and flower-beds—Grass walks	75
--	----

CHAPTER XIV

FERNS AND WILD FLOWERS

The hardy fernery—How we made our own—Wild flowers for the fernery—The fernery all the year round—Amusing May—The Pale Osmunda—The neglected fernery of London and the suburbs—Roadside Ferns and hedge-haunters	80
--	----

CHAPTER XV

CREEPERS AND CLIMBERS

	PAGE
The Vine and Fig-tree— <i>Ampelopsis Veitchii</i> —Trellis-work— Wire netting—Supports—Roses, Jasmine and Magnolia— The Passion-flower—Hops and Honeysuckle—Morning Glories—"Ivy Lane"	88

CHAPTER XVI

EASY ROCK AND WALL GARDENING

How to get "rock" and place it—Alpine and English rock- plants—Mr. Barr's nursery ground—Encrusted Saxifrages —The double wall—Thrift, Wallflower, and Red Valerian —One pleasing Thought	95
INDEX	103

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A WINDOW-BOX IN JUNE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>Photo by Mrs. Bardswell</i>	
DOUBLE AND SINGLE PYRETHRUMS	2
<i>By courtesy of Messrs. Barr</i>	
MICHAELMAS DAISIES	6
<i>By courtesy of Messrs. Barr</i>	
OVERLOOKING THE TOWN	16
<i>Photo by T. W. Scott</i>	
A HANGING BASKET	20
<i>Photo by Mrs. Bardswell</i>	
A BOAT-SHELTER WITH CERASTIUM ON ROOF	26
<i>Photo by D. T. Fish</i>	
A ROOF GARDEN	30
<i>Photo by D. T. Fish</i>	
POOR MAN'S WINDOW-BOX AT MILLWALL	32
<i>By courtesy of Mrs. Richard Frere</i>	
POOR MAN'S HOUSE-FRONT, WITH INSIDE PARLOUR GROUP, AT MILLWALL	34
<i>By courtesy of Mrs. Richard Frere</i>	
SPRING IN THE CROOK'S PLACE BOARD SCHOOL GARDEN, NORWICH	36
<i>By courtesy of Mr. Edward Peake</i>	

	TO FACE PAGE
PANSY BED IN CROOK'S PLACE BOARD SCHOOL GARDEN, NORWICH	38
<i>By courtesy of Mr. Edward Peake</i>	
PART OF ROCK-GARDEN, CROOK'S PLACE BOARD SCHOOL, NORWICH	42
<i>By courtesy of Mr. Edward Peake</i>	
A WATER GARDEN	50
<i>By courtesy of Messrs. Barr</i>	
LILIES IN LORD ILCHESTER'S JAPANESE GARDEN, AT HOLLAND HOUSE, KENSINGTON	54
<i>By courtesy of "Country Life"</i>	
BULRUSHES AND BOG BEANS IN SMALL TANK IN GARDEN	58
<i>Photo by T. W. Scott</i>	
IN A SMALL SUBURBAN GARDEN	62
<i>Photo by John Scott</i>	
LATE SUMMER	68
<i>Photo by T. W. Scott</i>	
EARLY AUTUMN	74
<i>Photo by T. W. Scott</i>	
A TOWN FERNERY	80
<i>Photo by Mrs. Bardswell</i>	
THE OSMUNDA IN MAY	84
<i>Photo by Mrs. Bardswell</i>	
VIRGINIAN CREEPER OVER PORCH	88
<i>Photo by Mrs. Bardswell</i>	
A ROCKERY	96
<i>Photo by John Scott</i>	
A ROCKERY IN EARLY SUMMER	100
<i>Photo by John Scott</i>	

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CHAPTER I

TOWN-GARDENING

“I'll take the showers as they fall,
I will not vex my bosom ;
Enough if at the end of all
A little garden blossom.”

COURAGE is wanted to write a book about Town-gardening. Is there such a thing ? Some would say “No ; cats, fogs, and smuts forbid.” Yet how inseparable from London is the thought of flowers ! Can we picture the West End on a summer's day without them ? The dust-laid, freshly sprinkled squares and streets, where behind half-drawn blinds there is the fragrance of many blossoms ; the bright harness of horses jangling as they champ the bit, a knot of flowers at every bridle ; flower-sellers with baskets at all convenient corners, and along the roadway carts of Palms and growing plants bending and waving in the wind ; every man one meets has got his button-hole, and every maiden wears her posy ; even the butcher-boy holds a bud between his thumb and finger, twirling it and smelling at it as he goes.

The love of flowers and an almost passionate delight in cultivating them has ever been a feature of English life, and of late years the old taste has been renewed and strengthened : no mere whim of fashion's fancy is it, but the outcome of a nation's feeling, deep and true ; and what the English people love and long for, that they will have, despite all difficulties. Thus it comes about that London's

2 TOWN AND WINDOW GARDENING

heart is gay with flowers. They strew our parks and open spaces, they fill the cheerful window-box and seed-sown area, and make the cold grey balcony to blossom as the rose; even where London's traffic roars the loudest, one lights upon the pathetic back-yard garden, hemmed in by church and factory walls, the high-hung garden of the roof and parapet, the little beau-pot of the window-sill, the poetic window-plant, that shares its owner's only living-room,—everywhere flowers, flowers, for rich and poor, especially for the rich.

“There's never a delicate nursling of the year,
But our huge London hails it, and delights
To wear it on her heart or at her ear,
Her days to colour and make sweet her nights.”

Buying flowers is easy enough, it is the growing of them in big towns that is so difficult; but the struggle is not a hopeless one, there is much that may encourage. When we hear of what others have done, still more, when we have seen their successes for ourselves, despair gives way to animation and activity.

No one will deny for a moment that there is more real joy to be felt over one plant that we have grown for ourselves than over ninety and nine bought ones; and this is not only because attending to its needs has made us love the flower as we love children and other pets and dear dependents—there is another reason. In shop-flowers the method of growth (one of a plant's greatest beauties) is a charm left out. Sweet Peas, for instance; we buy them squeezed up in tight bunches, all pink ones massed together, or all white or purple. Where is the grace of the clinging tendril, the tender poising of the dainty blooms?

I have seen these beauties where Sweet Peas were blowing and growing in the depths of a London area along with white Pinks, Candytuft, and the gold-flowered



DOUBLE AND SINGLE PYRETHRUMS

Canary Creeper, but never have I beheld them in the shop : bunches of Cornflowers and even Roses, will be laid against a trail of Smilax, or something else that does not belong to either of them, such as the ever-present "French Fern" or New Zealand grass. Flower-artists of Japan, who willingly spend hours in coaxing each separate twig and flower to show its natural grace and habit, would not much care to arrange the cut flowers we buy in towns, that have been divorced completely from the stems and branches where they grow ; and to say this is not to grumble at the florists, who cannot do impossibilities, but to accentuate the fact that cut flowers cannot take the place of growing ones.

Happily for the town gardener, many plants and flowers do well among the chimney-pots. Annuals less so than some, perhaps, but many of these flower satisfactorily if thinly sowed. Nasturtiums, Virginia Stock, Coreopsis, Marigold, Scabious, Sunflower, Lupin, Love-in-a-mist, Candytuft and Larkspur never fail us, nor Sweet Pea, if we can keep the sparrows from eating the seeds. Some town-folk tell me they think Carnations really like smoke, so well they thrive in it. Pyrethrums, both single and double, are among our best town flowers, and will grow almost anywhere and in any ordinary garden soil. The one drawback to their well-being is slugs, who find the young growths too enticing ; but we can circumvent this enemy if in autumn we sprinkle ashes, soot, or lime around the crowns. In London it is never difficult to get soot, though, oddly enough, every chimney-sweeper considers *our* own home-made soot *his* perquisite, and makes *us* pay for it. The really best way to get rid of slugs is to catch them in orange-peel traps, made of empty half-oranges, under which they crawl, and can then be killed. Sliced potatoe is another good bait, or beet-root. The drawback of using traps is the danger of attracting the enemy. On the other hand,

4 TOWN AND WINDOW GARDENING

ashes, soot, and lime are unsightly, and may spoil our plants if allowed to touch them. A pail of salt and water we find the least displeasing medium when culprits must be executed.

In a town garden where there is room for them, no plants do better than the Star-worts or Michaelmas Daisies. They are so easy of cultivation and so comforting late in the season, when the "bedders" of every public and private garden have succumbed to cold and wet. Later there are Chrysanthemums.

Lilies and all bulbous plants show unexpected hardiness. Our parks both east and west familiarize us with Snow-drop, Crocus, Jonquil, Narcissus, and Daffodil ; and to see how happy Valley-lilies can make themselves within ear-shot of the bustling Strand, we need only turn our footsteps towards the dim green gardens of the Temple, where banks and parterres of them unfold their verdant cloaks beneath every April sky. Farther west, if eyes could pierce the trees and shrubs that guard the gardens of the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace, or those round Marlborough House, they would see Lilacs, Laburnums, Pinks, and Roses ; and from the knife-board of a Bayswater omnibus, if our field of vision were a little broader, we should catch glimpses of Lord Ilchester's fair gardens about Holland House, where languorous Lilies of Japan luxuriate in all their native splendour, and much of their native wildness ; and this but a stone's throw from the Great Western Railway Station and the World's Fair of William Whiteley.

Among the gardens of the suburbs most of our town difficulties disappear ; the many nursery, and market, and Rose, and Rock, and Daffodil gardens that flourish in London's outskirts abundantly prove this.¹ Once away from fog and smoke, there are few limitations except those that come of want of space ; but land is dear, and there is little ground to spare, except for public

and general gardens, where again individual joys are lost.

The suburban garden, in spite of all the hard things that have been said of it, is really not so much to be despised, and so large a part does it play in the social life of the twentieth century, that it is worth a moment's thought.

Suburban gardens are of many kinds; there are all manner of notes in the scale. The squalid ones—alas! some are squalid—we see in London's shabbiest borderlands. They often belong to houses filled with many different families, and are a kind of no man's land. Hardly can we call them gardens; little enough is grown in them, though sometimes among the straggling Runner-beans and rubbish-heaps there will be a tree, a beautiful spreading tree, like a green-winged angel. Then there are the tidy patches of the fairly well-to-do workman; some made hideous by mounds of shells and grottoes, others filled with useful and pretty plants. So we go upwards, step by step, to the good-sized strip or more ambitious villa garden. Wonders are done in these. Many a busy City man, whose garden is not far from the Marble Arch, knows all about Roses, and might give lessons on Grape-growing and Orchid-forcing to his relations in the real country.

Suburban gardens naturally have not the same good chances as are enjoyed by country gardens, but they do know some joys that may be envied. One is the birds. It is not that there are more of them, but those there are, are such a pleasure. When a new bird of a rarer kind than ordinary is coaxed into the precincts of one's own domain, how great the interest, and how many friendly traps are laid for him in the way of food, water, and material for building. And wild flowers; when unfamiliar seedlings appear, one knows not whence, here is another joy. Few people in country gardens know every

6 TOWN AND WINDOW GARDENING

leaf and blade by heart as do the owners of the small suburban garden, so carefully watched, so tenderly made the most of.

There is many a quaint touch about these gardens of the suburbs. They are often, like blouses and children's frocks after sale-time, made of remnants. Some large old holding is cut into blocks. Block A gets bits of orchard ; Block B, a piece of garden-ground with Roses and blossoming trees, Block C may have nothing but Briars and Blackberries. Or in another place a stately avenue has been cut down for building, and some magnificent Elm or Oak or Cedar has been spared, and is stranded, a forlorn-looking prisoner, in the back garden of some modern villa. Well, he is a blessing to somebody ; little children may still play about beneath his sheltering arms, where the rooks yet cling to their old haunts, croaking cheerfully as ever.

Nor is it altogether displeasing to have a garden near the busy haunts of men ; the roar and rattle of the streets, that sound like the humming of innumerable bees, the strange glow of lights in the distance, the pealing of bells and the striking of many clocks, the thunder and whistle of the trains that link us with friends far off, the stir and throb of human life, that chimes in, not inharmoniously with the calmer life of Nature—all these things combine in making up the unexpressed enjoyments of the dwellers in gardens that lie close to the heart of towns.

“Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.
News from the humming city comes to it,
In sound of funeral or marriage bells.”

My own belief is, that ever such a small garden is better than none, and that life without its flowers is not worth living. Should this little book be found a help or encouragement to any town-dwellers who love plants and



MICHAELMAS DAISIES

flowers well enough to wish to see them as they live and grow, as well as to enjoy their beauty and sweetness when they are cut, the pleasant time of writing it will not have been ill spent. In every case, where possible, the fruits of practical experiences have been given, and imagination and exaggeration have been excluded.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY WINDOW-BOX

“Yet sun and wind, what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show ?”

SINCE Londoners have learned that life without scent and colour is not worth living, England's capital has become a City of Flowers. It is not only Covent Garden and the great floral shops of the West End that blaze with blossoms; the same idea has spread into every little outlying suburb, wherein no self-respecting greengrocer, however small his frontage, would fail to fill a shelf or two with fresh-cut flowers several times a week. Here every careful housewife holds her Saturday marketing incomplete till she has bought the bunch of sweetness that is destined to adorn the Sunday sitting-room or grace the midday meal. Cold winds of wintry spring may blow, but, wrapped in folds of pale green tissue (which sets them off amazingly), bright yellow Daffodils, purple Violets, white Narcissus, or branches of the almond-sweet Mimosa, are carried through the streets by thousands.

All this is delightful; but cut flowers, lovely and decorative as they are, can never satisfy the deeper necessities of the soul. We admire them, we enjoy them, but it can hardly be said we love them; they are too strange to us, like new friends that we have not had time to cultivate, but must let go ere we know them.

As we agreed just now, really to enjoy a flower we must have grown it.

In London and all large towns gardening has its trials. Many will not attempt the task, and rely wholly on the cut flowers of the florist or the daintily filled pots and baskets he sells us, the blossoms in which last hardly longer than those we buy by handfuls. What are the inhabitants of flats and tall town tenements to do when they long for the joys of a little gardening—real gardening—and have not so much as a bit of a back-yard to call their own? Well, even in towns and cities, where there is a will there is a way. One or two alternatives are open to us; one is the Window-box, another is the Roof-garden, and there is the Balcony.

The window-box is both the easiest and the most general, but, common as are these town adornments, it is a matter of fact that very little “gardening” is done in them. For the most part the man in the street gets as much æsthetic enjoyment out of a window-box as its owner, and often, except in the matter of payment, has about as much to do with it. The lordly mansions, in front of which are displayed the most beautiful colour-schemes during the fashionable season, are often closed at other periods of the year, while their owners are away enjoying flowers in distant places. It is of the window-gardening of that far larger class that lives in London all the year round we would say a word or two. Window-gardening might become ten times more interesting than it is now if people only woke up to a sense of its possibilities.

Too frequently the window-boxes of the million follow the fashions that are set them by the “ton,” and come out radiant only with the dawn of summer. True, in some cases, the baldness of winter and early spring is mitigated by the planting of a few small shrubs, green or variegated; but not infrequently so little interest is taken

in them that the poor things are allowed to wither on their stems, either parched with thirst or frozen with cold. One would almost prefer the sight of the clean, quite empty flower-box, which does, at any rate, give a sense of rest.

Can nothing better than this be done? Why should not everybody who owns a window-box make and enjoy a spring garden in it? Nothing is easier, and it may be done in an endless variety of ways. To begin with, a whole chapter could be written about Bulbs for the window-box. These friendly little plantlets, if we invite them, will keep us bright for the first three months or any year.

Gold, white, and blue,—these are the colours we will choose, and we will start with a very cheap and simple scheme. Nothing is better for planting at the same time (quite early in the autumn) than Winter Aconites, Snowdrops, and blue Scillas. These give us brilliant colours in quick succession, and, what is more, they overlap each other, and the grass that belongs to each plant helps to make a background for the rest. In planting Snowdrops I would counsel everybody to put in two kinds, not one double and one single (to my mind a Snowdrop doubled is a Snowdrop spoiled). What we like is to place a long-stalked and a short-stalked flowerlet side by side, so as to give the same appearance of lightness we aim at in the arrangement of cut flowers in the house. For a long-stalked Snowdrop, Mr. Barr's *Galanthus Whittalli* could not be improved upon. It never looks prettier than when rising from a bed of its lowlier sisters, just the little common kind we are so familiar with in London shops and baskets, where, for some inscrutable reason, they are generally bound up stiffly with twigs or box, which do their best to overpower the fresh sweet scent that properly belongs to every Snowdrop.

If our window-box is in a sunny position, these little

flowers of early spring will peep up at us even during the frosts of January. The golden Aconite cares nothing for the cold of a London winter; he is used to Himalayan snows, and shows his schoolboy shining face and frilled green collar so early that he invariably takes us by surprise, though we have been looking for him. Next come the flake-white Snowdrops, "offering their frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun;" lastly the Scillas, brightly, beautifully blue.

To set these flowers off to the best advantage one must have given them a dainty bed on which to lie. When the Bulbs are planted some tufts of hardy, free-growing, flowering Moss should be put in at the same time. The common Iceland Moss does very well; it stands any amount of cold, and spreads out thickly as the days grow light. Every scrap of soil is hidden, and the flower-spikes look doubly pretty pushing through the green. If Ivy-trails are wanted, this is easily managed, but *great* care has to be taken with Ivy. Once started, it grows so strongly, and may injure other things. Crocuses of every hue blend well with any of the flowers just mentioned, and bloom about the same time. Another window-scheme is charming, but will be at its best a little later, through the months of April and of May. Instead of Moss (or as well as Moss, if we like both) we can make our carpet this time of Forget-me-not, through which white Cottage Tulips grow delightfully, and so do white or pale pink Hyacinths. Thus grown the Hyacinth loses the look of stiffness, which is its only fault. White Arabis is another grounding flower, which sets off scarlet Tulips (Van Thol's we choose by preference) to perfection. The double Arabis is even prettier than the single, and very nearly as hardy. Either with or without the addition of bulbs, a very inexpensive yet pleasing combination for the window-box, that will be a joy through the most inclement May, is London Pride and Forget-

me-not growing side by side. The tender pinks and blues blend charmingly, and when gathered last a long time in water. Miss Jekyll says one of her favourite combinations is London Pride and St. Bruno's Lilies. We have not tried this for boxes, but can well believe it; London Pride is such a sympathetic little flower, and sets off everything it accompanies.

We have sometimes let the delicious Poet's Narcissus (Pheasant's-eye) spring up amid these charming flowers of later spring; tall, fair, and gracious, they give an added charm. If a tone of pink is wanted, not a better spring flower can be chosen than *Silene*, sometimes better known as the *Campion* or *Catchfly*. It can be bought in clumps at any flower-market.

If we like, it is quite possible to grow the very early bulbs along with all these flowers: they do not interfere with each other in the least. Every one takes his turn to "show off" like the ballet-dancers of grand opera, and does his part to keep a window-box bright with blossoms right on from January to the end of May.

For the encouragement of those who have to grow their spring flowers in window-boxes instead of in the open, I may quote some wise words written by one who knows.

"The window-gardener," he says, "equally with the possessor of extensive flower-borders, may enjoy the early spring flowers, and in almost as great variety as his more fortunate neighbours. Bulbous plants will grow equally well in well-drained boxes, filled with soil that is fairly good, as in the open border. They may, indeed, grow better, for window-boxes are invariably sheltered to a great extent, and bulbs in the border have sometimes much to contend with—insufficient drainage, insect enemies, inclement weather, to which they are fully exposed, etc."

Every one can vary his flower-scheme as he likes, season by season. Anemones, some Irises, Jonquils, and Daffodils,

must never be forgotten, nor yet the simple Primrose, which looks so fair near beds of heavenly blue (Grape-hyacinth, Forget-me-not, and Bluebell, are contemporaries), and we should start our window-garden as soon as we come back from seaside holidays, say in the quiet days of late September.

Through the long winter nothing gives a more delightful sense of restful expectation than a box or border we have filled with bulbs and covered comfortably with some simple greenery. It secures for us a taste of the real pleasures of gardening. Our part is done ; Nature, even in towns, will do the rest.

“The bulbs lie close
In the earth’s warm keeping ;
But when Spring wakes,
That now is sleeping,
Crocus and daffodil,
Hyacinth and jonquil,
Their dreams unfold
In blue and gold,
For lovers reaping.”

CHAPTER III

“THE SEASON” WINDOW-BOX

“The summer approaching with richness—
And the infinite separate houses.”

THE spring months over, and our early blossom faded, how joyfully one hails the crowd of summer flowers, that appear as if by magic, begging us to buy them. Market-carts and barrows filled with “bedders” meet us at every turn, and their wafted sweetness in square and street is intoxicating. We must clutch these old joys and hold them. How now about the window-box?

To be practical, two courses are open to us. Bulbs are not at all fond of being moved; they like to rest in peace while their grass grows long and straggly, to feed the bulblets underground; but this does not look pretty, so if we have any place where we can store the spring flower-box, we may remove it bodily, and leave the rest to Nature. If not, we had much better clear it all out ruthlessly, and start afresh.

One mistake that should be guarded against is that of filling the summer window-box too soon. People are in such a hurry; they want to smarten up their houses with growing summer flowers, even before the end of May. To put it on the lowest ground, this is waste of money; but worse, it is cruelty. We might as well stand our darling occupants of the warm nursery outside their open windows, with nothing on but pinafores! All

these summer flowers have been grown in a hot place. At all times it is well to know the previous history of each plant we buy, and something of its pedigree. Plants have their pasts as well as people, and they should be considered. We want those that have been brought up hardily, not forced.

In early summer the multitude of floral beauties before us to choose from is bewildering, yet nearly every one fixes his affections on the same flowers year by year, and no doubt will continue to do so, for they never fail to please. London would not be itself without its windows framed with clusters of white Marguerites and bright Geraniums (generally pink), with a neat edging of Lobelia. There will be slight variations in the kind and colour of the flowers, and sometimes trailing Ivy-leaved Geraniums will add a note of grace. For a lovely pink nothing surpasses the Geraniums “Christine Nielson” or “Olive Carr.” But variety is the spice of life. Why cannot some of us, for a change, choose white Geraniums—“Queen of Whites,” for instance—and fill the spaces in between with Petunias, single and double? Petunias are now brought to the greatest perfection, and may be had in splendid colours, shading from palest pink to the deepest crimson, and the fringed blossoms are exquisite. The freedom of their growth is a welcome set-off to the stately deportment of Geranium “Queens.” And we might have yellow Marguerites, with Marigolds and Nasturtiums deepening to brown and orange, Fuchsias with Heliotrope (only we must keep the Heliotrope out of a draught), or gold and spotted Calceolarias mingled with white Daisies. But is it of any use to advise Calceolarias? They are so unpopular nowadays, though some of them are not so bad, even if they do remind a little of the gaping, wide-mouthed toad. One would gladly see more Musk used; it is delicious billowing over pots of dark red Roses. Some say Carnations do

well in window-boxes. We have never tried them. They are capricious always and anywhere.

Walking or driving about the streets and squares of the West End of London on a June day, when all the window-boxes are at their gayest, it is amusing to notice how some localities favour certain flowers. At Queen's Gate for several seasons past there has been what shopkeepers call "a great feeling" for white Marguerites and Genista. Here, again, I use shopkeeper language. "Genista" is London shop for the almond-scented, yellow-flowered *Cistus* which, though really a conservatory plant, deigns to brighten the window-boxes of London façades, reminding delightfully of the golden gorse-blossoms that have the same sweet smell, and are blooming at the same moment about the heaths and waste-lands of the country. *Genista* *must* have the sunny side of the street; we should bear that in mind. Some Clubs, too, adopt certain flowers and colours, remaining very constant to their specialities. It would be interesting to reckon up the number of Daisies that bud and blow in town during the "season." Never need Londoners quit the region of bricks and mortar to count the "daisies of the dappled field;" there are nearly as many of them to be seen in town. The Daisy is such a human flower. Nettles, they say, are never met with but near the haunts of man, and we are really very much obliged to them, for boiled Nettle is nearly as good as Spinach, and Daisies are just as friendly. I have seen them on the golf-links of Norfolk in chill December, their fringed and yellow eyes gazing benevolently at the golfers. Wordsworth knew all about the Daisy.

"Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity
Given to no other flower I see
The forest through."

One very charming scheme that has been adopted with



OVERLOOKING THE TOWN

great success for the sunny side of the street is to have the whole house painted white, and to fill every box and balcony with the lovely tendrils of *Asparagus Sprengeri*, and nothing else. This ripples over most luxuriantly ; to look at it makes one feel cool on the hottest day. After two hours' eye-strain at the Royal Academy no sight could be more refreshing. The Sprengeri is often used for pendant baskets, which it furnishes to perfection.

However handsome may be the receptacle for our flowers, no arrangement is really so pretty as that which gives them trailing blossoms and greenery to hang and cluster over the hard edge. Campanulas are always ready to do this gracious task, and can be had either in pink or white to suit every requirement.

If we live in a flat that has a good many windows and aspects, we may enjoy a great number of different growing plants. Before the kitchen-window I should have a box for parsley and a herb or two. They make for grace as well as use. Some herbs grow very prettily, and their aromatic, refreshing scent (so unaccustomed in a town drawing-room) will please more than that of the costliest exotic. I have sometimes amused myself by making a nosegay out of nothing but herbs. In a sick-room it is priceless. Wormwood—the herb that in France is used for making absinthe—is a very graceful grower, of pale grey green not unlike Southernwood or Old-Man, but finer, and it has a more delicate and subtle scent. Another herb, Sweet Cicely, is often mistaken for a fern, though it is softer and bears flowers. Mint, Balm, Sage, and Rue make a pleasing bunch, and these herbs will grow anywhere ; they are not afraid of London smoke. Parsley is more difficult to manage, but is just as tricky in the garden as in the box. It is perhaps as well to buy this with our cabbages and cauliflowers. Some of the other herbs are really not procurable in towns, however gladly

we would pay their price, so it is worth while trying to grow them for ourselves, and it can be done.

All town gardeners must make up their mind to contend with difficulties. The worst of them are smoke and smuts. Smoke, however, is not nearly so bad in summer as in winter, nor are there then so many flying children of the soot. We must wash and sponge and syringe, and we must use soft water. Oh, the magic of soft water in the plant-world ! but how often the dry and panting flowers sigh for it in vain. We forget or omit to store the water heaven sends us, though nothing is simpler to arrange than a pipe leading from the gutter on the roof down to the ground. Instead of feeding our plants with rain-water we turn the nearest tap, and torment them with hard water from the main. This is what Londoners do, anyway ; I hope it is not the same in other towns. On the whole, growing plants give very little trouble, and make slight demands upon our time, but, like children, they are ruined by alternations of petting and neglect ; the little care we give them must be constant, and, as usual, experience is the best teacher. "The watched pot never boils," they say, and picnic experiences have taught us to believe the proverb ; but it does not apply to plants and flowers, which always do better for being noticed. It has come to be a family fiction, in which we more than half believe, that flowers will not thrive unless they are watched. Looking at them seems to make them grow, which of course is only another way of saying that they pay for close attention, and the stitch in time that saves.

At Exeter, already one of the most beautifully kept of English towns, the window-box bids fair to become a striking feature. An enthusiast in horticulture, anxious to improve its southern entrance, is offering prizes for the best window-sill gardening in that locality. Three months are allowed for exhibition, and consolation prizes give a chance to all. The idea is a good one, and almost

sure to be imitated in other places. I have often wished that every nursery-window in London might have its window-box for simple flowers. A child's delight in the first shoot above the ground is a pretty thing to see, and after that there is the miracle of the bud and bloom. How much more meaning has the pretty “Seed Song” to a town child who has himself with his own hands sowed the little seedlets and watched the wonder of their birth in his very own window-box ! I borrow two half verses of it, for the benefit of those to whom it is unfamiliar.

“Little brown seed, oh ! little brown brother,
Are you awake in the dark ?
Here we lie cosily, close to each other :—
Hark to the song of the lark !

“Little brown seed, oh ! little brown brother,
What kind of flower will you be ?
I'll be a Poppy—all white like my mother.
Do be a Poppy like me.”

CHAPTER IV

BALCONY-GARDENING

“Visions of blue Violet plots,
White Daisies and Forget-me-nots.”

SOME of us have a balcony as well as a window-box. Here is a field indeed ; we have more space, more opportunity for display. Rescued from the hands of the florist, balcony-gardening becomes one of the most interesting of occupations. Here we may aspire to creepers and climbers in a good aspect, even to Roses. Imagine it in London !

“Rose-trees, either side the doorway
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set, a summer Warder
For the keeping of the hall.”

Climbers in pots that make thick summer growth are easiest to manage ; these we can get fresh every season, and they greatly brighten up the old friends that have lived with us from year to year through the adversities of frost and fog. Major *Convolvulus* and the perennial “Morning Glories” do well, also *Canariensis* ; but all these must have sun.

For a town wall-plant nothing can surpass the Winter Jasmine, whose yellow blossoms cheer the dullest months, and in summer we welcome its long green trails, which we must not forget to cut back every autumn, or it will get too straggly. It is always the year’s young



A HANGING BASKET

shoots that are wanted for beauty. Forsythia, with its golden flowers of February and March, delight us sometimes on the fronts of London houses in very early spring, but the foliage is not so decorative afterwards, and for the balcony we must have summer beauty. The Virginia Creeper, that we have brought from the generous West (along with other pretty things and people), is now so familiar that we forget that it is really a new-comer. It was in 1841, at the back of a house in Rutland Gate, that the Virginia Creeper made its first appearance in London. Since then how much it has done to beautify our towns, both the common kind and the small-leaved *Ampelopsis Veitchii*, whose habit of self-clinging renders it so invaluable. Some critics think we use this Creeper too freely, but I do not agree with them. Either on grey stone or brick, or trellis-work or rails, its light festoons of green, or red, or crimson—as the sun has dyed them—give summer grace and autumn colour. Of the Ivy there is no occasion to speak, except to remind that there are more kinds than one. Good balcony shrubs for backgrounds are easily found, and in many contrasting tints of green and gold. With respect to pot plants, Mrs. Earle gives a suggestion that is worth following up :—

“One day outside a dining-room window of a London house I noticed some large, heavy, oblong Japanese flower-pots planted with single plants. They looked very well, as one was able to see the growth of the plants. The pots were glazed, and much thicker than the ordinary flower-pot. This lessens evaporation, and their weight prevents them from being blown over.”

Ordinary flower-pots are not suitable in our climate for outer windows and balconies.

I am convinced that for furnishing the balcony there is a great future for strong, well-made, handsome pots. It is wonderful what can be grown in them. No one understands this better than the flower-lover who has

ever lived in any of the West Indian Islands, where there is no soil, and everything has to be grown in pots and tubs. Tubs are charming, so cheap, so easy to manage, and so decorative when tastefully painted. Plants always take kindly to tubs, and both tubs and pots can be arranged and moved about with ease—a great convenience when ladies undertake the work.

But tubs and pots are not the only receptacles that are useful for balconies, verandahs, leads, and window-doorways. Italian oil-jars answer very well, either whole or sawn in half to make two. Seakale pots serve the same purpose. For painting them in colour, nothing is better than a low-toned green, which harmonizes with all else. There is a certain dull red that pleases some tastes ; but red is a colour that tires.

The quality of the material of which the receptacles are made must be considered, as it has a great deal to do with the amount of water the plants will require. Ordinary flower-pot ware is very porous, and plants grown in large flower-pots require more frequent watering than when grown in anything else. The evaporation through plain wood is not nearly so great as through unglazed earthenware, and when the wood is painted it is still less. Glazing an ordinary flower-pot makes it more protective. Old petroleum barrels (when the oil has been turned out) and butter-tubs are excellent plant-holders, but of course must have ample provision made for drainage, and several good-sized holes must be pierced at the bottom. If the tub or pot has not much depth of room underneath, it should be set on bricks, or raised in some other way. This assists drainage, and keeps the holes from being blocked by worms or otherwise. Repotting is very seldom required if in the first instance good compost is freely given. The best way of feeding our tub plants and shrubs is very clearly explained in a paper on "Tub Gardening," by Mr. Alger Petts in *The*

Garden of September 21, 1891. It is well worth study by those who mean to take seriously to tub-gardening ; but most likely the tub-gardeners of the London balcony do not expect their plants to live long. They would do so, however, if properly looked after and given a fair chance. One great advantage about flowering pot and tub plants is that they bear more blossoms grown in this way than if they were in the open border ; the strength of them goes to blossom instead of root, as everybody knows.

London in June ! How beautiful it is, especially at the West End, the best End ! and who can doubt it owes much of its beauty to plants and flowers ? There they are, in shops and dairies, even among the delicate confections of the modiste, pots of green Ferns, even fragrant blossoms. On a summer's day in Bond Street I have sometimes stopped involuntarily to feast my eyes on the artistic arrangement of a shop-front, where blocks of ice and silvery white-bait, the scarlet lobster and the subtle pinks of salmon mingle with trails of grass and seaweed green. This is delightful, but we should like more of it. Why should not our streets be even gayer than they are now, and sweeter ? Over the shop-fronts and on leads, as well as in the window-box or on the balcony, we would see something fresh and growing. Cut flowers are all very well, but they make only for beauty. The growing plant is a health-helper, as well as pleasing to the eye, for the carbonic fumes that kill us are positively good for plants ; they live on and enjoy them. Trees and all green things are good ; but trees, unless a street is very wide indeed, take up too much room, robbing us of light and preventing the air from circulating.

Balcony-gardening need never do this ; we can keep to low-growing things and creepers. Many a town house has balconies large enough to lounge in. On a July evening, under the delicate thin curve of a new

moon, or in starlight, how sweet the summer dusk, even in London, and flowers are just as fragrant here as in the country. Where so welcome as in cities are "pointed blossoms rising delicate, with the perfume strong we love"?

I was once a frequent visitor at a London house which was always kept full of growing plants, and could never enjoy one of them. Why? Because I knew each one was dying every moment. They were treated exactly like furniture. A dark corner would be "lighted up" by the splendour of a Scarlet Geranium in full bloom; (it did not remain scarlet long); a Daphne showed its fragrant stars on a davenport close to the fireplace, and a long way off the window. No one ever picked off a dead leaf or gave the plants so much as a cupful of cold water. Every few days the florist's man came round, took away the invalids—for such they had become—and arranged a fresh lot. Poor plants, they had my sympathy! I do not think this treatment of flowers shows the least real love for them; better were it to grow the humblest blooms out in the open air, upon the balcony.

In a lady's paper the other day I chanced to see some practical hints on how to convert a London balcony into a miniature garden, and thought them worth transcribing.

"One of the first things to be considered is what flowers will flourish in the smoky atmosphere. I have noticed that the ivy-leaf Geranium does well, and this makes a brave show, and grows rapidly. Close to the front of the balcony have some narrow boxes made of wood, painted green, and fill these with plenty of plants, which can be trained to the rails of the ironwork, and thus make quite a screen. A striped awning should be fixed to the wall of the house just above the drawing-room windows, and this can be made removable by driving iron staples into the wall and sewing rings on

to the canvas awning. In the front three iron uprights must be fixed to the balcony, one at each end, and one in the middle. The top of each upright can be bent over to form a ring, and the awning can be tied on to these with strong tapes. Two large hanging baskets of ferns should be suspended from a thin rod, which is passed from end to end of the iron uprights, and if two more baskets are hung from the lowest rail of the balcony in front, the bower will be complete. With some matting on the floor and two lounge wicker chairs, this will make a charming retreat on a hot day and a cool lounge on a sultry evening."

I can exactly picture such a balcony as this, and would edge the box with plants of musk, the smell of which would be delicious in the drawing-room, especially on a summer's afternoon, just after it had been watered.

CHAPTER V

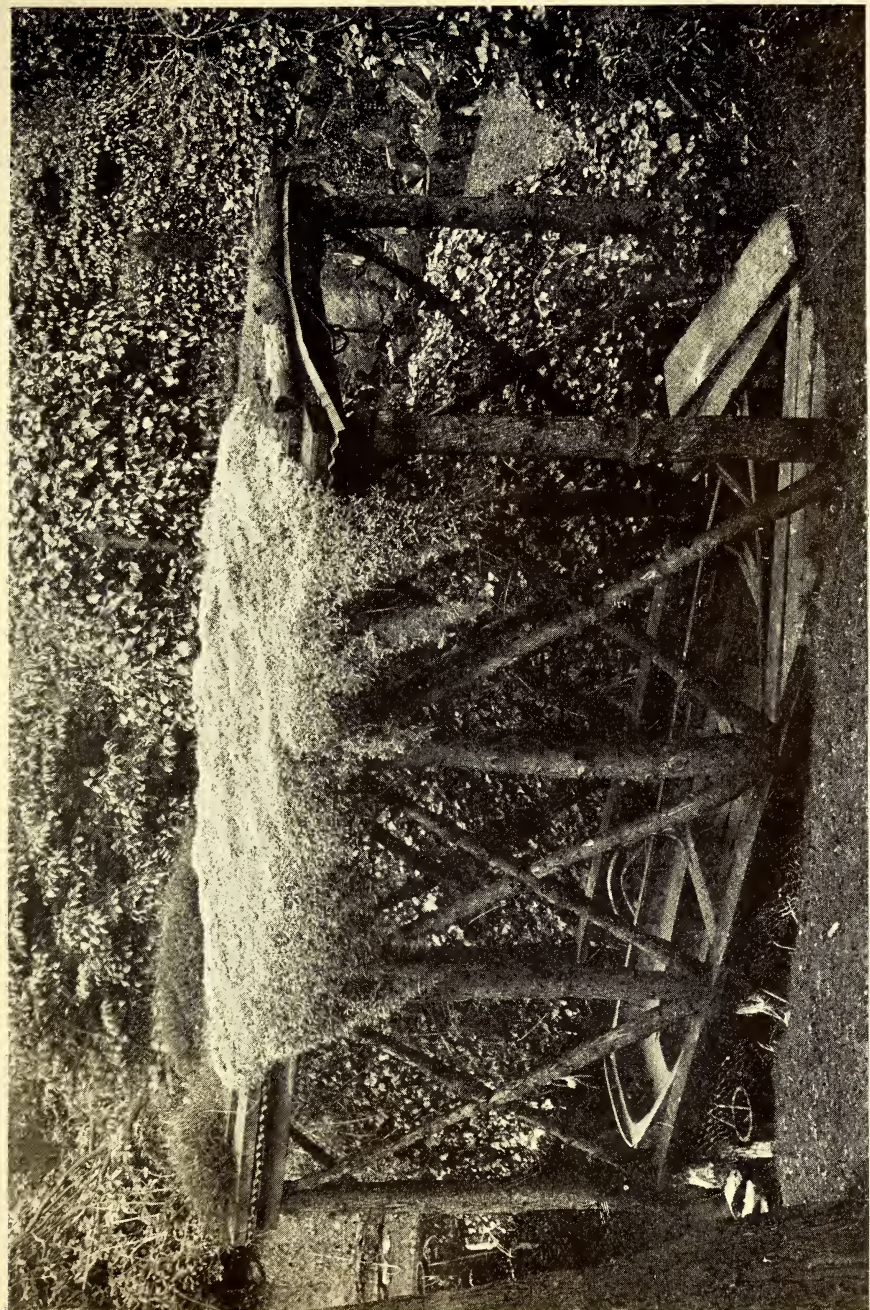
ROOF AND BACK-YARD GARDENS IN THE CITY

“High over roaring Temple Bar
And set in Heaven’s third story.”

“O, green is the colour of faith and truth.”

WHEN one comes to write of roof and back-yard gardens the pen must run less glibly ; such oases in the dust and drouth of towns are few and rare. The roofs of English houses are not shaped well for gardening, and if there happen to be a back-yard, it is often more like a well than a garden ; not a dripping well lined with fern and soft with moss, but a well walled round with smoke-black bricks, and not much of a sky above it. Yet garden-lovers do make their little plots somehow, even in London’s heart, and live there happily tending their flowers. In the broad City thoroughfare that leads from Blackfriar’s Bridge to St. Paul’s Cathedral stands a church among the shops and marts—an old church built by Sir Christopher Wren. Behind this building, up a narrow street—little more than a passage—is a Rectory-house hemmed in at back and sides with factories ; yet, hidden away in this strange corner may be found a bower of greenery. Mrs. Clementi-Smith, the Rector’s wife, shall tell the story of her City garden in her own words. We must imagine it to be in the month of March.

“The foreground of our garden consists of a bank of rock work, interspersed by hundreds of the very finest



A BOAT-SHELTER WITH CERASTIUM ON ROOF

Crocuses which one could find anywhere, mostly purple, bright mauve, pure white, and a few yellow. These were put in last autumn, and have certainly done splendidly, in spite of smuts and smoke. The only grievous thing about them is that, when the flowers are over, the bulbs will have to be pulled up and thrown away, as we have found that one season is quite enough for them; they would not flower again if left in for another year."

In gardens such as this bulbs do better than anything else; they give back the treasure that was stored up by them when living in the air and sunshine. A little greenhouse between the wall and rock garden is full of ferns. Geraniums will not grow, but Cyclamen and Palms are well content, and Azaleas manage to bloom for one year—not more, as there is not enough sun to ripen the new wood. One fair-sized tree stands in the middle of the plot, a Lime; not a good town tree, because its foliage fades and falls so soon. This one is to come down and make room for an apple-tree.

The annals of another City garden are worth recording because so instructive. They were confided to the sympathetic ears of the editor of *The Garden* under the title of "Struggles in Smoke." Every reader sympathized. This garden, too, lay in the shadow of a cathedral, but in the north of England.

"Everything we touched was black, and how strong it all smelt of smoke and the mingled fumes of fried fish and burnt shoe-leather from the small shops that backed on to it! The garden was at the very edge of a wind-swept hill, the ground falling away so suddenly below it that the tops of the chimneys of the City beneath were just at the proper level to pour their smoke right into it. When the wind blew from the south, the thick clouds from the foundry and factory chimneys made it impossible to see across the garden. Then we had to set to work."

Nothing teaches so well as an object-lesson. Let us

hear what flowers were persuaded to grow in this garden of difficulties, where cats and sparrows, we learn, were nearly as troublesome as the smoke.

"Tiger Lilies seemed to love us best. These grew and spread and triumphed, till at times the garden glowed with an orange glory. Their cousins, the White Lilies, would have nothing to do with us. Naturally, bulbs were the most satisfactory things, and Crocus, Narcissus and Tulip were joyful, but soot-coloured Snowdrops were not inspiring. We felt rich when the Lilies of the Valley were in bloom—there were always enough to give away. We revelled in the carpets of Woodruffe and white Periwinkle, from which sprang great clumps of the yellow Trollius and the silvery stars of *Astrantia*. Auriculas, Double Daisies, Violas and Pansies did their best to make up to us for the lack of Violets and Mignonette." A good list, and there is more to follow. "Christmas Roses did well, but very few bedding plants answered. Various Irises, Campanulas, Monkshood, Canterbury Bells, *Lychnis* and masses of *Epilobium-Angustifolium* made things bright. The old pink Cabbage Rose and Gloire-de-Dijon flowered well. Cornflowers and Larkspurs were happy, and one small Pear-tree yielded fruit." What love and toil must have gone to give such rich results, and how great the joy, can only be guessed by those who have had a like experience.

Roof-gardens are even rarer than yard-gardens. One that is full of interest may be seen in Bishopsgate Street, E.C., at the Home for Working Boys. Trees of quite a respectable size are grown in it; Sycamore trees twenty feet high, Limes from eight to ten feet, with Nut and Cedar, Chestnut, Holly, Fir, and Plane. Cats are, of course, a hindrance, but the wire netting which keeps them out is hidden in summer by Virginia Creeper, and on the parapets and in tubs and boxes are Evergreens and Orange plants, and bushes of Rose and Lilac. Eight or



AN EAST-END ROOF GARDEN

ten sorts of flowers bloom freely, Petunias doing best of all. Gardening operations, as carried on by the boys and Superintendent, are an unfailing source of amusement to the children of the surrounding poor. A pond and fountain with spray rising sixteen feet high are crowning glories of this shady jungle, where, but a few years since there was nothing to be seen but a bare zinc roof, some twelve yards square. The place has now been pet-named "Pelham Park."

A private roof-garden at the back of a London house, four stories from the ground, is graphically described by an amateur gardener, who says he "fights for failure," but he does so cheerfully. There are some points, he says, on which the many-acred owner of a country garden might envy his rival on the roof. One is his personal intimacy with his garden kingdom and its subjects.

"Up among the chimney pots he has watched each plant through all difficulties struggling up into timid blossoms ; he has washed away daily smuts and combated incessant sparrows with cotton entanglements, and now knows every flower, nay, every petal, with a personal love. He will tell you which day of the week the Pansy lost its second bud through the sparrows, just when it looked certain to be quite as good as the flower he got last year ; or he will show you how the *Canariensis*, baffled by the same marauders last Friday week, has tried again with a second shoot which will be out before Wednesday ; those Pansies were specially bought at Covent Garden ; as for the Sweet Peas, they came as seedlings, not a tenth their present size, and they will be even better in a fortnight. The *Solanum* is a special prize, and comes from a country garden ; but dearer than that is the *Geranium*, grown from one of his own cuttings, a real scion of the family."

A *Geranium* among the slates and chimney stacks !

This was a triumph indeed ; enough to make the Clementi-Smiths at St. Andrew's Rectory envious.

In these roof-gardens there are joys undreamed of by the stranger. A real honey-bee buzzing and working over the flowerbeds, even a spider—a real garden spider, with a shining web, a country-looking weed, a stinging nettle,—a lively one that knows how to sting, and on one bright still evening, when the sunshine lingered on the gas-work's chimneys, a humming-bird hawk-moth fluttering well-pleased among the flowers.

After these flights among the tiles and chimney-stacks it is tame work, talking of the City gardens of the level ground ; but, after all, they are the commonest and most generally useful. The dreary churchyards now made into play-grounds, where a few simple flowers bloom, and there is a shrub or two ; we may see such any day at St. John's in the Waterloo Road. And there are the old, old gardens about the Temple and the Law Courts ; how many generations of lawyers they have cheered (not one space can be spared) ; and who has not felt a thrill of joy when nearing St. Paul's Cathedral, to see the fresh green of the trees and the indescribable beauty of the rustling, swaying boughs, so strangely sweet in such a spot.

Not the least good done by our City gardens is the welcome given by them to bird and butterfly ; even the seagulls did not come to London till after we had planted trees on the Embankment and laid down turf. The more gardens we make, the more country visitors will come to them, gladdening the Londoner with rural sounds.

“ A cuckoo cried at Lincoln's Inn
 Last April, somewhere else one heard
 The missel-thrush with throat of glee ;
 And nightingales at Battersea.”



A ROOF GARDEN

CHAPTER VI

PLANTS FOR THE CITY POOR

“Along the dense-packed cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways—every leaf a miracle.”

A KINDLY K.C. of my acquaintance is always telling us we ought to provide pianos for the poor. “So elevating”—this is his argument. Mine is, that pianos want too much practising—poor people have no time for it; much better give them window-boxes and a spade. A taste for gardening raises the most uneducated, and the mixed elements of chance and skill secure perennial freshness, giving a zest to the pursuit that makes it like the best kind of game.

Mrs. Free, of St. Cuthbert’s Lodge, Millwall, is doing an excellent work in encouraging a love of flowers among her poor. About four years ago, through her efforts, a Window-box Society was started. Members (there are now about seventy) pay twopence annually, and in return receive gifts in kind of bulbs and plants. Prizes are awarded for the best display of flowers. Few families, alas! possess the smallest bit of garden ground, and many have no space for a window-box, but must make the best of a few plants indoors, on a table as near the light as possible. This arrangement, often as I see it, never fails to give a double pang. The first is for the owners, and the second for the plants, that, although taking up more room than ought to be allowed them, are themselves starving for want of air and light.

Last summer, travelling by railway in the heart of London, a poorish-looking, but respectable man entered our carriage, carrying a basket of really beautiful flowers. He had grown them all himself, in a narrow little plot of ground where every single flower was a personal acquaintance. His Lilies were as fragrant as if from a cottage garden in the country. The Madonna-Lily always does grow well for poor people, as we have noticed in many a country garden.

Many good-hearted people have tried to bring the pleasure of plants and gardens to the City poor. Many of the schemes set out are quite Utopian. We cannot build cities after a plan, they grow, but individual enterprise may do much. I had enjoyed Mr. Cadbury's well-made chocolate for many a year, before I found out a very good, and to me quite new reason for liking it. For forty years the good man had watched the class of people who worked for him in Birmingham, and came to the conclusion that the only practical way of raising them up from the degradation of their surroundings was to bring the factory-worker out on to the land, and give him a piece of garden, in which he could enjoy that most delightful of all recreations—the coming in touch with Nature on the soil. So he withdrew his great cocoa manufactory from the town, and established it in the pretty village of Bournville. The move was a great success.

Town board schools in some places are doing what they can to give their scholars practical instruction in Nature knowledge. In cities this is very difficult. Seeds do not germinate well in pots indoors. A school garden, however small, is worth anything; results are so much more satisfactory. The boys' garden at Crook's Place Board School, Norwich, is an example of what may be done in a town. The enclosure measures 50 yards by 20, and was formerly an ugly and uninviting corner of the Chapel Field. Builders' rubbish has been cleared



A POOR MAN'S WINDOW-BOX AT MILLWALL

away, and replaced by good soil. Friends have sent seeds and bulbs and plants; stones have been gathered for a rock-garden, the boys work with enthusiasm, and the Norwich school-garden in summer is as bright a spot as one could see.

The young gardeners are instructed for an hour a day three times a week, and show great aptitude in learning. What a pleasant change from books and slates, and how educating in the best sense of the word! No occupation brings to light the better qualities of the mind so much as gardening, even if it is on ever so small a scale. Patience, forethought, sympathy, and tenderness all belong to the gardener—they must do so or his work will be a failure.

It has often struck me that country board schools are not doing the good they might, in the way of influencing their scholars to love the land and take an interest in it. Children are very happy in their board schools. They hurry away as early in the morning as possible, from comfortless stuffy cottages to the well-warmed, well-aired school-room, where they find the joys of emulation and intelligent companionship. In the afternoon it is the same, with intervals for football or games. What time is left to help with work in their own little garden-patches? These lie neglected, while vegetables and garden-produce are purchased by mother from the travelling market-cart, dearer and less fresh than if home-grown. When the boys come home they pore over a borrowed book, or practice sums and easy drawing. Every one of them “means to go to London,” and live by his brains, not at all by his hands; and he is no more at home with a spade or a pitchfork than if he came out of a London slum. There must be something wrong about this, and the something could very easily be remedied.

At the risk of being digressive, I cannot help saying that I am afraid that Germany is ahead of us in the matter

of school-gardens. The clever educationists of the Fatherland have found out that book-work, valuable as it is and dear to the heart of a schoolmaster, is barren and unproductive while divorced from the labour of the hands. Garden-schools are established up and down the country, with courses of instruction ; elementary village-schools are provided with educational garden-ground, and even town schools have their garden-plots. As usual, these good and useful efforts are most successful where personal practical influence is brought to bear on them.

With regard to supplying the very poor of London and other towns with plants for their little yards and gardens and window-boxes, I have often thought how easily this could be done if owners of large or even moderate-sized gardens did not mind the little trouble of giving to them of their abundance. We all know how hardy things come up of themselves, and are thrown away as weeds by the gardener unless we prevent it. Forget-me-nots among the Cabbages, Violets under the Gooseberry bushes, Creeping-Jenny, Foxgloves and Evening-Primroses wherever they can find a footing. Why not at every change of season send off hampers and baskets to those who would find priceless treasure in our rubbish ? Better with them than on the burn-heap.

Londoners are surprisingly clever in cultivating flowers. A poor woman in the City had a small plant given her, and was not very sure what it was, but put it in a sunny place on a parapet outside her garret window. It grew six feet high, and turned out to be a Sunflower ! Eventually the best blossom was presented as a contribution to the harvest decorations at a neighbouring church.

Miss Jekyll, in *Home and Garden*, tells the prettiest story I know of plants given to the poor. A factory lad in one of the great northern manufacturing towns had advertised in a mechanical paper that he wanted a tiny garden in a window-box ; he knew nothing—would



A POOR MAN'S HOUSE FRONT IN MILLWALL

somebody help him with advice? That some one was Gertrude Jekyll. Little plants of mossy and silvery Saxifrages and a few small bulbs were sent him, also some stones, for this was to be a rock-garden. It had two hills of different heights, with rocky tops, and a longish valley, with a sunny and a shady side, all in a box that measured three feet by ten inches!

Imagine the delight of the factory child when he saw the milk-white of the modest Snowdrop and the brilliant blue of the early Squill as they came up, jewel bright, in the grey, soot-laden atmosphere of the smoky town! The boy's happy letters showed that, in his childish way, he shared the rapture of the poet.

“The simplest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNER

“ When spring unlocks the flowers.”

Now and again we meet with beginners who really seem hardly to know one end of a plant from another. Always buying their flowers in bunches, they have no idea how they look when growing, and seeing flowers placed side by side that have been sent from the widest different zones and climates, they are not even very sure which of them may be claimed as English grown. Shiploads of flowers from warmer latitudes keep London and other large towns far in advance of the seasons as seen in country districts, and it is misleading. At last some enterprising spirit begins to long for the pleasure of the growing plant. It is a trial to be always buying and bringing home fresh flowering plants only to see them die off in their new quarters (for this is what they generally do), so a balcony or window-box is started.

We will suppose its owner to be living quite in town ; country, and, as I think, even suburban folk with gardens have little need of window-boxes, which are make-shifts, after all, though not to be despised on that account.

The enterpriser must now choose his window-box, and is lucky if his house is built handily for it, and if his aspects are favourable. But what is one plant's good is another plant's poison. No aspect is without some advantages, if only it has light and air ; even shady places can do with Ferns.



SPRING IN THE CROOK'S HILL BOARD-SCHOOL GARDEN, NORWICH

The style and material for our window-box must depend on circumstances—size, for instance, and the style of the house. It may be rustic, severe, or plain, and made either of wood, or tiles, or cork. All are good in their way. Some modern builders arrange the stonework of the window-sills purposely to facilitate window-gardening, and it is to be hoped this good fashion will be continued and improved upon; it is a great assistance. There will often be an amateur carpenter who is quite capable of building his window-box for himself. It is nothing but a strong wooden case, in which holes must be bored at the bottom; the box once made, it is easy to tack on pieces of virgin cork. This can be bought, seven pounds for a shilling, and nothing looks neater. Last spring I noticed all the window-boxes in a row of small semi-detached suburban villas. The prettiest were made of cork, and were filled with blood-red Tulips and Wallflowers almost exactly the same shade, and lovely they all looked among the Wallflower green. The next-door boxes were made of upright lengths of bamboo, and had a very stiff appearance; they were filled with Tulips only, packed very close together, and mostly yellow; the effect was anything but good. By good luck we chanced to see the identical row of pretty small houses again in early June, when our old admiration was furnished afresh with summer flowers. The photograph we begged for, and were kindly allowed to take, has become our frontispiece.

Having settled about our box, the next point to be considered is the mould to fill it. This we can buy either by the load or sack. Good leaf mould can be had for six shillings a load, or some get it by the sack, and give two shillings for that. Under the box should be a plate of zinc to prevent drips making the house damp. I have known enthusiasts to bring mould from the country to town places in boxes like ordinary luggage.

Except in extreme cases, when a particular soil is wanted for particular plants, I do not recommend this plan, especially now that the railway authorities are so strict about the weight of luggage; and besides this, plants often enjoy a change of soil; it does them good.

It is a good plan personally to superintend the first filling of the box. To cast the mould into it and shake it down, as if we were filling a pudding-basin, would never do. Drainage is necessary, so we must fill the bottom of the box with crocks. Old flower-pots broken up do excellently, but must be perfectly clean, and a few lumps of charcoal are useful to keep all sweet. Then we can lay the mould in with a clear conscience.

To those who would like to economize by using the mould from their own little back-yards, if they have any, I would emphatically say "Don't!" It is sure to be poor stuff, and full of soot and other undesirable things. Soot, by the way, is a capital stimulant; if kept some time till it has lost its first crudeness, and mixed with water till the liquid is about the colour of beer, here is an excellent tonic which will invigorate many weakly plants. But no plants like to live on physic, any more than we do.

Now for the flowers, or, if winter is coming on, the shrubs. Small Conifers do very well in winter-boxes, or Golden Privet, or Acuba, or tiny Box-trees. There is the widest range. Suppose we choose a set of the prettiest shrubs we can get, and plant between them and in front of them hardy bulbs, with a sprinkling of small-leaved Ivy to hang over the edge of the box. This will give us something pretty to look at throughout the winter and the early spring. We must water carefully, as required, and keep all foliage quite clean. There are hundreds or other schemes. The difficulty is to choose between them. It is a capital plan to take in a gardening paper. Many excellent journals can be had for one penny weekly, and any of their editors, when written to, are ready to give



PANSY BED IN CROOK'S HILL BOARD-SCHOOL GARDEN, NORWICH

advice. They will tell us what are suitable plants for special situations, and ease our path by smoothing difficulties as they arise.

In April the time approaches for a quick change. We find shrubs no longer satisfy, and the early bulbs are over. We now want spring flowers, and can buy small ones ready to be planted at Covent Garden, or from any good florist near at hand. We can propagate them ourselves if we have ever so small a garden to fall back upon—if not, why, then we must buy from the shops and market-gardens. Aubrietia, Wall-flowers, Anemones, Narcissus, Myosotis, Tulips, and Iris will all be coming on now, and their flowers are charming. At this season a little fresh mould may be advisable, and a good clean up.

In May we can make up hanging baskets for the balcony. Large ones do better than small, as a good body of soil can be kept in a more equable state of moisture. Fuchsias are lovely for the basket, and so are all kinds of trailing geraniums. Moss is of course indispensable, and small pieces will soon spread. Daisies, both white and yellow, are always ready and welcome. Alpine Strawberries hanging or trailing over a basket look very pretty.

June is here before we know where we are, and the long sweet summer days. Even our miniature gardens will keep us busy. Watering, staking, thinning out, and weeding—all these things will have to be done, as well as cutting off dead leaves. If a plant looks sickly, do not let that make us too sad. We had better take it out from among its fellows and nurse it up elsewhere. In Paris, there is a hospital for invalid plants, where they are taken care of and restored to health. I am afraid no one has yet started a Flower Hospital for London.

Petunias come on later, and are splendid plants for town people; they are brilliant, and do not put themselves out because of smoke and smuts. They climb

about, and fling themselves all over the place, so it is a good plan to associate them with sturdy plants for a contrast, and the filling up of gaps.

Insects must be destroyed as they appear, but soap and water will keep them from appearing at all. A daily wash is the best thing in the world for town plants, and if we cannot give it every day, we must give it as often as we can.

Watering is always a difficult matter with beginners. No exact rules can be laid down. It is not like clock-winding or anything mechanical. Plants must be watered just when they want it, and if we give it them when they don't, it makes them sick. Still, they must never be forgotten; if once allowed to get dust-dry, it is an injury from which they will not recover. We must watch them carefully, and shall thus soon learn their needs. Weather has a great deal to do with it. Wind and sun are wonderfully drying. During the heat of summer it is a good plan to water in the evening, so that the plants enjoy the moisture through the night. One axiom is drummed into the heads of all beginners, "Never water in the sunshine." But sometimes one must do it to avoid casualties, and no harm need come of it if we water the ground thoroughly without touching the leaves or flowers. Let it be a good soak. To give water in dribblets is fatal. After a *little* water, the upper surface of the soil may cake and dry and harden, and the plant be worse off than ever, or the water may run through some dry channel in the mould and never reach the roots at all. It is best to water pot-plants by standing them in a pail or tub, the water coming quite over the rim; the leaves can be washed separately, and should not be left too wet, which rots them; efforts must be made to get soft water. If we really are compelled to use hard, some good may be done by standing it for a time in shallow pans, or even in the water-pots we are

going to use. This improves its temperature ; it will be far better for the plants than cold hard water from the tap. Baby's bath-water, when he has done with it, is excellent to water with.

Sometimes one sees the beginner put his pot-plants out in the rain, thinking it to be ever so generous to them. See that the leaves do not get all the wet, leaving none for the soil ; this often happens, and the poor plants suffer thirst in the midst of plenty. We want to keep the leaves washed clean, so that the skin of the leaves can breathe (they are full of pores), but it is through their roots that plants drink in the water. Our interest in tending plants is enhanced tenfold by the study of their nature. Then common sense comes in to help us ; anything like good gardening without this is nearly as impossible as it would be for doctors to cure their patients without having first been through a course of training in physiology and physics.

Plants in pots set out on the balcony do well if we stand them on a layer of coke ashes, or, indeed, any ashes that are going. Of course, we must hide them in some cunning way. Little pots of *Campanulas*, pink or white, drooping about are a help, and always decorative. So is Musk—delicious, delightful, shade-loving Musk ! What a treat when the time for the Musk comes round ! But Musk wants a great deal of watering, and we must never water its flowers, only its leaves ; and no plant scorches up so easily in a hot sun. It just wants care, and to be in a sheltered, yet not altogether sunless place.

For the autumn many people like *Asters*. I am not very fond of *Asters* personally ; but they are gay, and will pass in a crowd. Small *Myrtles* are helpful, but our *Geraniums* and *Petunias*, *Ferns* and *Daisies* may be relied on to keep us going till flower-time is over and we begin to be thankful for the small mercies of the evergreen old *Ivy*, and enjoy the colours of the *Virginia Creeper*, more beautiful

than ever when reddened by the fiery fingers of the frost.

It is hardly fair to end without a word or two about the open-air Fern-box. For beginners, and in fact for everybody, nothing requires so little trouble to cultivate as Ferns. Let us suppose a young lady's room in a north-east aspect, or north-west with only afternoon sunshine. Here is the very place for a Fern window-box. All Ferns and nothing else. Nothing but the common Harts-tongue looks lovely ; so do Male Ferns and Lady Ferns growing together. Ferns want more drainage and more water than flowers, and that is all they do want. When in the autumn they die down, the old fronds must not be cut off. Let them be, and give a very little water now and again to prevent an utter dryness. In the spring they will come up again as good as ever, and would be glad of a sprinkling of fresh leaf-mould over the top just as an encouragement for the fresh growth.

When the new fronds appear we shall find them folded at the base very tight and cosy. Then, and then only, must last year's dead leaves be removed. They have protected and even nourished.

It is better not to arrange the Fern-box for a very conspicuous room ; people get impatient during the resting-time of the plants, and want to turn them out, which is too bad. Nothing and nobody can be *always* at its best, not even human beings. The only remedy is a second box, and to put the Fern-box away to go through its dormant stage unseen. The danger of this is that it may be forgotten, like canaries are sometimes ; but the Fern-box is worth trying for. In summer it is a treat, and its fresh green never looks prettier than in a case of pale blue tiles ; I like this better for Ferns than the more conventional box of rustic-work.

Seeds are fascinating, but I cannot cordially recommend them for window-box use ; there are too many



PART OF ROCK-GARDEN, CROOK'S HILL BOARD-SCHOOL, NORWICH

chances of failure. But if there are any who wish to make the experiment *Nasturtiums* are the hardiest, and Californian *Nemophila* is pretty and easy to grow ; but my favourite of all, and the most unfailingly good-tempered, is *Virginia Stock*, which does equally well in all aspects. Give it good ground and sufficient water, and its pretty, simple, many-coloured flowers will not fail to please. They always remind me of the sugar hundreds-and-thousands of our youth, one colour blending with another.

A modern poetess has written about these flowers very prettily, and the good character she gives them is the outcome of no poetical license ; it is simple truth.

“The Lily’s ignorant white is glad of cheer,
But these are high of courage ; glad are these,
Against all changes of the changing year,
Untempered sun or overshadowing trees.”

“Lilac and lavender and hoar-frost white,
My border waves its colour to the sun.
Virginia Stocks grow low, but every one
Gives all her colour to the questing light.”

CHAPTER VIII

FOLIAGE PLANTS FOR TOWNS

“ Oh, give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall.”

“ Sweet leaves to the air.”

WE have said a good deal about Flowering Plants for town decoration ; there are also non-flowering sets of plants to choose from, which are just as lovely and far more uncommon ; I mean the grand array of foliage plants.

Some years ago it was my good fortune to be present at one of the prettiest weddings of the season. Not one of the bridesmaids wore a flower. Every bouquet was made of leaves, shaded, striped and coloured ; they were as bright as they were graceful, the effect was indescribably fresh and charming, and was a lesson for ever on what can be done with leaves.

Furnishing the box or balcony with foliage-plants may be more costly than flowers in the first place, and they require more consideration in arrangement ; but they have useful qualities which render them invaluable. They are much more durable than flowering plants, and less affected by accidents of weather.

About their beauty there is no question, and their variety, even if we exclude Palms and Ferns, is endless. Luckily for their admirers, it is found that many of those we have been taught to consider hot-house nurslings do just as well in the open air. Nor is there any difficulty

in marketing for them. Growers are quite alive to the situation, and those who can afford the luxury have nothing to do but make their choice.

Covent Garden market, that fairyland of flowers, is, I suppose, at the head and front of the forward movement in the sale of plants. Twenty years ago only about thirty growers attended and sold plants there. Now there are over three hundred; and it is no exaggeration to count the plants and flowers yearly sold by them in millions.

With cordial sympathy we note the small green painted window-box on the garret window-sill of the artisan. It generally consists of a neat row of palings with a realistic stile or gateway in the middle, and bubbles over with Creeping-Jenny and Nasturtiums; the man in the street who passes the costly window-gardens of the rich, how he must sympathize with them, and revel in the sights we give him! This is the best of window-gardening, it is such an unselfish pleasure. Every passer-by is made happier by it. In the love of Nature and of flowers we all join hands, meeting on common ground. "Oh, the joy of the vast elemental sympathy which only the human soul is capable of generating!" Few things call it forth more pleasantly than the mutual enjoyment of earth's fair treasures, plants and trees and flowers.

Nowadays we have learned to expect great things from the wealthy people who live in the many-windowed mansions of our Capital. When spring comes back again with sunshine, like an old smile, we look for the flowers outside the houses as well as those that grow in the Parks, and we are not disappointed. But there are one or two districts that still want waking up. Some people are content to spend their money and display their taste only now and then at great entertainments or on special occasions, when enough is lavished in one night to furnish the whole roadway for a season!

If we could read the annals of some of our great floral firms, we should be startled to see what immense sums are paid for one month's decorations only by one family. Several thousand pounds are soon dispensed, when the flowers for a single entertainment have cost five hundred. Orchids and Roses cannot be had in huge quantities for nothing, and it is all good for trade, so nobody need pretend to be shocked or call out about extravagance. We all love the best when we see it, and why not secure the same—those who can? but I do not think that people who have made their ball-rooms into bowers of beauty, and transformed their houses into paradises for one night, have done their duty till they have contributed their quota to the street.

Yet it never looks well when outside decoration is overdone. All should be in keeping, and never an obtrusive glare. Here our foliage-plants come in well. They look so good and so refined. A list of plants to choose from may be useful. I will cull one from a paper on "Plants for House Decoration," read by Mr. John Wills, F.R.H.S., at a meeting of the Horticultural Society on March 8th, 1892, and published January, 1903. Even if one cannot remember the Latin names very well, it is easy to make a copied catalogue to show our florist when giving orders. He always does his best for those who show an intelligent interest and appear to know what they are talking about.

Among Palms, *Corypha australis*, *Latania borbonica*, and *Cocos Weddelliana* are recommended, especially this last; it is so graceful and enduring, and has been known to last for more than two years in a draughty room. *Kentia Belmoreana* is another good plant of the same habit.

Any of the following are also available for room or flower-box decoration: *Areca Baueri*, and *A. lutescens*, *Cocos flexuosa*, *Geonoma gracilis*, *Phoenix reclinata*, *P. tenuis* and *Thrinax elegans*.

So much for the Palms. Now for the coloured and ornamental foliage plants. The following may be relied upon as being very useful and satisfactory, as well as possessing the quality of endurance : *Ananassa satina*, *Asparagus plumosa*, and *A. procumbens*. These last are the most graceful, feathery, branching things in the world, delighting everybody. Many handsome Crotons mix in well, and may be used with impunity, out-of-doors. The following Dracaenas are also pretty, and hardy enough to brave an English summer. *Dracaena australis*, *D. fragrans*, *D. linita*, *D. Goldiana*, and many other varieties. Bromeliads may be freely planted, and will retain their beauty for a long time. Tillandsias, *Aspidistra lurida* and its variegated form, are most useful and never-failing plants. Several of the Fittonias are also pretty. The never-dying Ophiopogon, any number of Ferns, and various other decorative foliage-plants too numerous to mention, are available for either house, balcony, or window-box purposes. We might add Kentias of different kinds, *Nidularium fulgens*, and Bamboos. Every plant mentioned will keep in good looks from June to the end of October.

Anybody who wants more sorts than these, had better consult his florist. I do not think I could resist adding some old-fashioned scented-leaf Geraniums for the sake of their delicious fragrance; both the Oak-leafed, the Peppermint, and the Musk, all of which are more valuable for their foliage than their flowers. So "out of fashion" these are now, that it is quite difficult to get them from the Nurseryman; we must invade the floral sanctums of our friends, where a pot or two may often be found hidden away in a Melon bed, or in a corner of the Peach house, or keeping company with the sweet leaves of the Grape-vine.

CHAPTER IX

FOG, FLOWERS, AND FOLIAGE

“ Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us.”

AIR is invisible, and earth a very tangible thing indeed, which makes us forget sometimes how much air does for us, to feed and nourish. We do not only live in it, we live of it; and by *we* I mean all breathing creatures, whether men or lower animals or plants. What brings the truth most home to us is having to do without air—in a London fog, for instance.

We have been talking a great deal about the flowers and plants of London. Alas! very few of them are grown there; most of them have to be imported. During the winter months fog is too terrible an enemy, so insidious is it, playing havoc even with our indoor and conservatory plants.

It is interesting to learn from the researches of the savants, that the evil effect of urban fog on flowers and foliage is twofold. The injuries are produced in two quite separate ways: one is the presence of poison in the atmosphere; the other, the reduction of light, which is the invariable result of the fog of cities and manufacturing towns.

Darkness and poison! Does not this sound worse than a plague of Egypt? Yet we town-folk suffer it without much grumbling, and scientists spend as much time in

learning what the poison consists of, and in tracing exactly how the injuries come about, as would suffice, one would imagine, to discover a cure. Oddly enough, more poisons are found in fog than even coal-burning altogether accounts for ; the exact nature of some of the substances which are present in the atmosphere of foggy weather is a matter about which scientists themselves confess to ignorance.

Still, there is one thing on which all agree, and that is the perfect harmlessness of clean mist. Neither mountain nor country mists do any wrong to plant life, and from the coasts of Kent and Sussex, Essex and Norfolk, come assurances of the innocuous character of sea-fogs.

Of the known impurities of town-fog the following list gives most of those suspected of being inimical to plants. "Suspected" is the scientific way of putting it. Our scientists are wary ; they must be, for they know how everybody weighs their words ; and besides that, they can never be sure what fresh discoveries will be made to-morrow ; the latest are oftentimes upsetting.

The amount of miscellaneous ingredients that enrich a London fog is startling. Our list is taken from an analysis of the deposits left on the glass roofs of plant-houses at Chelsea and Kew during the severe fogs of February, 1891 :—

Carbon, hydrocarbons, organic bases, sulphuric acid, hydrochloric acid, ammonia, metallic iron, and magnetic oxide, with other mineral matter, chiefly silica and ferric-oxide. Sulphuric acid, it seems, is the principal cause of injury to trees and shrubs, and sulphurous acid to herbaceous and soft-wooded plants.

The effects of fog are seen sometimes in the breaking-down of the plant, sometimes in its discoloration ; leaves gradually turn yellow, progressing from below upwards, and they drop off in the order in which they showed the change of colour. Thus two things have happened :

destruction of the green colouring matter, and structural injury at the point where leaf meets stalk. Where is the London flower-grower who has not watched these processes with sad eyes? When an ill wind blows soot-laden fog towards Kew or Chelsea—places where so many of our choicest plants and trees and flowers are cherished—loud are the lamentations because of damage done.

Mr. Watson, assistant curator of the Royal Kew Gardens, says he gathers up bushels of leaves in the palm-houses every morning while a bad fog lasts, and after a long spell of it many hard-wooded as well as the more delicate plants are reduced to an unsightly condition of almost bare stems, blotched and discoloured leaves, and fallen foliage. Among certain groups even the soft stems disarticulate at the nodes.

Mr. W. Thiselton-Dye, Director of Kew Gardens, describes the substance deposited on his glass-houses as a solid brown paint, weighing about twenty-two pounds to the acre, or six tons to the square mile. This makes our fog enemy appear a very real thing indeed; no wonder it breaks plants down, and is the ruin of many fruit and floral industries in the south of London.

Are there any means by which town cultivators may counteract these malign influences? Only by very expensive appliances. The grower wants an air-tight greenhouse, with definite openings where the admitted air can be filtered. Filtering foggy air may counteract or even keep out poison, but even then one has to make up for the darkness. This can only be done by a generous installation of electric light.

Horticulture thus carried on is extremely interesting from a scientific point of view, but is not commercially desirable, nor could the ordinary flower-grower afford it. Fog-annihilators, and the use of chemicals in conservatories have also been tried, the latter with very scant success.

A WATER GARDEN



Charcoal seems to be by far the best filtering medium. There is a Mr. Toope, who, in a small conservatory at his offices at Stepney, is endeavouring to cultivate a collection of orchids and other stove plants in safety by the use of charcoal filters and warmed air.

The method he uses is ingenious. Boxes containing open-work trays, upon which sticks of charcoal are loosely placed, are set upon the floor under the staging. These communicate with the exterior by means of apertures which can be opened or closed at will. The air (fog and all) is led from outside through these trays, passes the charcoal, impinges upon the hot-water pipes, and is then allowed to reach the plants. Draught is regulated by valves. Results so far are considered very encouraging, but not convincing. Mr. Toope has other things to occupy his attention, and sometimes has to trust his pets to others; if it were not for this, he thinks he would ensure a greater measure of success.

It seems curious to think of plants taking to respirators, just as human beings have discarded them; but the use of charcoal does sound common-sensible. We are all familiar with the extraordinary power charcoal has of absorbing and oxidizing the products of decomposition of organic matter, and of rendering harmless the greater number of easily alterable gases and vapours. A few years since, after some nursing lectures at the Royal Hospital for children and women at the Waterloo Road, the following examination question was put to the students: "How would you ventilate a room of a small-pox patient on the night of a dense fog?" The question puzzled us all. We were told the right answer afterwards. "Open the window at the top, and hang up a blanket." This appeared to me to be a stifling arrangement; as at present advised, I would treat patients as Mr. Toope treats his plants, and give them charcoal filters instead of the blanket. The chemist Stenhouse has

devised a respirator for human beings on the charcoal principle, for use in districts smitten with cholera or yellow fever.

What Plants suffer least from Fog?

This is such an important question for town people that I have given it a separate heading. Here is the answer: Ferns and bulbous plants. The latter have but a short reign ere they die off, so that we must put down Ferns as the Londoners' greatest stand-by. Considering the tender and delicate nature of their foliage, this is one of the things we should deem a miracle if we were not used to it, but the frailty of the Fern is only in appearance.

Professor Oliver, in a Report to the Scientific Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society, says, "At Kew Gardens I have examined the various Fern-houses after spells of severe fog, when the collections of stove plants in adjacent houses were completely disfigured from this cause, without remarking any damage to the Ferns to speak of."

How is this? Ferns are shade-loving plants, so that darkness, such a terrible foe to most plants, is to them comparatively harmless. Other things being equal, the more greedy a plant is of sunlight, the more will it suffer when its illumination is reduced. There is another point that tells in favour of the Fern. During the sunless months of autumn and early winter the vitality of most flowering plants is lowered, which renders them unfit to bear a strain—they are "run down," and, like ourselves in the same circumstances, liable to "catch" anything, and go under. Ferns, on the other hand, meet the enemy and battle with it in good condition; no doubt their excellent constitutions are largely inherited from early forefathers who lived in an age that was far too rough for flowers; they were giants in those days.

Bulbous plants stand fog well for a different reason. They rely on the stores collected, each one for himself, in his own compact small body. No squirrel nor dormouse is more thrifty, nor better understands the art of making hay while the sun shines. This is how it is that Londoners are so successful in growing bulbs. Look at the parks in the spring-time, with their sheets of Crocuses, Snowdrops, and Tulips. Allium, too, and Narcissus and Hyacinth, are just as happy close to, and even in the midst of towns, showing very little injury after being exposed to fog. Flowers and flower-buds are the first parts of any plant to evince suffering ; six or seven hours of a bad fog will suffice to leave a scar, but the flower that shows the blemish is pretty sure to be growing on a plant that has no useful bulb set at its base.

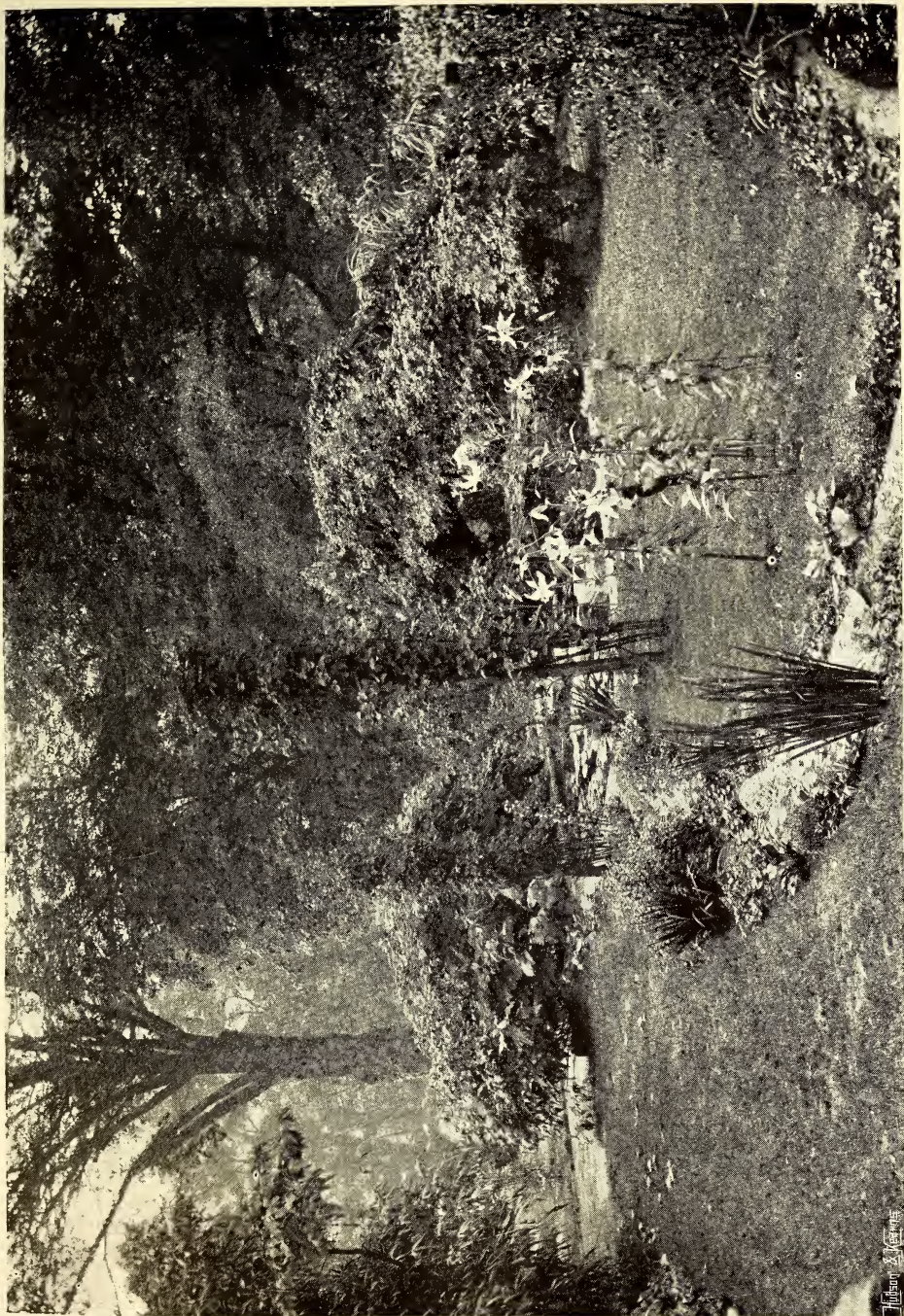
London fog is often the signal for much burning of gas. The usual hardness of the Fern deserts it here ; no plants have a greater dislike to fumes of gas ; they resent them as much as any other of God's creatures who were meant to live and breathe in the sweet air which is heaven's best gift.

What precautions can be used in foggy weather ? Experience shows that a low temperature and a moist atmosphere are most conducive to the well-being of plants indoors. It is not very easy to secure these conditions ; glass roofs are a source of dryness in cold weather. The temperature of a roof is lowered by the external air, in consequence of which, the moisture of the hot-house air is precipitated upon the inside of the glass, whence it runs down in the form of "drip." Drip and dryness, what plants can put up with these ? We must guard against them.

The more one reads about and learns the ways of fogs, the more one longs to scotch the snake itself, instead of endeavouring to cure its bites. Why does not the Coal-smoke Abatement Society wake up and try a little harder to do *something* ?

At a meeting of this society at Grosvenor House, presided over by Sir W. B. Richmond, there was a good deal of talk that was well worth listening to. Principal Lodge moved that, "The injury and waste caused by the escape of coal-smoke in cities demand the strict enforcement of the laws existing for its elimination, and the adoption of such further remedies as it is within the present power of science to devise." Very good, all that, but he went on to say that he thought the continuance of the evil was largely due to the apathy of the public. This resolution was seconded, and carried unanimously. *The Apathy of the Public*—that means you and me, reader. What can we do to express our feelings?

Sir W. B. Richmond moved another resolution, which was also agreed to. He said the clause of the Public Health Act, 1891, which related to the smoke nuisance, was practically set aside by many authorities entrusted with its execution. "Three strong obstructions to the purity and cleanliness of London air were—apathy, vested interests, and insufficient fines for breaking the law." An account of this meeting was published in *The Garden* of December 14th, 1901, where I read it with mingled feelings of anger and amusement, but my conscience did not accuse me of apathy.



LILIES IN LORD ILCHESTER'S JAPANESE GARDEN AT HOLLAND HOUSE, KENSINGTON

CHAPTER X

THE LADY DECORATOR AND THE FLOWER-GIRL

“Pink, primrose, valley-lily, clove-carnation ;
Red rose and white rose, wall-flower, mignonette,
The daisies all—these be her recreation,
Her gaudies these.”

DURING the rush of the London season many hostesses, much as they love to have their houses made sweet and beautiful with flowers, find it impossible to attend to the work of decoration themselves ; they must entrust the task to others. To meet the want of *châtelaines* such as these, there is the lady decorator, with her train of flower-fairies, ready to fill the breach.

And they will not only bring us flowers ; lights, too, they can adjust at will, not fire-flies but electric, which, after all, are most to be depended on.

Arranging flowers is one of those things that every woman in the world thinks nobody can do but herself ; she is as much addicted to self-esteem in this direction as a man is over mending the fire ; and who does not enjoy the pleasing excitement of setting out the flowers for a ball or dinner-party ? The very smell of the wet moss, the cool feel of the stalks, the bunches of pliant fern, the baskets ready to be unpacked, every circumstance is in itself a pleasure, but it is not so nice if you are hurried and interrupted. Better by far is it for very busy people to think out the scheme of decoration with one of the above-named fairies, who will appear exactly at the right

moment, while you are resting, and scatter your board with beauty.

One of the most experienced among these lady-workers has told me that, of all colour-schemes, the best for lighting up well at night is pink and silver. Pink Roses in silver bowls are lovely, but invisible receptacles, meandering about a table, are pretty too. Sometimes, at the last moment, the particular flower desired will not be procurable—the market has been cleared—and pink Sweet Peas or Pelargoniums must take the place of Roses, purple Stock do duty for Pansies, or Scarlet Geranium for fallen Poppies. It is anxious work.

The lady decorator is wonderfully quick. She has to be. James the First—all the Jameses, indeed—plushed, powdered, silk-stockinged, and calmly insistent, say, “You cannot have the table till such-and-such an hour.” Very well; then all the flowers must be prepared before they are packed to bring—every single leaf and every blossom, all must be wired. This makes them go much further, besides keeping them in their places, and it does give the effect of lightness; but it is a thing to which I am never able to reconcile myself. You take a Lily-of-the-Valley from its vase, attracted irresistibly by its scent, and find it fast set in a *corsetière* of steel—each leaf and stalk, almost each separate blossom, wired. This gives you a horrid feeling; you idly untwist the cruel bonds, and then the poor flower droops or falls to pieces.

In the ballroom dreadful things are suffered by the Roses. Fancy a curtain all made of these lovely flowers, wired together in long trails to match the festoons that wave softly overhead!

The lady decorator is pleasant to work with; she will use your own flowers if you like, so that one's country-houses can send their quota, and one always enjoys the things from home. She is equally ready to fill your window-box or balcony, to furnish your dwelling-rooms

with flowers both cut and growing, to smarten up your concert-platforms or theatrical scenes, to dress your bazaar-stalls for you, to make your Court bouquets, or sprays for hair and dress ; she will even help you to decorate your churches ; and, after once experiencing the delight of skilled assistance, few ladies in the world of fashion take these graceful duties entirely on themselves. A lady flower-decorator is almost as much wanted as a lady type-writer, and has a far pleasanter time of it. But, like all trades, this one has to be learned. I believe an apprenticeship of two years is considered necessary.

It is at a wedding, perhaps, the flower-lady is at her best. The entire dwelling of the bride is made whitely beautiful, and the church becomes a green and scented sanctuary. Palms and Ferns are lent. I hope I am right in saying that the lady decorator never dyes her flowers. I am certain she would not do so except to order ; but the present year, which promises to be one of Eastern magnificence and gorgeous colouring, has begun badly in the matter of flower-dyeing ; even the simple spring flowers have not escaped the ban. Early in March, when pacing Regent Street, and pausing, as one cannot help doing, to admire the display of flowers in certain shops, it was with a shock of horror one beheld dyed daffodils ! They formed the upstanding group of blossoms in crosses and garlands, the groundwork of which consisted entirely of Wall-flower ; and the dye that reddened the Daffodils, leaving some of the petals their natural colour, matched the red-brown of the Wall-flowers exactly. For one moment it was a puzzle—only one. Shade of Herrick ! who could mistake a Daffodil ? A dyed Daffodil is several degrees more agonizing than a green Carnation, and nearly as bad as a blue Rose.

The fashion for certain flowers and colours at different seasons is quite harmless, though one may smile at it ; but sometimes there is a reason behind the mode. For

instance, one could understand the use of national colours in Coronation year, and yearly is London brightened by St. Patrick's Day, St. George's Day, and the unforgettable day of the Primrose.

It is human nature, and ever has been, to use flowers as symbols ; they express our feelings better than anything, and more pleasantly. Happily, the "wearin' o' the green" is a privilege no longer denied to any of our Irish soldiers. It is a smaller thing, but still worth noticing, as a proof of the part flowers play in daily life, and the way they illustrate feeling, that at the Eton and Harrow cricket-matches it is a flower that is worn for party-colour—a Corn-flower or a Parma Violet—and in a less degree, two shades of blue in flowers stand for Oxford and Cambridge colours on boat-race day. Herein we do but follow the fashion of our forefathers and of days still older, when crowns of Olive, Myrtle, Bay, and Violet were worn symbolically. Time was when rival Roses, red and white, grew wild, and soldiers gathered them for badges, where now the Temple Gardens stand ; and every nation has its patriot flower—for France the Lily, for Germany the Linden, and for us the Rose. It is unfortunate that St. George's festival of Roses comes so early in the year. April Roses are plentiful enough in florists' shops, but not elsewhere ; few of them have been grown in England. Primroses come more seasonably ; of them we need only wear true home-grown blossoms, nor need a scarcity be feared while country hedgerows continue to provide such yellow millions. Primrose Day in London, independently of its meaning, is always enjoyable ;

"That subtle smell the spring unbinds—
The faint sweet scent of Primroses"

is everywhere, and Primroses, like Violets, want no arranging, but look their best in simplest bunch or basket.



BULRUSHES AND BOG BEANS IN SMALL TANK IN GARDEN

An Irish poetess sings a song about it, which I give, as it is always a pleasure to see London through a poet's eyes.

“Make me a song for Primrose Day.
Along the streets of London town
A Primrose snowstorm settles down,
And makes each street an amber way.
Here are tall baskets that o'erbrim
With posies bound for one day's whim.
Here are shrill voices that would drown
All singing, crying their gold wares ;
And many buy, if no one cares
How lonesome are the country places
Deserted by these Primrose faces.”

Thus it has been for more than twenty years on April the 19th, and whether the pretty flower was really loved best by its hero as a salad or as an ornament does not matter. The Primrose, so plentiful, so popular, as a memory-flower is perfect, none the less so because Shakespeare has pervaded it with a touch of sadness:

Floral trophies are, in my opinion, little to be admired ; dreadful things are done in their name. Flower hearts and harps and crowns, and cushions with cords and tassels, made by stripping Violets from their stalks and stringing them on lengths of wire like beads—how terrible are all these ! And so it is to see in Christmas churches chains of Holly-berries hung about like rosaries, though of the two one would rather stab a berry than a Violet.

Ballroom bouquets are less fashionable now than in early and mid-Victorian days, when a pretty girl would have as many as a dozen sent her on one evening by different admirers. What changes, too, in the method of arrangement ! Instead of the trailing posy or picturesque bunch, every flower individualized, one had then stiff circles of blossoms tightly packed. Violets and white Camelias thus arranged were very popular, and one Camelia, with a glossy leaf or two, would be worn upon

a smooth and shining head of hair, dressed in bandeaux (bandolined—that is, gummed down if necessary), long, loose ringlets (the Alexandra curl), or rolled back à *l'Imperatrice*. The prettiest nosegay of that period was the ample bunch of pink Moss-rose buds; nothing modern could be lovelier than that, nor sweeter.

I have often wished that London's bevy of street-selling flower-girls were more picturesque. Why cannot the Society for beautifying London do something in this direction? The snowy caps of the grisette, or the Italian kerchief—anything would be better than the feathered hat and grimy jacket, and I would like neat shoes instead of boots. W. E. Henley, another poet who finds inspiration in London streets, has sketched her with vivid pen—

“Forth from Drury Lane,
Trapesing in any of her whirl of weathers
The flower-girl foots it, honest and hoarse and vain,
All boot and little shawl and wilted feathers,
Of populous corners right advantage taking
And, where they squat, endlessly posy-making.”

If we watch the working-up of the button-holes—a thing I have often done—what a joyless, monotonous task it looks! Two ivy-leaves picked from the stalk with as little joy as if they were oakum, wired together, and flung into a basket like malefactors' heads. Two more, and then two more, *ad infinitum*. When the basket is quite full, to each pair of leaves a little cluster of Violets is added, or a Rose-bud, or a few Pinks, or a Primrose or two, according to the season. Later on, it will be sprigs of Maiden-hair. Oh dear, that Maiden-hair! When will it cease to remind of Harry and Harriet? Neither of these good folk feels fully dressed without the spray of Maiden-hair; yet it soon dies, and its latest breaths are bitter—we know exactly the smell of it, in its death-throes, mingled with that of cheap tobacco-smoke.

But the love of flowers is such a good thing that one must, one should not, begrudge any one of its manifestations ; there is something beautiful even in the worst of them. The bunch of Violets is a natural and graceful gift, the birthday posy an offering the most fastidious will not refuse, the basket of flowers the sweetest present to the *débutante* or the *diva*. In a French town I once saw a skeleton parasol, trimmed with flowers, opened and handed to a lady-singer on the stage. I did not admire that, but the general applause was deafening, and it was impossible to repress a smile as the encore song was gravely given beneath its shelter.

There is room in our towns for both the lady decorator and the flower-girl ; to both we cry a welcome !

CHAPTER XI

THE SMALL SUBURBAN GARDEN

“The size of a garden has very little to do with its merit,—it is the size of the heart and brain and the goodwill of the owner that will make his garden either delightful or dull.”—G. Jekyll.

THE small Suburban Garden—it is time some one said a good word for it. What other place has been so much abused, maligned? It may, it does, in fact, go on improving with the march of time and the general upwaking of the gardening world; but the ill name sticks, and will most likely continue to do so till the cult of the motor-car drives everybody out of the towns to live in the suburbs. Yet, if the truth were known, for the last thirty years at least the little garden spaces that skirt our towns have, for the room they occupy, given more pleasure and done more good than the like area in any other part of the King's dominions.

The suburbs of London are certainly looking up. Thanks partly to the motor-car, they are no longer the *terra-incognita* they used to be, for it is impossible for people to drive out in any direction without making acquaintance with them. Travelling by road in this way, one gets a much better idea of the capacities of the suburban garden than is possible from the windows of the railway-carriage. These, especially as we are just leaving London, show us only the pathetic garden of the flowerless kind, belonging mostly to the very poor; some with



IN A SMALL SUBURBAN GARDEN

a stunted cabbage or two, other with a rabbit-hutch or a handful of dilapidated fowls, another with clothes hanging out to dry. Sometimes there will be a summer-house, but very seldom anybody sitting in it, nor does one often catch sight of children playing happily about; they prefer the more exciting street or the playground of their school.

But travelling by road, what do we see? Whether we steam along the great high-road to Acton and Ealing, or towards the hills of Highgate and Hampstead, or rattle through Richmond to Wimbledon, or *viâ* Kingston's quaint old town to Surbiton and its precincts, it is always the same; hundreds and thousands of villas and small houses are met with, each of which is a castle to some Englishman. Interspersed with them are large gardens of older houses; but these, as a rule, are hidden from view by high walls and trees. They have a different story, are sometimes of great beauty, and do not belong at all to the class we are now considering.

Before every one of the small suburban houses, certainly before all that are detached, there is a little plot of ground with trees and shrubs. These plots are typically suburban, and are often very severely censured by careless critics for their monotony and gracelessness. Unjustly so, I think; it appears to me that, in most cases, pains have been taken to make the most of opportunities, and considering that in a whole row of small gardens every one has a different owner, and a different mind behind it, it is wonderful things are not more patchy than they are.

Let us look at some of these suburban highways on a smiling day of very early summer; it is a cheerful prospect. There will be flowering and foliage trees, neat gravel paths, and carefully kept shrubs. Lilacs, Syringas (properly called Mock-orange), Laburnums dropping fires, Rowan-trees that by-and-by will be brilliant with berries, bronze-brown Copper-beech trees, Guelder-roses tossing

up their creamy balls, the White May and the rose-pink Double Thorn—all these are as common along the road as are the nursery-maids and perambulators upon the sidewalks and pavements. If our survey had been taken either earlier or a good deal later in the year, so far as the season would allow, the outlook would have been just as pleasing. We should have seen the Fire-thorn's splendid red, the Cotoneaster's softer crimson, the gold flowers of the Winter Jasmine, the bare-branched Almond trees kindled with rosy fire, or brick walls blazoned with yellow blooms of February's Forsythia, above borders brimming with the gallant Crocus. The people who live in the houses behind these fore-courts (if we may not call them gardens) are not very rich perhaps, but may be educated folk of taste and culture, doing their best to make beautiful their surroundings, though often but birds of passage who look forward to a time not far away, when the little home will be left for larger borders. Many are presided over by the wives of barristers and other men of business or of law, who prefer renting a small house away from town to living in the whirl and dust of London; or sometimes by the widows and daughters of country clergymen, who do not possess too much of this world's goods, but cannot exist without some of their former favourites growing around them in their new suburban homes.

We are so much accustomed to the scenes I have described that we do not take much heed of them; they are a matter of course, but they do surprise the stranger that is within our gates. People I have met abroad, both in Germany and Switzerland, have told me that one of the things that struck them most in England was the beauty of London's outskirts, owing largely to the little gardens before each private house. We must hope the fashionable flat will not rob us wholly of this charm.

Whenever I see a pretty front suburban garden, a wild

curiosity as to the back premises arises within me. Here-in are opportunities for the most dreadful mistakes and the most wonderful successes ; all depends on the presiding genius.

Corner houses are the luckiest ; they get more room, and the gardens are of quainter shapes. But we will begin by considering the ordinary strip. It may be long, it is almost sure to be narrow—anyhow, no expansion is possible ; we must make the best of what we have. A general consensus of opinion has decided on having a border for flowers all round the edge against the outer wall or paling, fronting this a gravel path ; and the centre is turfed over and called the “lawn.” In very small gardens it is difficult to improve on this plan, though other suggestions are made—such as gravelling the garden entirely, and having a large bed for flowers in the middle, and a bank at the end. In practice, this does not make a garden so comfortable to sit and to walk about in. One does want pathways, and to be able to get at the flowers easily.

If the garden is long enough, it is a very good plan to turf quite up to the wall or paling, on the shady side, and have a bank raised across the middle of the garden about halfway down it. A path may then be carried all round the remainder of the plot where we can walk on firm, dry ground. Behind the bank we can revel in Currant and Gooseberry bushes and fruit trees, and grow Violets and Crocusses underneath them, and Parsley and all manner of herbs that love the partial shelter of the bush. Near where the bank comes, a Willow tree may be planted. The common Weeping-willow grows faster than anything, and will soon give enough shelter for enjoyment. I much prefer the loose growth of the common Willow to the tight little tents made by some Willow trees that are considered more choice. Under the shadow of a simple tree like this, father, mother, and little ones

may sit and enjoy the beauty of the sun-flecked turf and leaf-entangled sunbeams, as well as if they were in the grandest gardens that could be imagined.

It is often objected that turf does not do well in suburban gardens. Turf does not do well anywhere, unless it is looked after, and put down carefully in the first place. People seem to think grass has no roots. I have seen the jobbing gardener, as well as the amateur, lay his squares of new turf on anything that came first ! This is to court disaster. Turf wants feeding as much as anything else. It is, of course, useless to expect it to do well right under the shadow of a house, or under most trees ; but I love grass so much that I consider it indispensable even in the smallest garden, and would not begrudge the trifling expense of laying down fresh turves, where wanted, every season. We should not hesitate to spend the same sum on a book or a theatre-ticket ; why refuse it to the garden which we shall very likely be looking at and living in the summer through ?

If one ever has a chance of viewing a roadful of *back* suburban gardens when their owners are not there to distract attention, nothing could be more entertaining. Through the medium of a friendly railway-track, I once enjoyed this treat. Houses looked pretty much alike, but the gardens were strikingly dissimilar. In some cases the minds of the owners were pleasingly reflected in their gardens ; in others one saw nothing but the tracks of the jobbing gardener ; in none, except the empty and ownerless, did one see neglect—so much must be said for all of them.

One or two things that were noticed were worthy of remark. It was abundantly clear that the best results came about where owners themselves had personally shared in the gardening work ; it is quite easy to pick out those cases where mere neatness ended, and mind came in, and taste.

One garden (by no means among the largest) was particularly attractive. Nothing much was attempted in it, but the little that was attempted was so well done. The turf was of the finest, like dark green velvet, soft to the foot. Only a few kinds of flowers, but all of the very best. Choice Roses clustered against the west wall—not nailed to the wall, but trained carefully on wood against it; in front of these grew dwarf standard Rose trees, and before them again stretched a long border of Carnations, ready to bloom when their turn came. The grey-green spears were beautiful already, and a pleasure to see, even before a bud among them was unfolded, because so well kept and so healthy. Massed richly in one corner near the house the still bright foliage of the Lily of the Valley showed what a wealth of these flowers must have made the garden sweet in June. A tree or two at the far end (I was peeping through them) gave the shelter and comfort no garden should be without. This little strip, small as it was, deserved the lovely name of “garden.”

One could not help observing with amusement that in some cases back and front gardens did not match; like goods in a shop-window front, the best had been put out for the public. The public is very much obliged for the show, but how about the family, if there is one? No pretty flowers for them, no comfortable nooks, no pleasant sward, no borders of white Pinks nor clumps of Mignonette. Next door, perhaps would be seen the other extreme—too much fussing, too much detail, too many rustic shelters, even the flowers too much crowded together; but to gardens that err in this way much may be forgiven, for much they have been loved.

There is nothing like individuality for making a small garden attractive. Few gardens are too small for the careful cultivation of one particular flower or series of

flowers. A sunny little patch entirely given up to rock and wall plants would be an interest and education to one's neighbours as well as to one's self ; or a system of tubs and tubes might result in a pond-garden for many kinds of water-flowers ; or one might have a Carnation garden, or a garden where all the Starworts had a chance—there are now so many varieties that well repay for cultivation ; or there could be a collection of the best Violas, Sweet-peas or Columbines ;—any of these would afford the sort of hobby that occupies and makes content the man of leisure as much as it refreshes him who has to work.

Miniature rock and water gardens are among the latest and most pleasing developments (it would be unfair to call them fashions) of the gardening world, though for obvious reasons they are not well represented at our flower-shows. To begin with, it is impossible to cart about the kind of plants that belong to them, and they are never suitable for exhibition ; unlike the placid Roses and smart Orchids, who are used to being stared at, and appear to like it. But we can enjoy the "Rockies" and the Water-plants at home. One gentleman of my acquaintance—by profession a man of law, by taste a gardener and engineer—has so arranged his small suburban plot with rills and fountains that in it Pond-weeds and Water-lilies are waving and lolling. No Joseph Paxton ruling the length and breadth of the Crystal Palace grounds could be more content than he is with his small domain.

It is strange how the owners of small suburban gardens, where every inch is of importance, idealize the gardens or their country cousins. Did they but know it, these are often nothing but disappointments. What opportunities are lost for want of enterprise ! Instead of all that might and could be done in them, nothing *is* done. Bushes and trees and shrubberies are allowed to overgrow ; poultry are considered of more importance than Peonies, or any other



LATE SUMMER

flowers, and are allowed to get through hedges and scrape about among the borders. The troublesome things are hustled away, after a fashion, but are under no real control, and two or three eggs are supposed to atone for the severest damage. The old herbaceous plants that have been growing and spreading for years attain to any age and size, which does not improve their shapes or blossoms. The country garden is lovely sometimes of its own sweet wayward will, but its owner might frequently do worse than take a lesson in up-to-date gardening from the proprietor of the small suburban patch.

A writer who always says the things I wanted to say first, has just confided to the public the particulars of the arrangement of his own small garden near a town, and seems astonished at himself to find how fond he gets of it. It would not astonish me. We all get more fond of small gardens than we do of large ones—great lawns and shrubberies are for the crowd—the brilliant crowd; we crave a niche in which to work and live, a little corner of our very own, to plan, to perfect, and to stamp with our own impress. So if we happen to have “grounds” instead of gardens, why, then, to put things right, we make a garden within a garden, and it is in this small spot we feel at home; it is familiar, and it fits us, like the old friend or the long-worn glove, and in our eyes it is beautiful as *Corisande’s* own garden when she picked the Rose. As to beauty, either real or fancied, it is lucky that size is not everything. Here are a few words I found the other day in a book called “*Art out of Doors*.” It was not meant for the suburban garden, but well applies to it:

“Two trees and six shrubs, a scrap of lawn, and a dozen flowering plants, may form either a beautiful little picture, or a huddled disarray of forms and colours.”

On our own taste it depends whether the little garden is to be the “picture” or the “disarray.” Perhaps if it

is the latter we shall not be aware of it, for love is blind ; anyhow, even bad players may enjoy the game, and, happily, like chess, the gardening game is one that can be played, and played well too, with little pieces on a tiny board.

CHAPTER XII

“NEXT DOOR”—A PARENTHETICAL CHAPTER

“United, yet divided.”

ONE matter of the deepest import confronts the owner of the small suburban garden, from which his prototype in the country is generally free; it is the question of “next door.” Inevitable, critical, all-important, almost uncontrollable as it is, “next door” has to be faced and made the best of.

Sometimes the best is very good indeed; sometimes there is no best, but a thorn. In the suburbs a kind of etiquette exists which helps to smooth the way. People must not stare at each other, children must not throw things over the wall. Nobody should play games on Sunday, or make much noise if one or other of the neighbours has a garden-party. (Suburbia revels in garden-parties.) Snails must never be dropped over the fence, nor stones, and boughs that hang over are not to be robbed of fruit; rules as to fallen fruit vary, but are not so strict as some others. These codes prevent much friction. The discordant apple is as tempting in the suburban garden as ever it was in Eden. I have known a generous apple-tree owner present the rights of an overhanging branch in perpetuo to a family where there were schoolboys, thereby securing their lifelong friendship. Such acts of grace as this make next-door neighbourdom a pleasant thing.

And there are customs. It is allowable to borrow garden-rollers, but not brooms, nor spades, nor lawn-mowing machines; this is considered encroachment, and "going too far." Neither is it considered ladylike or gentlemanly to pass unsolicited remarks about the next-door garden, even in praise; nor is it good form to scrape acquaintance across the fence—proper introductions in the drawing-room must be waited for; windows must not be looked out of obtrusively; and lost balls must be searched for by going round to the front gate and ringing the bell—no short cuts.

Putting up barriers to shut out "next door" is liable to offend. Manœuvring is here advisable, and wire netting comes in useful. It is insidious. At the outset barely visible, as creepers clamber over and cover it, the screen becomes impervious imperceptibly; there is no grievance.

It is not thought good manners to work too hard on Sundays;—not like a navvy, and the shirt-sleeve would annoy. Anything like serious work should be done before breakfast. Pruning and light gardening, however (in the Sunday coat), may go on at any time, and one may see friends and give them tea; but decorum must prevail, and loud laughter is avoided by the well-behaved.

Yet great happiness has resulted from, and many a friendship been cemented by, handshakes across the garden-wall; children have thus found playmates, and older people kindred souls.

To the little houses of Suburbia come many brides. What an interest the new bride takes in the one-year-longer-married matron of the next-door garden as she paces round it with the nurse-maid and the brand-new baby. By-and-by what comparisons and friendly talks, what advisings and what exchanging of plants and flowers, what sage remarks from the old inhabitants to the new, what pleasant evenings in the summer dusk,

when husbands appear upon the scene in restful undress with tobacco-smoke, the spark of cigarette, and the latest news from town.

There are no unwritten laws about music and practising in Suburbia. Every one plays as loudly and as much as he can or likes. This is a pity, but it is difficult to see how it can be prevented.

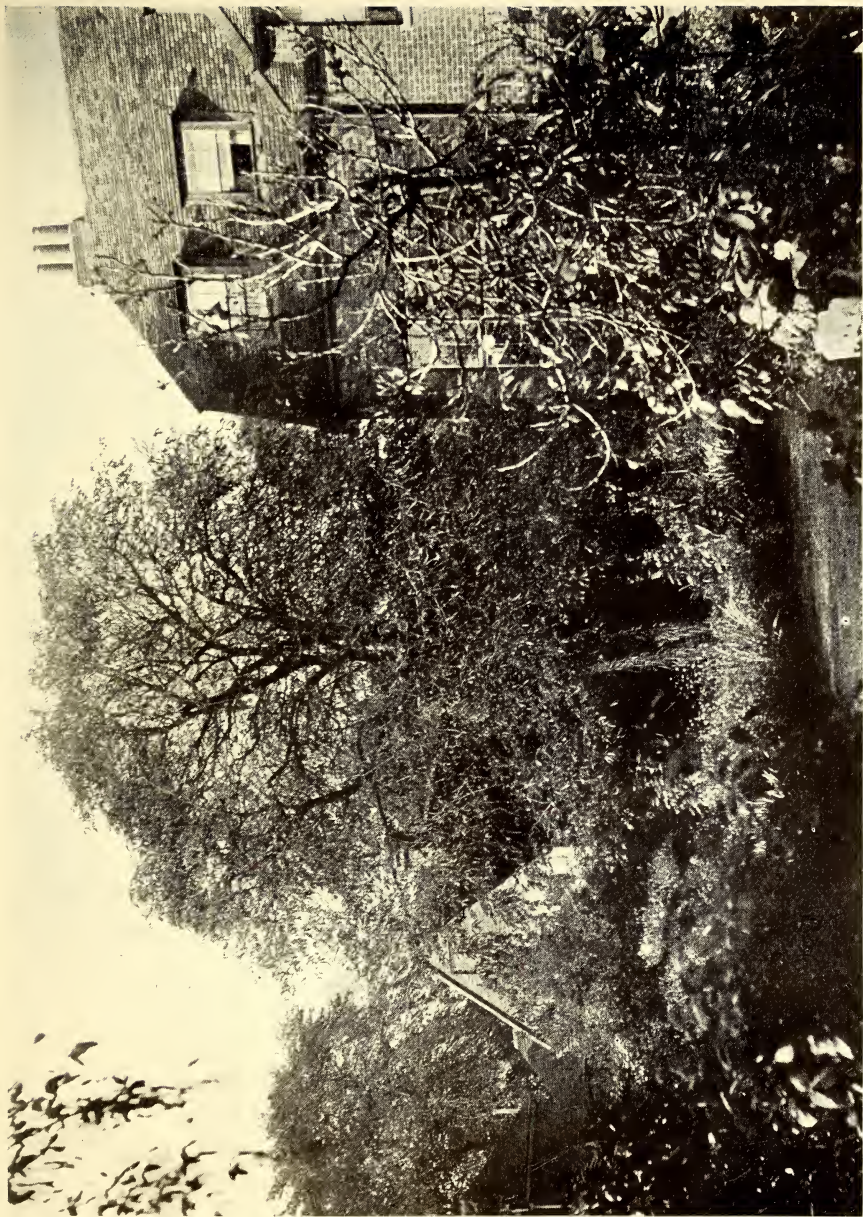
“Sound loves to revel in a summer night,” says the poet; indeed he would have said so if ever he had sojourned in the suburbs; but many of the sounds are pleasing. There is the indescribable hum of the distant City, which seems to match the red glow on the sky-line of its countless fires; there is the chime of clocks, the ringing of church bells, the thrum of the banjo from a holiday group, the trumpet call and drum of the Salvationist.

But it is not for sentimental or ethical reasons alone that “next door” exercises so great, so extraordinary an influence; horticultural affairs of the deepest moment are also implicated. Imagine somebody, a yard or so removed from your most cherished border, planting a row of Poplar trees close on to the very boundary fence. Nothing can stop it—the hungry roots may burrow as they choose. They are not liable to the law of trespass; there is no redress. Or for years you have been enjoying some comfortable nook under the shelter of your next-door neighbour’s Elm or Oak tree. One fine morning you get up to find it has disappeared in the night, and with it your cosy corner; but this you must take in good part. It was your neighbour’s tree, not yours. Or upon the next-door frowning house-wall you have (on the sly) been planting Ivy. What a trial to see this carelessly or ruthlessly cut down, or injudiciously lopped; again you have to suffer in silence.

It is extraordinary how most children idealize “next door,” particularly if it so happen that the inhabitants

thereof are personally unknown. Everything beyond their own wall is pervaded by a sense of mystery. They see a halo round every flower, which blooms more brightly than any in the home patch; the lawns are greener, and the trees and bushes give a pleasanter shade. Things half seen and only guessed at are fraught with breathless interest, and stray glimpses from the top of a dust-bin are heaven itself. The barriers of reserve once down, more than half of the excitement and all the glamour have departed.

Then there is the question of bonfires. Some people enjoy bonfires—I do myself—but the smoke of burning weeds in an adverse wind is liable to be too choky for choice. I have known the bonfire to rankle. As regards the hanging out of clothes to dry (smoke reminds me of them), I am informed that in the lease of many a suburban house a clause is inserted to forbid the family wash. I am quite sure, were such a thing attempted, the breach of good manners would not be tolerated for one moment in polite suburban circles. In one suburban house I knew, the coachman's wife was allowed—once a week—to dry her linen for two hours of the very early morning, before the world was up. She was quite alive to the fearful necessity for punctuality, and this is really all I know about “next door,” except that, oddly enough, it is possible to live for thirty years without making any acquaintance with a neighbour of the next-door garden, and this simply for accidental reasons. In the thirty-first year the neighbours may meet abroad and find themselves dear friends! Such are the fruits of the whimsical juxtaposition of small suburban gardens—“United, yet divided.”



EARLY AUTUMN

CHAPTER XIII

GRASS, GROUND, OR GRAVEL

"Where a green, grassy turf is all I crave."

"A turf of dull, down-trodden grass
Brings summer to my heart."

WHEN people first take possession of the new suburban garden, be it ever so small or empty, three things are sure to be found in it; even the builder bestows as much as that upon them, though it may not be much to boast of either in quantity or quality. The three things are grass, ground, and gravel; grass for the tiny lawn, ground for the flower-beds, and gravel for the paths. Now, how are these to be apportioned? Some people crave for nothing but flowers and vegetables, so they are keenest about soil and ground; others desire to have a dry place always ready to walk about or sit in, cheap to keep up, and handy for their dog-kennels and other fancies. They are gravelites. Another set of folk are only to be made happy by grass, and I am of that number.

One of the most extraordinary things in the world is that so many garden-lovers who are kind enough to give advice about suburban plots seldom have a good word for grass. I always think it must be because they have never had to do without it themselves. The love of green turf is, I think, one of the most deeply rooted feelings of human nature; maybe it is a heritage from the days

when pasture-land meant more to us than it does now, and the coming or withholding of the green blade spelled life or death. "The king himself is served by the field."

The restful charm of the grassy garden appeals to me so much, that with a tree or two, the simplest of flowers, and a rose-bush here and there, I could content myself with nothing else, so I (for once) cannot see eye to eye with Mrs. Earle when she says, "I am all for reducing lawns and turf except for paths in small gardens;" and elsewhere we are advised to have red gravel or a bricked or tiled square to sit on while we admire a wide border of flowers all round the edge. I should not like such a garden as this at all, and could never feel at home in it. Fancy no kindly turf to throw one's self down upon in the noonday heat, with a book in hand and a tree overhead, or if not a tree, a parasol. If we had no lawn to be cut and trimmed, where would be the sounds that most do "rout the brood of care, the sigh of scythe in morning dew," or the less poetical but still soothing monotone of the mowing-machine? And what a loss never to smell the fresh scent of the new-cut blades of grass as they are collected in box or barrow, and used to mulch the wilting flowers; nor to note the deliciously neat appearance of the well-rolled, carefully swept grass-plot, looking so much like a good child that has just been washed and dressed, and repays so fully for the sweet trouble it has given.

A writer on the subject of very diminutive gardens has described one that belonged to a small suburban villa. It captivated my fancy. Narrow was this tiny plot and very old, but it was grassed all over, and at one end a child's swing had been left standing, which was covered with a thick growth of Ivy. How quaint and cool and pleasant on a summer's day, and what a setting for a touch of white or scarlet! Any flower would look its best in such a garden.

Not long ago a contributor to *Country Life* wrote an

article on English and Continental suburban gardens that interested me very much, but I am sorry to say there was no mention whatever in it of turf. Certainly there was not much room for grass in the plots that were described, and in some of them the gradients were too steep for grass-growing. The garden I liked best out of those mentioned was a mere strip about thirty yards long by about ten or eleven yards wide. In this small space (little more than a courtyard) was a border with vines and fruit trees and flowers, a broad brick path, and then a pleached alley of small Lime trees, the outer row close against the boundary wall. This is another of the small gardens I have read of that live in my memory and are a pleasure to think of.

Under the circumstances, it is difficult to see how its arrangement could have been improved upon. I am sure the owners, being people of taste, would have had turf also if possible, and I am still wondering what was done *under* the Lime avenue. The trees must have been sweet when in flower, but alas ! Lime foliage falters and falls down with the first touch of frost, and then what a litter it makes. But no trees are more delightful in summer ; the wind stirs so gently in the boughs, with eloquent soft speech of leaves.

It is now a good many years since it fell to my lot to plan and lay out a new suburban garden, fortunately not one of the smallest, and happily placed, inasmuch as the ground ran down to a railway cutting, at that period almost sylvan in its wildness, with scattered Birch and Fir trees and banks of Primroses. How many of this garden's inhabitants have been grateful since for the good broad stretch of turf that then was carefully put down and has gone on improving and mellowing with time and age. Blackbirds and thrushes have hopped about all over it, finding many a meal, and so have round-eyed robins, though not at the same moment ; croquet and tennis

have been played upon it,—first croquet, then tennis, then croquet again in the cycle of the *môde*; dainty tea-cups' cheerful chink has softly sounded over it, and oft has it been dinted by childish feet. In the morning it has been dim with early dew, at noon a carpet all alive with shadows flung from leaves, and in the evening warm and smooth and barred by sunshine. The lawn has been as good as a sun-dial for telling the hours; the trees are the pointers, here a Willow and there an Oak, and the dial-plate is the grass itself. Whether in shade or sunshine, the lawn is always soft to the foot and pleasant to the eye.

In this garden grass was made the keynote. Turf is the favourite bordering for the shrubbery—a good wide border, that makes a handsome edge and is pretty for flowers to tumble over; grass again where there is room for another little lawn, that can be given up to flower-beds.

How much is said now about the dreadful practice of cutting up a lawn to stick flower-beds in it, “shrieking spots of colour set down here and there with little thought.” An authority I revere says “a lawn is a place for grass; to spot bright beds all over it is to ruin it.” I quite admit that to “spot,” if there is only room for one lawn, is gross Vandalism, but I am quite as firmly convinced that no garden is complete without some flower-beds set in turf. What else shows the colours to so much advantage? Flower-beds in gravel, with a stiff edging of Box, do not please me at all; they are formal, and the effect is hard. Even these can be improved by a broad edging of grass to every bed. Herbaceous borders are delightful; we cannot live without them, but we do want beds too, they are so brilliant, so useful, and so well-behaved. “Bedders” are the good children of the garden, herbaceous plants the wayward. To manage them is like playing a game of croquet with Wonderland Alice's

live flamingoes for hoops and mallets ; the plants have the same habit of taking their way, not ours, and this puts us more than ever in conceit with our little plots of green enamel, set with coloured flowers like jewels.

A grass walk, where there is room for it, is another charming feature. In dry weather, when well kept, nothing is so pleasant to walk on. But no small suburban garden can hope for this luxury ; it is only to be attained in large gardens, that have other walks for everyday wear and tear.

One of the gardens haunted by me as a child had a very long grass walk. There was a flower border on each side of it, and behind the borders there were trees. How we all delighted in this part of the garden-ground ; how many were the friendships sworn along that silent scented pathway. It was said, moreover, that every engagement in the family dated from it.

Perhaps it is going too far to praise turf because it is healthy, and poetry is no argument ; but Fuller, about 1620, said that "to smell to a turf of fresh earth is wholesome to the body." Ruskin in his best prose speaks lovingly of its "soft and countless peaceful spears," and Shakespeare simply revels in grass. The Bible, too, generally the first poem a child loves and is influenced by, may be responsible for some of the fascination of the green herb : "Like rain upon the mown grass ;" "Thou shalt lead me in the green pastures ;" "He maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains." No wonder one loves and even idealizes grass.

CHAPTER XIV

FERNS AND WILD FLOWERS

“Wood-sorrel and wild violet
Ease my soul’s fret.”

“How I do envy you your bank of Ferns” is the remark made to me almost daily during the summer months when the green background of our outdoor fernery looks so pretty as it throws up the colours of the flower-beds on the little lawn that flanks it. This is the brightest bit of the whole garden, and its beauty is very largely due to the Ferns. Then we get talking about Ferns, and everybody says, “What a pity Ferns are out of fashion.” This is what I think. There was a Fern-craze about five and thirty years ago, when crinolines were worn, and long riding-habits, and every drawing-room had its tank of sea-flowers; but times have changed, and the day of the outdoor fernery is over. One reason given for its disappearance is what people say is its untidiness. “We cannot have Ferns near the house, because they look ragged in autumn and winter.” This is what I am told so constantly, but do not agree with at all. In the first place, to my way of thinking, Ferns are picturesque all the year round, not less so when they are brown and yellow than at the time of their greenest luxuriance, and hardy Ferns are the very best things in the world for Londoners to cultivate, because their foliage is so tolerant of smoke-poison, even in the



A TOWN FERNERY

most aggravated form of it known as "urban fog." No town nor suburban garden, however unfavourably placed, need be without its Ferns.

It was against a blank wall facing east, in a brand-new garden of the suburbs, that our own fernery was started, and turned despair into delight. This part of the garden had looked so hopeless. What were we to do with it? We knew that flowers would not bloom there, and yet we wanted something cheerful to look at, because the door-windows of our favourite sitting-rooms "gave on to it," as the French say, and it would always be in sight. Then some one suggested ferns, and it was felt at once the right note had been struck. Between the house and the wall there was chaos for about sixty-five feet; then the bare wall. Behind that in the next-door garden were an Oak and one or two Apple trees, that gave some shelter. Beside the house we made a terrace, high and dry, and planted a Magnolia against the wall, and Rose trees. Then came a gravel path, and beyond the path we laid a little lawn; this left room for a four or five-foot border by the wall. Here was to be the fernery.

Good drainage was secured by digging down and filling up with crocks and broken tiles and cinders. Then we got together a goodly store of stones, tree-stumps, and gnarled roots, choosing Oak when possible, because of all woods it is the least liable to decay. Oak will even resist damp, though damp is a thing a fernery should never be. That is the mistake most people make. Ferns want a great deal of water, but never to be water-logged—always dewy, fresh, and sprinkled. Now it was time to think about the soil. We got in leaf-mould, loam, and a little peat, which in those days was easier to get than it is now. The building up of all these good materials was a pleasant task. It is so nice to work *with* one's gardeners. We cannot expect them to have the same cultivated tastes as some of ourselves, who have travelled, and read,

and thought, and got out of old grooves; but they can do the hard work, and are quick to take ideas. Our Fern-bank was not allowed to be grotto-y. Not a scrap of clinker, nor a flint, nor a shell—least of all a fossil—was permitted to come near it. We waved the border up and down in quite irregular fashion with hills and dales and comfortable crannies to hold the plants when they should come. A month or two had to pass before we could plant, and this was fortunate in a way, as things could settle down. We had made the fernery in the spring, and in the autumn we furnished it—a good time for doing so, for in the autumn holidays one finds so many treasures to bring home in box or basket. This was what we did; and besides that, had ordered a good many beautiful and hardy Ferns from some growers in the south of England.

I do think this is such a good plan. The more frequented country places have been so depleted by the careless Fern-hunter and the over-zealous field-class, that really there are now few wild Ferns to spare. Whenever I come across any, growing in all their beauty, my impulse is to leave them, not to take them away, especially delicate Ferns like *Tricomanes*, or the Sea or Bladder Spleenwort; nor would I ever rifle a lake-side of the Royal Osmunda, unless in Ireland, where it might be growing like a weed. Quite common things we may take a portion of, with care—not the whole root—the Male and Lady-Fern for instance, the Blecknums, the Hart's-tongues from the well-side, and the Polypodies of the wood and hedgerow. Ferns can be moved and planted with safety either in spring or autumn. In the garden for dividing and replanting, we find February the best month.

In making a Fern-bank it must never be forgotten that, though the hardy kinds stand cold well, they do hate draught. We carried our border round a little at both ends, and planted shrubs so as to make it quite a cosy corner. The wall itself had been stocked with climbers—

Ivy, Virginian Creeper, and some Briar Roses and Honey-suckle—the latter not with the hope of flowers, but for a change of foliage. In October the brown and yellowing fronds, with green and gold and red and crimson leaves behind them, are splendid. Our ugly patch is now the best part of the garden—the flower-beds on the turf a little formal, perhaps, but always bright either with spring or summer flowers. Both grass and blossoms are in clover here; they get a sideways benefit from the constant spraying of the bank, and the close-cut turf grows very fine and soft, keeping its greenness through the hottest weather.

Has any one noticed the beauty of the growth of fresh young, pale-green Fern-fronds, among the old dark foliage? Sometimes we secure this by leaving the Fern-bank for a dry hot day or two without much water, then we give it a deluge over-night. Next day new growth begins to show, and the fernery, so far from being cross at so much teasing, puts on its fairest smiles, and looks prettier than ever.

But one of the greatest delights of a fernery in London or suburban gardens is the opportunity it gives of growing wild flowers. There are so many of these one longs to have, but there is no room for them. In the herbaceous border they would be pulled up as weeds, and on the rockery they would overgrow the other things. What the dear weeds want is a place where they can rest harmless and unmolested. The outdoor fernery is their Promised Land; there they are good and happy. Many a wilding has a home in ours.

Sometimes we wonder how they get there, for generally they are not of our own planting. Some, of course, are “stowaways”—vagrants that have travelled with Fern-roots sent from far; others may be wind or bird-sown—there is no lack of bird-life in suburban gardens. Any way, the weeds are welcome. Amongst the strangers

are Wind-flowers, wild Hyacinth, Wood-violets, and Celandine. Enchanter's Night-shade is a visitor that is inclined to be too pushful, but we like a little left, to study its life-history as related so delightfully by Grant Allen. Under the Osmundas there is a carpet of Oak and Beech Fern, but below the hardy common Ferns we let the Alpine Strawberry run about—how bright its scarlet berries in the cool green leaves!—and Wood-sorrel, that most engaging weed, claimed by many as the true Shamrock of St. Patrick. There is no wild flower more interesting; its triune leaflets are so sensitive, closing if startled, or if the wind be chill, and on hot summer afternoons it is amusing to listen for the cracking of its tiny artillery as the seed-pods burst, to fling their harmless contents all around.

In very early spring Blue-bells and the constant Primrose find warm corners on our Fern-bank, and show bright faces sooner than elsewhere. It is here the "spotted Orchis takes his annual step across the earth"—why is this plant so walkative? Wood-sanicle is another weed we allow no one to pull up; it is to us a living lyric of copse and woodland. Such simple plants are doubly sweet when growing in the small suburban garden, houses to right of us, houses to left of us, and houses over the way.

And now a word or two to those who fear to make a fernery too near the house. Here is an extract from my garden log-book, written in December 1901: "The Fern-bank against the Ivied wall is looking almost as well as in August. The plants are simply revelling in the moist still air. The undergrowth of Oak, Beech, Limestone and Bladder Fern is gone, and some of the Lady Fern is yellowing, but the Hart's-tongues are greener than ever; their bosses show up well, and the Male Fern and hardy Polystichums and Polypodies are still flourishing, many of them growing from a centre like gigantic



THE OSMUNDA IN MAY

shuttlecocks. The *Osmunda* is a little withered, but in its golden yellow stage is very lovely." The present prevailing fashion of a lingering autumn and mild December leaves the Fern-bank beautiful through October, November, and the months that follow, till the very hard frosts come, which nowadays is generally not till the days have begun to lengthen. In sheltered corners many plants are green the whole year round. So things go on till January, when some few heads are lying low, but even then the bank is quaintly pretty. February is, I admit, the least attractive month for the Ferns themselves, but by that time the little lowly flowers that grow among them are coming up, and a careful look will show how fast the fronds are spreading and thickening amid the Wood-violets' gentle blue and the pale stars of the Primrose. May is here the most amusing month; in their growing-up stage Ferns are funnier than schoolboys, and more uncouth. How tall and lanky is this pale *Osmunda*; he has shot up too quickly, and there is nothing but a little bullet head at the top of every attenuated stalk. He bends this backwards, the colour changes, and lo! the round ball opens into the splendour of branching leaves. Warm rain of a day or two will do this and many another miracle will it work; the rolled-up, wriggling snakes and viperlings that hid away in white and woolly fleeces, and seemed so frightened of coming out too soon, one by one now show themselves to be the *Scolopendrimus*, *Aspleniums*, *Polypodiums* and *Poly-stichums* that were so beautiful last July—it would really be mean to remind them in summer-time of how they looked while yet unfledged.

The great charm of a fernery, well kept and long-established, is now forgotten by most, for it is seldom seen. What we do see in many a London and suburban garden is the extinct or neglected fernery, an arid spot, most likely under a tree or trees, which have drained

every drop of moisture from the soil. People have such odd notions about Ferns ; they do not discriminate. All kinds are lumped together, and expected to look after themselves and do all right, if they are given a few stones or a clinker or two to play with. I do not think under trees the very best place for Ferns, for the trees get all the moisture. When we know that one fair-sized Oak tree will draw up as much as a hundred and twenty-three tons of water in a season, we cannot wonder that there is not much left to nourish the plants beneath ; and then the rain, the kindly rain that drops from heaven upon the earth beneath, how are the poor overshadowed Ferns to get that ? Speaking generally, all Ferns like shade and moisture, but different members of the Fern family show as many individual tastes and likes and dislikes as we should find in any school or nursery. Some are for the cool depths of the woodland, some for the breezy heath or open moor ; others sun themselves like chameleons on a dry and stony wall, where they live on nothing but lime and light ; and there are the lake-lovers, who, poet-like, would sit with their feet in the brook, and gaze at the blue of the sky ; and the mountain-climbers who hide under the slates of Skiddaw ; and the roadside Ferns that grow beneath, and sometimes upon, the bossy branches of Elms and Oaks. These hardy hedge-haunters were for a long time the only Ferns that would not grow for us ; at last we discovered the reason why. They will not drink anything but soft water, sooner would they die.

All the other Ferns I have mentioned live as happily in a suburban garden as they did in their native haunts, and attain to an even greater size and luxuriance. They give no trouble, most of them do not mind hard water, but this is much better if sprayed or sprinkled than if hosed. Sprinklers can be bought for a shilling or two at any ironmonger's shop, and are most useful. Even the Holly fern, and the Hay-scented, and the pretty *Polystichum-*

proliferum that most people consider a greenhouse plant, come up every year, punctual as the morning sunshine, and want nothing but water, and some fresh leaf-mould to grow into, now and then. Sometimes in the autumn we scatter them with dead leaves, and always leave the fronds to wither as they will; no tidying up is allowed. Here Nature holds her sway, and the touch of wildness in an otherwise well-ordered garden is refreshing.

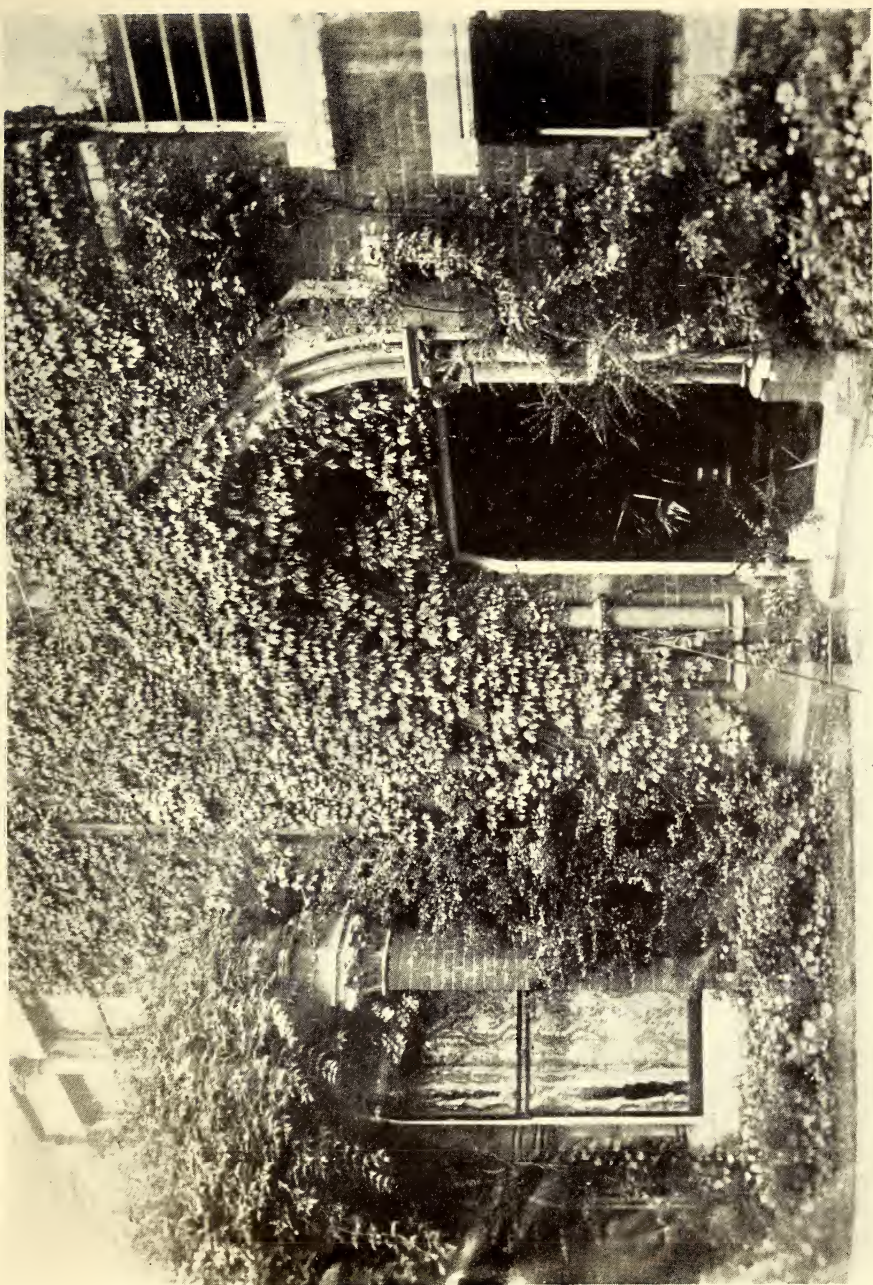
CHAPTER XV

CREEPERS AND CLIMBERS

“Our tallest rose
Peeped in at the chamber window.”

No cottage, villa, hut, nor any other human dwelling, however small and gardenless, need be without some leaves and flowers, for it must have walls, and up them may the Ivy wander and the Jasmine cling. Quaintly enough, both Vine and Fig tree are tolerant of town air, and, suggestive as they are of sylvan and patriarchal life, might flourish in Seven-Dials if there were room enough for them to grow. The Vine, in fact, is one of the best climbers it is possible to find for London and the suburbs; one regrets that it is not oftener made use of, for, to say nothing of its fruits, the foliage is so exquisitely decorative: in summer of a pure green, and in autumn rich in yellows, reds, and browns. The Fig tree is another handsome plant, well worth growing if only for the sake of its comfortable triple leaves that in Eden were found so useful. There is no occasion to mention Virginian Creepers; everybody already knows and appreciates them. The large-leafed, loosely flowing, common kind is preferred by some, but is not so neat and compact as the small-foliaged *Ampelopsis Veitchii*, which clings wherever it can place a finger with extraordinary tenacity, and never needs a nail. Naturally, this clinging habit makes the *Veitchii* very popular where gardeners are scarce.

In planting creepers and climbers we find it the best



VIRGINIAN CREEPER OVER PORCH

of methods always to put in two or three at a time ; winter and summer ones grow happily side by side ; after one has had his turn, another takes the floor, and things are always lively. Even in drear November there are berries, whose shining colours are cotemporary with the bright yellows of the Winter Jasmine, and these together provide a feast of colour from October to the end of January.

On taking possession of a house near town, or in any of the suburbs, we must consider well its different aspects before we choose our creepers, and after that must settle on the best means of training them. Some people like to have a trellis-work of wood against the walls, and upon grey, or white, old-fashioned houses this looks very well. Others will stretch wire-netting against the walls, a method convenient in one way, because a width or two can always be added as it is wanted, and it is cheap ; but wire is not a very genial support to live on. Many plants do not like it, and I am not at all fond of it myself ; but it comes in useful sometimes if a very ugly, bare side wall has to be hidden by degrees. Virginian Creepers do not disdain to use it when they want to climb ; but others turn from it most amusingly. The other alternative is the ordinary garden-nail and shred, and a very good one, too, it is. Every gardener should be generously supplied with nails of different sizes and strong, clean shreds of cloth. In stormy weather they save many a wreck. Sometimes stout string will be required, and stakes, and something in the nature of a pad to soften the rub of the support against the stem. Cloth shreds must be looked to now and then, and renewed when necessary, for the ravages of moth and rust are only to be expected. It is wise to use tarred string, which is very wholesome and durable. Many plants that find a place on walls can neither climb nor creep ; these must be strongly held in place. Of such

are the Cape and Winter Jasmines, many Roses, Forsythia, the Fire-thorn (*Pyracanthus*), and Cotoncaster, whose soft berries, with a crimson bloom upon them, are a pleasant change from the Firethorn's brilliant red and the scarlet of the Holly.

Roses certainly do better against wood than when growing flush against the brick of any wall, especially if it happens to be an old one : they keep more free from insects. How different from Ivy, whose feelings are deeply hurt and injured if it is torn from its dear walls, where it so gladly feeds on lime and air, and makes a clustered home for twilight moths.

Jasmines and other plants that have the same habit of growth must not be allowed to run too much to riot. They should be well cut in every autumn, as soon as frost is threatening ; the new growths of each recurring season amply suffice to provide the graceful trails that hang about with great luxuriance, and will be full of flowers. Two years running a pair of spotted fly-catchers built their nests in the Jasmine-withes close to our windows ; by June the new growths were already thick enough to hold their tiny homes.

A delightful plant to cover a house-wall, and one that is quite content to live in London and its suburbs, is the evergreen *Magnolia grandiflora*. Our own was planted, in the first instance, against a south wall, where afterwards we put a Passion-flower, and have now two kinds of Jasmine. In this aspect the Magnolia did not thrive at all. Then we moved it to the west, where it started growth at once, and rose with wonderful rapidity house-high and thickly branched. It is a lovely place for blackbirds ; they never fail to build in it, so we get music as well as scent ; but the birds have flown before the flowers come. These bloom from August to October, sweetening every dwelling-room that is near them, and every one loves to watch the big white buds as they

unfold so slowly to show their satin linings and the big gold jewel that lies inside each cup.

Both on our north and south and west walls we plant Gloire-de-Dijon Roses along with purple Clematis, not for a succession of flowers, but so that they may bloom together. Few things in nature are more truly satisfactory than the way these two plants have of blossoming at the same time ; the colours contrast so perfectly.

Passion-flowers and *Clematis Montana* are two creepers that, as a rule, do well on warm south walls. For a long time we revelled in these upon the house ; but both are delicate. Even so far south as Surrey we found a very cold, damp winter would kill them, and it is dreadful to see an empty wall which once was full of leaves and blossoms, so we now grow these creepers in some sheltered corner ; arch of door and window-mullion must have stronger plants.

No creepers are hardier than the Virginians, nor could any look prettier as they wreath above a porch. More than once the shelter of ours has been chosen for a rare bird's nesting, and the author of a gardening dictionary was so taken with it that he begged for its photograph, as an illustration of that particular creeper, in his book. I have never known anything to kill this plant except drought or sunstroke. Do give it a little water in dry, hot weather. Our south wall has been the scene of many adventures in the plant world. There is a family legend about the Passion-flower that for years grew high enough to look in (along with the roses) at our chamber windows. It did not survive the foot-treads of Mr. Peace, the thief and murderer, who, one fine day at the luncheon hour, climbed up by it over a portico and into a bedroom, whence he made off with all the jewellery he could find ; die the Passion-flower certainly did, and that before the following winter's frost.

Another creeper of great value to the suburban gardener

is Honeysuckle ; the Dutch variety for its sweetness, the Japanese for its leaves of yellow, green, and gold. Not for the house, but for pergolas, or as a blind to hide "next door," or for a rustic arbour, what is more cheerful than the Hop, which climbs to the height of many yards in one season, and drops its pretty blooms, that have so queer and pleasant a smell, as merrily in a sunny corner of any town garden as if it were clambering up the hop-poles of Kent or Sussex? Hop-bines might be used a great deal more freely than they are to hide unsightly out-houses and barren places, but even Hops want a little care ; they must have some good stuff to grow into, and they do like sunshine. Gourds are magnificent for all these purposes. I know one gentleman who so much admires the leaves and flowers of the common domestic Vegetable Marrow that he cultivates it as an ornament and not for eating, much as the King of Siam grows carrots, with whose charming foliage he fell in love when sojourning in England.

Of all creepers we are familiar with, *Clematis Montana* is least tolerant of the knife. If we happen to meet with a very old one, that has been allowed to wander unchecked all over the place, and is untidy at the bottom, it is quite useless to attempt to cut and prune it into shape. Such treatment would be certain to destroy ; it is better to take it away bodily and put in a new one. The yearly pruning already spoken of may be pursued in safety. Honeysuckles behave much in the same way as to their dislike of too much cutting, otherwise they give no trouble at all, and thrive in any garden soil that is fairly good. Sometimes one has to deal with old house-walls whereon neglected creepers show unsightly stems, and yet we cannot part with them, because of the value of the upper growth. The best thing to be done—so we find—is to plant some gay perennial climber that will hide defects. One of the best is the Morning Glory (*Ipomœa*.) If given a sunny

place, this creeper will throw up long free garlands every summer. The leaves are prettily shaped, and each new morning brings new buds, wonderful, twisted, spiral buds, that open into cup-shaped flowers, pink, or white, or blue, or streaked, or crimson.

Ivy deserves a chapter all to itself ; it is the kindest and most beneficent climber in all the world, never shabby, never tired, blooming in November and December, when flowers are scarcest ; and it owns such an endless variety of leaf-forms and colours that one might make an interesting garden by filling it with nothing but different kinds of Ivy. And the same Ivy behaves so differently at different periods of its life, that sometimes one can hardly believe one is not being cheated by a changeling. See the Ivy that is busy climbing up a tree or wall, how tightly it catches hold, and how industriously it wins its way to the very summit. No leisure now for play or flowering, it is a steady onward march—eyes right, no looking round ; but once the top is reached there comes a change. Like a successful man of business, whose work is done, it has time now for life's graces ; the Ivy settles down and clusters, and bears flowers and berries. It loves pretty shapes and pictures—in short, takes kindly to the Arts.

For the borders of shrubberies no edgings are prettier than Gold and Silver Ivies trailed over stones or rock-work, and Irish Ivy is invaluable to fill bare patches under trees on lawns, where nothing else will grow, or for covering up old tree-stumps or unsightly barns or sheds. Ivy at first grows slowly. Any one who is impatient for immediate effect had better buy well-rooted plants of it in pots ; by this means a good length can be secured at once. If a small piece is planted, a little lime-rubbish in the ground helps very much, and so does watering for a week or two till well-established, after which any Ivy can be trusted to look after itself. Ivy in London is no new favourite.

Close to St. Paul's Cathedral is a thoroughfare where once the Prebendaries of St. Paul lived peaceful lives in quaint old-fashioned houses, whose walls were smothered in it ; houses and Ivy have disappeared, but the old name lingers—it is “Ivy Lane.”

CHAPTER XVI

EASY ROCK AND WALL GARDENING

“The stems are faithful to the root
That worketh out of view,
And to the rock the root adheres
In every fibre true.”

A ROCK-GARDEN, even in a simple way, is a great joy, and there is no reason why we should not try to possess one even in a town or in the suburbs. Writers in the best horticultural papers are sometimes a little discouraging; they tell us that the rock-garden near a house is out of place, and that it should never be made near trees, nor buildings, nor any other objects, but stand apart in stony isolation; they also tell us by no means to make a rockery ourselves, any more than we should try to mend a broken limb without the doctor: we are to call in an experienced garden-artist blessed with good taste, a knowledge of rocks, and the requirements of Alpine plants.

No doubt, the owners of large grounds and long purses will do well to take this advice, but people must cut their coats according to their cloth, and no one who does not mind taking a little trouble need despair. It is not so very difficult a matter to build a home for, and to get together, a pretty collection of Alpine and other rock-plants. One's pains are well repaid, for no class of growing things is more interesting; besides this, we shall be in the fashion.

In our own garden, which I have said before is not a

large one (close to other people's houses, and much too full of trees), we have contrived to make two rock-gardens, one in shade and one in sunshine. Neither of them is far from our own house, and one is much too near some Fir trees ; but the plants do not seem to mind either of these things in the very least.

The first thing we have to consider in establishing a rockery (after settling where to place it) is the rock, and "rock," as we all know, is geology for every kind of earth and stone. Limestone is about the best rock we can choose ; there are so many plants that love to live in it, and it is easier to procure than granite. Need it be said that we must not dream of using clinker ? Stone is a little difficult to get, and dear to buy and cart about, but we lighted upon a cunning plan in getting ours. We looked up a neighbouring builder, and for a trifle and the cartage he let us have a number of disused steps and sinks and stones that came out of old houses, and to him were so much lumber ; they were just the thing for us, and were already nicely weathered.

I think we knew the right way to build a rockery, for we had read many papers on the subject in *The Garden*, and also possessed Miss Jekyll's delightful book on "Wall and Water Gardens," the pictures in which are very helpful ; and though we could not do all the best things that might be done, for want of room, we succeeded fairly well, but we had to superintend and do all except the heavy work ourselves. No gardener of the ordinary jobbing or suburban type can be trusted to make a rockery.

The natural soil of our garden made drainage requisite, so we began with that ; then we laid in a store of loam, a little leaf-mould, and a great deal of coarse sand. Rock-plants look as if they grew on the surface, lying on it like water-flies upon a stream. This appearance is deceitful ; they have particularly long roots, which strike down any



A ROCKERY

distance in search of food. No one, therefore, need expect to have a successful rockery who first dumps his stones down in a heap, and then piles the earth on the top of them. Each stone or piece of rock must be planted firmly, ends pointing downwards, as in building a flint wall, so that roots can run down easily through the soil between them; and it is best to work after a plan, arranging the "rock" in a sort of orderly disorder like a stratification, with here and there a "fault." So anxious were we to make our rockery look natural, that we referred to one of Mr. Geikie's geology books, and chose our style of stratification from that.

It was a long time before we managed to place the stones exactly to our minds, but we did succeed at last, after one or two trials and a few alterations. Then came a period of waiting till things had settled down. We gave temporary lodgings among the rocks to tufts of London Pride, the pretty pink Saxifrage, that so well deserves its name and is so invaluable a plant in any difficult garden, as it will grow anywhere and remains in bloom so many months. Creeping Jenny was another stop-gap, quite as hardy as London Pride, and flowering almost directly after you plant it, if it is given a little water and some sunshine; Lung-wort and common Campanulas we put in too, with odds and ends of all the weedy things that inhabit every garden and consider themselves, as it were, joint owners of it. We robbed the Herb-border, too, of bits of gold and silver Thyme, that so much loves growing on a bank and is so fragrant; these latter were allowed to stay, and we would have had Balm too, had space permitted.

Later on came a visit to Mr. Barr's nursery-ground, from whence we drove home the richer by a number of little sandy pots, in each pot a treasure. Whenever I visit this flowery region in search of Daffodils, I never can find time to admire the Daffodils because of being so

taken up with rock plants. They are grown so beautifully here ; with nothing but flat fields to work upon, a stretch of rocks has been imported into them so skilfully as to wear a very natural look, and one cannot walk among them without taking an object-lesson on the beauty of bold effects. After falling in love with wide expanses of trailing, creeping, rooting, and clinging Alpine and native rock-plants, one can visit the open frames where small pieces of them are growing in pots. Nothing could be more convenient or pleasanter than the choosing of these and the bearing of them away in safety to individual hearts and homes. Grown in pots, the most delicate things can be moved in safety.

The great danger among so much that attracts is that of being tempted to buy more sorts and kinds of plants than can have justice done them in a small garden ; much wiser is it to choose but a few of the best, and let those have space to grow and spread. A cranny can always be found for any rarity, but no "scrappy" rockery, any more than a "scrappy" garden, will ever make for beauty.

In a gardening paper the other day there was a piece of advice that amused us by its *naïveté*. It was, "never to buy plants, but always to get them given you by friends, because that way you get much bigger pieces." Certainly friends who have a well-established rockery can assist greatly, and a hamper sent us one October was a treasure-trove indeed, not only for the plants we saw and handled, but also for its waifs and strays. Like the magic ferry-boat, that hamper had brought more travellers than eye could see. Next summer they appeared. One was a vigorous plant of bright pink Yarrow, another a fairy Flax (oh, what a delicious blue !), and one day a weird-looking stranger popped up suddenly. He had a beautiful cream-coloured suit, and peacock's eyes, which the gardener said quite frightened him. His name we

discovered afterwards was *Calochortus*, a Lily from California, which is supposed to require a good deal of warmth and some care, so we were very proud of his appearance in our rockery.

We contrived to find room for many pretty things: *Campanula Bavarica*, in falls of azure blue; the white *Iberis* and *Arabis*, double and single; yellow *Alysum*; *Aubrietia*, pink and mauve; as well as one or two Rock Pinks and some crimson Thrift. The Bird's-eye Primrose, and Rock Primulas, and Alpine Poppies (these are lovely), we could not run to for want of space.

Saxifrages are a blessing in the shady rockery. Here, as well as the sunshiny one, mossy and encrusted Saxifrages do very well. Some of the mossy Saxifrages are early bloomers, opening in February with large white flowers, in striking contrast to their tufted dark-green leaves. The encrusted Saxifrages are the most wonderful of rock-plants; any one unfamiliar with their shining silver edges might fancy the foliage were frosted; but the edging is really an incrustation of lime. In some form or other lime is a food these plants must have, or they cannot thrive; it is pretty to see them using their food-stuff to adorn themselves as well as in support of life. Some small Saxifrages we liked are *S. sancta*, with yellow flowers, *S. oppositifolia*, with red-purple blooms, and the double-flowered native *S. granulata*. Perhaps the handsomest of all is *S. longifolia*, which grows in huge rosettes, throwing from the centre of each a panicle of creamy white flower nearly two feet long.

Wall-planting is easier to manage in the small garden than the rockery because it so economizes space. Many, in fact most, rock-plants do well in walls if made with mould enough to give root-room. A double wall is a delightful thing. On the broad top of it Roses can be planted, and soft-stemmed Roses look even prettier when falling down than when climbing up. Pink blossoms are

lovely on grey stone. *Cerastium*'s grey foliage should always rove about among the green things ; grey leaves are so pretty, and there are many plants of this colour. The Cotton plant, often called French Lavender, is a good one. *Anemone apennina* is a wall and rock plant that ought to be mentioned first instead of last ; *Anemone sylvestris* and *hepatica* also love the stones, and so do the homely House-leeks that remind us of cottage roofs, and the grey-green Cobweb-leeks that are smothered in downy thread.

It would be quite easy to make a beautiful rock or wall garden without going away from our own country to people it ; many of our common native stone-loving plants are so good. Snap-dragons are grand, and we could have Foxgloves, the great Mulleins and the delicate Stitchwort, the shining Crane's-bell—so scarlet of leaf as summer wanes—the Wall-Pennywort, and the pink-flowered tiny Toad-flax. Some Ferns, too, could find a place in it, Cetrach and Wall-Rue in the sun, and Polypody and the black-stemmed *Adiantum nigrum* anywhere. Polypodies run freely about the joints of walls, and will keep green all the winter.

The three commonest of our English wall-plants are those we love most dearly ; they are Thrift, Wallflower, and Red Valerian. Our own Valerian was brought from the top of a castle-wall in the Isle of Wight, close to the sea, wind-swept and bathed in sunshine. There were masses of it, in patches of deep crimson ; we took some while it was in full flower, in spite of the risk. No easy matter was it to get a root, so deeply had every one gone down between the stones, but we managed to secure one or two with fibre on them, and these have grown and spread. Wallflowers are never so happy as on stone-work with air and light all round them, and they are all the better for the slight protection given by a wall. Ivy-leaved Toad-flax was growing merrily near the Valerian, and was not half so difficult to get out. All of these are now



A ROCKERY IN EARLY SUMMER

quite content in the suburban garden to which they were brought, and in which they thrive and bloom, the red Valerian a special joy to every pussy-cat.

One pleasing thought may cheer the most disheartened while going through the troubles of making a rockery ; it will be a delicious salve to one's conscience when running away with roots of dainty little plants from wall, or moor, or mountain, either in England or abroad, to know that at home a comfortable shelter is awaiting them where not even the Edelweis need feel the pangs of Heimweh. Flowers we bring home that live and grow are about the pleasantest log-books it is possible to possess.

“Oh, to what uses shall we put
The wild weed-flower that simply blows ?”

This is what Tennyson says, and the question is easily answered by another : Could it have a better use than to bring happiness to those who dearly love the country and its flowers, but are obliged by stress of circumstance to live their lives in towns ?

INDEX

AMPELOPSIS VEITCHII, 21, 88.
 Analysis of fog at Kew and Chelsea
 in 1891, 49.
 Apathy of the public about fog, 54.
 Arabis, double and single, 11.
 Area garden, 2.
 "Art out of Doors," 69.
Asparagus Plumosa, 47.
Asparagus Sprengeri, 17.

BACK and front gardens, 64, 67.
 Balcony-fitting, 25.
 Barr's, Messrs., rock-garden, 97.
 Birds and butterflies in London, 30.
 Bournville, workman's village, 32.
 Bonfires, 74.
 Bulbs for the window-box, 10.
 Bulbs after flowering, 14.
 Bulbous plants in smoke, 28.
 Bulbous plants for parks in town, 4.
 Bulbous plants in fog, 53.
 Button-hole bouquet-making in
 London streets, 60.

CAMPANULAS, 4, 17, 41, 97.
Campanula Bavarica, 99.
 Candy-tuft (*Iberis*), 99.
 Charcoal filters for fog, 51.
 Children's window-boxes, 19.
 Children's ideas of "Next-door,"
 73.
 Choosing the window-box, 37.
 Cleansing foliage, 38, 41.
 Clean mist, 49.
Clematis Montana, 91.
 Clementi-Smith's, Mrs., rectory-
 garden in the City, 26, 30.

Climbers, 89.
 Climbers in pots, 20.
Country Life on suburban gardens,
 76.
 Country board schools, 33.
 Covent Garden Market, 45.
 Coal-smoke Abatement Society, 54.
 Crocus, 11, 64, 65.
 Crook's Place Board School, Nor-
 wich, 32.
 Creepers, 89.
 Cut flowers from the florist, 3

DAISIES, field, 16.
 Daisies, Michaelmas, 4.
 Double-wall gardening, 99.
 Dracaenas, 47.
 Drainage for window-box, 33.
 Drainage for fernery, 81.
 Drainage for rockery, 96.
 Dyed flowers, 57.

EARLY and mid-Victorian bouquets,
 59.
 Encrusted Saxifrages, 99.
 Establishing a rockery, 96.
 Etiquette in suburban gardens, 71.
 Exeter prize window-boxes, 18.

FACTORY-LAD'S window-box and
 Miss Jekyll, 35.
 Ferns for window-box, 42.
 Ferns at Kew after fog, 52.
 Ferns all the year round, 80.
 Ferns and gas, 53.
 Ferns under trees, 85.

- Flower Hospital, 39.
 Flower-girls of London, 60.
 Flowers as symbols, 58.
 Flower-beds in turf, 78.
 Flower-pots, 21, 22.
 Floral trophies, 59.
 Foreign opinions on English suburban gardens, 64.
 Fog filters and annihilators, 50.
 Foliage plants, 44.
 Free's, Mrs. Richard, Window-box Society at Millwall, 31.
 Front and back gardens, 64, 67.
 Furnishing the fernery, 82.
- GARDEN-SCHOOLS in Germany, 33
 Gardens we grow fond of, 69.
 Genesta, 16.
 Giant Snowdrop, *Galanthus* *Whittalli*, 10.
 Giving away our surplus plants, 34.
 Grassy gardens, 76.
 Grass walks, 79.
- HANGING baskets, 39.
 Herbs in the window-box, 17.
 Honeysuckle, 92.
 Hops, 92.
 Home for Working Boys, roof-garden at, 28.
- IMPURITIES of town fog, 49.
 Individuality in gardens, 67.
 Injuries from fog, 49.
 Iberis, candy-tuft, 99.
 Insects, 40.
 Ipomœa (Morning Glory), 92.
 Ivy, 11, 93.
- JASMINES, 90.
- KITCHEN window-boxes, 17.
 Kew Gardens, fog at, 50, 52.
 Kew and Chelsea, fog at, 49.
- LADY decorators, 85.
 Lawn, the, 65, 76, 78.
 Lilies, Japanese, at Holland House, 4.
 Lilies in poor man's garden, 32.
 Limestone for rockeries, 96.
 London in June, 23.
 London flower-girls, 60.
 London Pride, 11, 97.
 Love of small gardens, 69.
- MAIDEN-HAIR sprigs, 60.
 Making a balcony-garden, 25.
 Making a rockery, 96.
Magnolia Grandiflora, 90.
 Michaelmas Daisies, 4.
 Miniature rock and water gardens, 68.
 Moss, 11, 39.
 Musk, 15, 25, 41.
- NARCISSUS, 12, 39.
 Nasturtiums, 3, 43, 45.
- OPEN-AIR fern-box, 42.
 Ornamental foliage plants, 47.
Osmunda Regalis in May, 85.
Osmunda Regalis in autumn, 85.
- PASSION-FLOWERS on south wall, 91.
 Palms, 46.
 Petunias, 15, 29, 39.
 Pelham Park (Home for working boys), 29.
 Plants for house-decoration, 46.
 Poplar trees next door, 73.
 Pots for balconies, 21.
 Pot-plants, watering, 41.
 Precautions in foggy weather, 53.
 Primrose Day, 58.
 Pruning creepers, 92.
 Public Health Act, 54.
 Pyrethrums as town flowers, 3.
- QUEEN'S GATE window-boxes, 16.

RAIN-WATER, 18, 86.
 Rock-gardening, 95.
 Rock-plants, hardy English, 100.
 Roof-garden in Bishopsgate St., 28.
 Roof-garden on London leads, 29.
 Roses, 4, 20, 56, 58, 67, 90.

 SAXIFRAGES in rockery, 99.
 Seeds for window-box, 42.
 Seed Song, 18.
 Shop-front in Bond Street, 23.
 Shrubs for window-box, 38.
 Silene (Campion or Catchfly), 12.
 Slugs, 3.
 Snowdrops, 10.
 Smoke-poison, 48.
 Soil for window-box, 37.
 Soot, 3, 38.
 Study of plants, 41.
 Stone for rockery, 96.
 Suburban gardens, 4, 62.
 Suburban highways, 63.
 Sunflower, a city, 34.
 Summer flowers for window-box, 14.

 TIGER LILIES, 28.
 Town board schools, 32.

Tubs for verandahs and balconies, 22.
 Turf for small gardens, 66.
 Turf, love of green, 75.
 Turf, flower-beds in, 78.
 Turf for games, 77.
 Turf for bordering shrubberies, 78.

 URBAN fog, 48.

 VALERIAN, 100.
 Villa window-box in March and June, 37.
 Virginia Creeper for bird's nests, 91.
 Virginia Stock, 43.

 WASHING leaves, 41.
 Watering, 40, 81, 83.
 Weeping Willows, 65.
 Weeds that are welcome, 30, 83.
 Winter Jasmine (*nudiflorum*), 64, 90.
 Winter Aconite, 11.
 Wild flowers in the garden, 83.
 Window-box in spring, 10.
 Wire netting, 89.
 Wired flowers, 56.
 Wormwood, 17.

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