

THE FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND



G. FLEMWELL

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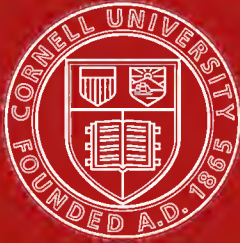
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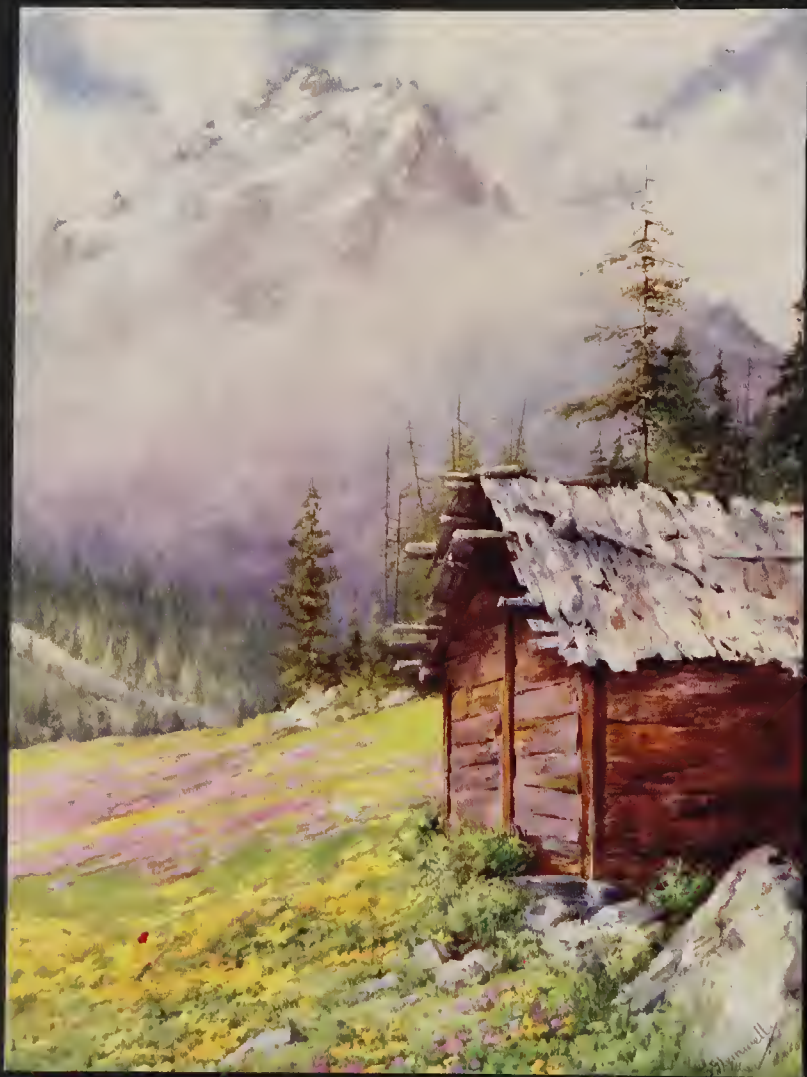
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**THE FLOWER-FIELDS OF
ALPINE SWITZERLAND**



CALTHA PALUSTRIS and *PRIMULA*
FARINOSA on the upper fields of
Champex towards the end of May.

THE FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

AN APPRECIATION AND A PLEA

PAINTED AND WRITTEN

BY

G. FLEMWELL

AUTHOR OF "ALPINE FLOWERS AND GARDENS"

"Into the fieldes did he goe, which then faire *Flora* bedecked,
With redolent blossoms, O how grateful to the senses."

FRANCIS SABLE, *Pan's Pipe*.

WITH TWENTY-FIVE REPRODUCTIONS
OF WATER-COLOUR DRAWINGS

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1912

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO
MADemoiselle MARTHE DEDIE
AND ALL AT
"LA COMBE," ROLLE (VAUD)

PREFACE

LAST year Mr. G. Flemwell gave us a very beautiful volume upon the Alpine Flora, and it has met with well-deserved success. But the author is not yet satisfied. He thinks to do better, and would now make known other pictures—those of Alpine fields, especially during the spring months.

Springtime in our Alps is certainly the most beautiful moment of the year, and the months of May and June, even to the middle of July, are the most brilliant of all. It is a season which, up to the present, we have rather considered as reserved for us Swiss, who do not much like that which is somewhat irreverently called *l'industrie des étrangers*, and perhaps we shall not be altogether enchanted to find that the author *à la mode* is about to draw the veil from our secrets, open the lock-gates of our most sacred joys to the

international flood, and sound the clarion to make known, *urbe et orbi*, the springtime glory of our fields. With this one little reservation to calm the egotistical anxiety which is in me (Mr. Flemwell, who is my colleague in the Swiss Alpine Club, knows too well our national character not to understand the spirit in which we make certain reservations with regard to this invasion of our mountains by the cosmopolitan crowd), I wish to thank the author, and to compliment him upon this fresh monument which he raises to the glory of our flowers.

He here presents them under a different aspect, and shows us the Alpine field, the meadow, the great green slope as they transform themselves in springtime. He sings of this rebirth with his poet-soul, and presents it in pictures which are so many hymns to the glory of the Creator. And he is justified in this, for nothing in the world is more marvellous than the re-flowering of Alpine fields in May and June. I have seen it in the little *vallons* of Fully and of Tourtemagne in Valais, in the fields of Anzeindaz and of Taveyanaz (Canton de Vaud), at the summit of the

Gemmi and on the Oberalp in the Grisons ; I have seen the flowering spring in the Bernese Oberland and on the Utli (Zurich), in the *vallons* of Savoie and in those of Dauphiné ; I have seen the metamorphosis of the Val de Bagnes and of the Bavarian plain, the transformation of the marvellous valleys of Piémont and of the elevated valley of Aosta. But I have never seen anything more beautiful or more solemn than spring in the Jura Mountains of Vaud and Neuchatel, with their fields of *Anemone alpina* and *narcissiflora*, when immense areas disappeared under a deep azure veil of *Gentiana verna* or of the darker *Gentiana Clusii*, and when the landscape is animated by myriads of *Viola biflora* or of Soldanella. In reading what Mr. Flemwell has written, my spirit floats further afield even than this—to the Val del Faene, which reposes near to the Bernina, and I see over again a picture that no painter, not even our author, could render : the snow, in retiring to the heights, gave place to a carpet of violet, blue, lilac, yellow, or bright pink, according as it was composed of either *Soldanella pusilla*, of long, narrow, pendent bells, which

flowered in thousands and millions upon slopes still brown from the rigours of winter, or *Gentiana verna*, or *Primula integrifolia*, whose dense masses were covered with their lovely blossoms, or *Gagea Liotardi*, whose brilliant yellow stars shone on all sides in the sun, or *Primula hirsuta*. All these separate masses formed together a truly enchanting picture, which remained unadmired by strangers—since these had not yet arrived—and which I was happy and proud to salute under the sky of the Grisons.

Our author seems to have a predilection for the blue flower of *Gentiana verna*, and I thank him for all he says of my favourite. When, at the age of ten years, I saw it for the first time, carpeting the fields of the Jura in Vaud, my child's soul was so enthusiastic over it that there were fears I should make myself ill. This impression, which dates from 1864, is still as fresh in my memory as if it were of yesterday. Blue, true blue, is so rare in Nature that Alphonse Karr could cite but five or six flowers that were really so: the Gentian, the Comellina, several Delphiniums, the Cornflower, and the Forget-me-not.

The blue of the Gentian is certainly the most superb and velvety, especially that of *Gentiana bavarica*. A group of *Gentiana verna*, *brachyphylla*, and *bavarica* which I exhibited at the Temple Show in London in May 1910, and which was a very modest one, it having suffered during the long voyage from Flouaire to London, was greatly admired, and did not cease to attract the regard of all flower-lovers. Blue is so scarce, every one said, that it is good to feast one's eyes upon it when one meets with it!

The practical side of this volume resides in the information it offers to lovers of Alpine flowers in England. One readily believes that, in order to cultivate these mountain plants, big surroundings are necessary: a great collection of rocks, as in the giant Alpine garden of Friar Park. We have proved in our garden of Flouaire—where the public is willingly admitted, and which flower-lovers are invited to visit—that mountain plants can be cultivated without rockwork, and that it is even important, if one wishes to give an artistic and natural aspect to the garden, not to be too prodigal of rock and stone. Much verdure is

essential, it is necessary to have a frame for the picture, and that frame can only be obtained by creating the Alpine field. One day at Friar Park, Sir Frank Crisp, the creator of this beautiful *alpinum*, taking me aside and making me walk around with him, showed me a vast, empty field which stretched away to the north of the Matterhorn, and said: "It is here that I wish to establish a Swiss field to soften the too rocky aspect of the garden and to give it a fitting frame." And since then I am unable to conceive that there was ever a time when the Alpine garden at Friar Park had not its setting of Alpine fields. There was no idea of making such a thing when the garden was begun; but once the rockwork was finished the rest imposed itself. One needs the flower-filled field, *l'alpe en fête*, by the side of the grey rocks.

This is why, in our horticultural establishment at Floraire, we make constant efforts to reproduce expanses of Narcissi, Columbines, Gentians, Daphnes, Primulas, etc., grouped in masses as we have seen them in nature, and as Mr. Flemwell gives them in his book.

Herein lies the great utility of this volume, and the reason why it will be consulted with pleasure by gardeners as well as by alpinists and lovers of nature generally.

HENRY CORREVON.

FLORAIRE, NEAR GENEVA,
January 2, 1911.

CONTENTS

PART I

AN APPRECIATION

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. OF OUR ENTHUSIASM FOR "ALPINES"	3
II. ALPINE FLOWER-FIELDS	12
III. THE MAY FIELDS	21
IV. THE VERNAL GENTIAN	35
V. IN STORM AND SHINE	48
VI. THE JUNE MEADOWS	64
VII. ON FLORAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND COLOUR	86
VIII. THE RHODODENDRON	102
IX. THE JULY FIELDS	114
X. THE AUTUMN CROCUS	134

PART II

A PLEA

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI. ALPINE FIELDS FOR ENGLAND	149
XII. SOME WAYS AND MEANS	162
L'ENVOI	179
INDEX	189

Missing Page

The original water-colours reproduced in this volume are exhibited, and will remain on sale, at the Doré Galleries, New Bond Street, London, where all inquiries may be addressed.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. <i>Caltha palustris</i> and <i>Primula farinosa</i> on the upper fields of Champex towards the end of May	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
2. <i>Gentiana verna</i> and <i>Primula farinosa</i> on the lower fields of Champex towards the end of May, with part of the <i>massif</i> of Saleinaz in the background	3
3. Lac Champex in cloudland at the end of May; <i>Caltha palustris</i> and <i>Primula farinosa</i> by the water-edge	8
4. <i>Trollius europaeus</i> , the Globe Flower, on the cloud-swept fields in early June	16
5. <i>Anemone sulphurea</i> and <i>Viola calcarata</i> in the Val d'Arpette in June	24
6. Early-June fields beyond Praz de Fort in the Val Ferret, backed by the Groupe du Grand Saint-Bernard et du Grand Golliaz	32
7. The Paradise Lily (<i>Paradisica Liliastrum</i>) near the Glacier de Trient about the middle of June	40
8. June meadows of <i>Salvia</i> , <i>Lychnis</i> , etc., in the Val Ferret, just before arriving at the village of Praz de Fort	48
9. Field of <i>Campanula rhomboidalis</i> on the Col de la Forclaz about the beginning of July	56
10. In the early-July fields at Champex	64
11. Evening among the fields of pink Bistort at Lac Champex; sunset-glow on the Grand Combin, July	72

	FACING PAGE
12. Haymaking at Champex in the middle of July	80
13. The Autumn Crocus in the fields near the village of Trient, with the Aiguille du Tour in the background, September	88
14. <i>Anemone sulphurea</i> and <i>Gentiana excisa</i> painted directly in the fields at the end of May	96
15. <i>Primula farinosa</i> , <i>Gentiana verna</i> , Micheli's Daisy, <i>Bartsia alpina</i> , <i>Polygala alpina</i> , and the two Pinguiculas or Butter- worts, painted directly in the fields at the end of May	104
16. <i>Gentiana verna</i> , the type-plant, and some of its forms	112
17. <i>Geranium sylvaticum</i> , <i>Potentilla rupestris</i> , <i>Centaurea montana</i> , the pink Bistort, the little Alpine Bistort, painted on the spot in the fields at the beginning of July	120
18. <i>Paradisia Liliastrum</i> , the Paradise or St. Bruno's Lily	128
19. <i>Rosa alpina</i> , the thornless Alpine Eglantine	136
20. Young plants of <i>Veratrum album</i> , together with <i>Sabia pra- tensis</i> , <i>Phyteuma betonicaefolium</i> , <i>P. orbiculare</i> , the white and the yellow Euphrasia, and the yellow Clover, drawn on the spot at the beginning of July	144
21. Arnica, the Brown Gentian (<i>G. purpurea</i>), <i>Campanula bar- bata</i> , and the fiery little <i>Hieracium aurantiacum</i> , painted from life in the fields towards the middle of July	152
22. The tall yellow <i>Hypochaeris uniflora</i> , <i>Centaurea uniflora</i> , the Golden Hawkweed (<i>Crepis aurea</i>), drawn from life in the July fields	160
23. <i>Gentiana campestris</i> and <i>Gentiana bavarica</i>	168
24. <i>Astrantia major</i> , <i>A. minor</i> , and the Apollo butterfly	176
25. The Willow Gentian (<i>G. asclepiadea</i>) and the Alpine Cotton Grass (<i>Eriophorum Scheuchzeri</i>)	182

PART I

AN APPRECIATION

“Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.”

ANDREW MARVELL.



CHAPTER I

OF OUR ENTHUSIASM FOR "ALPINES"

"We are here dealing with one of the strongest intellectual impulses of rational beings. Animals, as a rule, trouble themselves but little about anything unless they want either to eat it or to run away from it. Interest in, and wonder at, the works of nature and of the doings of man are products of civilisation, and excite emotions which do not diminish, but increase with increasing knowledge and cultivation. Feed them and they grow; minister to them and they will greatly multiply."—THE RT. HON. A. J. BALFOUR, *in his Address as Lord Rector of St. Andrews University, December 10, 1887.*

SOME excuse—or rather, some explanation—seems to be needed for daring to present yet another book upon the Alpine Flora of Switzerland. So formidable is the array of such books already, and so persistently do additions appear, that it is not without diffidence that I venture to swell the numbers, and, incidentally, help to fill the new subterranean chamber of the Bodleian.

With the author of "Du Vrai, Du Beau, et Du Bien," I feel that "Moins la musique fait de bruit et plus elle touche"; I feel that reticence

4 FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

rather than garrulity is at the base of well-being, and that, if the best interests of the cult of Alpines be studied, any over-production of books upon the subject should be avoided, otherwise we are likely to be face to face with the danger of driving this particular section of the plant-world within that zone of appreciation "over which hangs the veil of familiarity."

Few acts are more injudicious, more unkind, or more destructive than that of overloading. "The last straw" will break the back of anything, not alone of a camel. One who is mindful of this truth is in an anxious position when he finds himself one of a thousand industrious builders busily bent upon adding straw upon straw to the back of one special subject.

It were a thousand pities if, for want of moderation, Alpines should go the way Sweet Peas are possibly doomed to go—the way of all over-ridden enthusiasms. Extravagant attention is no new menace to the welfare of that we set out to admire and to cherish, and it were pity of pities if, for lack of seemly restraint, the shy and lovely denizens of the Alps should arrive at that place in our intimacy where they will no longer be generally

regarded with thoughtful respect and intelligent wonder, but will be obliged to retire into the oblivion which so much surrounds those things immediately and continuously under our noses. For, of all plants, they merit to be of our abiding treasures.

But just because we have come to the opinion that Alpines stand in need of less "bush," it does not necessarily follow that we must be sparing of our attention. There is ample occasion for an extension of honest, balanced intimacy. What we have to fear is an irrational freak-enthusiasm similar to the seventeenth-century craze for Tulips—a craze of which La Bruyère so trenchantly speaks in referring to an acquaintance who was swept off his feet by the monstrous prevailing wave. "God and Nature," he says, "are not in his thoughts, for they do not go beyond the bulb of his tulip, which he would not sell for a thousand pounds, though he will give it you for nothing when tulips are no longer in fashion, and carnations are all the rage. This rational being, who has a soul and professes some religion, comes home tired and half starved, but very pleased with his day's work. He has seen some tulips." Now this was enthusiasm of a degree

6 FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

and kind which could not possibly endure ; reaction was bound to come. Of course, it was an extreme instance of fashion run mad, and one of which Alpines may never perhaps provoke a repetition. Yet we shall do well to see a warning in it.

I think I hear enthusiastic lovers of Alpines protesting that there is no fear whatever of such an eventuality for their gems, because these latter are above all praises and attentions and cannot be overrated. I fancy I hear the enthusiasts explaining that Alpines are not Sweet Peas, or Tulips, or double Show Dahlias ; that they occupy a place apart, a place such as is occupied by the hot-house and greenhouse Orchids, a place unique and unassailable. And these protestations may quite possibly prove correct ; I only say that, in view of precedents, there lurks a tendency towards the danger named, and that it therefore behoves all those who have the solid welfare of these plants at heart to be on their guard, to discourage mere empty attentions, and to do what is possible to direct enthusiasm into sound, intelligent channels. “ An ignorant worship is a poor substitute for a just appreciation.” Aye, but it is often more than this ; it is often a dangerous one.

Already the admiration and attention meted out

to Alpines is being spoken of as a fashion, a rage, and a craze; and we know that there is no smoke without fire. Certainly, the same language has been used towards the enthusiasm shown for Orchids. But Orchids have nought to fear from that degree of popularisation which impinges upon vulgarisation. The prices they command and the expense attendant upon their culture afford them important protection—a protection which Alpines do not possess to anything like the same extent.

Of course, the fate in store for Alpines in England is not of so inevitable a nature as that awaiting Japanese gardening; for in this latter "craze" there is an element scarcely present in Alpine gardening. We can more or less fathom the spirit of Alpine gardening and are therefore quite able to construct something that shall be more or less intelligent and true; but can we say as much for ourselves with regard to Japanese gardening? I think not. I think that largely it is, and must remain, a sealed book to us. Japanese gardening, as Miss Du Cane very truly points out in her Preface to "The Flowers and Gardens of Japan," is "the most complicated form of gardening in the world." Who in England will master the "seven schools" and absorb all the philosophy

8 FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

and subtle doctrine which governs them? Who in England will bring himself to see a rock, a pool, a bush as the Japanese gardener sees them, as, indeed, the Japanese people in general see them? The spirit of Japanese gardening is as fundamentally different from the spirit of English gardening as that of Japanese art is from English art. What poor, spiritless results we have when English art assumes the guise of Japanese art! It is imitation limping leagues behind its model. And it is this because it is unthought, unfelt, unrealized.

Strikingly individual, the Japanese outlook is much more impersonal than is ours. Needs must that we be born into the traditions of such a race to comprehend and feel as it does about Nature. A Japanese must have his rocks, streams, trees proportioned to his tea or dwelling house and bearing mystic religious significance. Such particular strictness is the product of ages of upbringing. A few years, a generation or two could not produce in us the reasoned nicety of this phase of appreciation; still less the reading of some book or the visit to some garden built by Japanese hands. The spirit of a race is of far longer weaving; one summer does not make a butterfly;

LAC CHAMPEX in cloud-land at the end of
May; *CALTHA PALUSTRIS* and
PRIMULA FARINOSA by the water
edge.



" . . . think of all

The suns that go to make one speedwell blue."

To us a tiny chalet is quite well placed amid stupendous cliffs and huge, tumbled boulders, and is fit example to follow, if only we are able to do so. In Alpine gardening we feel no need to study the size of our rocks in relation to our summer-house, or place them so that they express some high philosophic or mystic principle. We have no cult beyond Nature's own cult in this matter. We see, and we are content to see, that Nature has no nice plan and yet is invariably admirable; we see, and we are content to see, that if man, as in Switzerland, chooses to plant his insignificant dwelling in the midst of great, disorderly rocks and crowded acres of brilliant blossoms, it is romantic garden enough and worthy of as close imitation as possible.

With the Japanese, gardening is perhaps more a deeply æsthetic culture than it is the culture of plants. Where we are bald, unemotional, "scientific" gardeners, they will soar high into the clouds of philosophic mysticism. Truer children of the Cosmos than we Western materialists, they walk in their gardens as in some religious rite. We, too, no doubt, are often dreamers; we, too, are often

10 FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

wont to find in our gardens expression for our searching inner-consciousness ; but how different are our methods, how different the spirit we wish to express.

The most, therefore, we can accomplish in Japanese modes of gardening is to ape them ; and of this, because of its emptiness, we shall very soon tire. The things which are most enduring are the things honestly felt and thought ; for the expression of the true self reaches out nearest to satisfaction. Unless, then, we are apes in more than ancestry, Japanese gardening can have no long life among us. Alpine gardening is far more akin to our natural or hereditary instincts ; it holds for us the possibility of an easier and more honest appreciation. And it is just here, in this very fact, where lies much of the danger which may overtake and smother the immense and growing enthusiasm with which Alpines are meeting.

How best, then, to direct and build up this enthusiasm into something substantial, something that shall secure for Alpines a lasting place in our affections ? The answer is in another question : What better than a larger, more comprehensive appeal to Alpine nature ; what better than a more

thorough translation of Alpine circumstance to our grounds and gardens?

Now, to this end we must look around us in the Alps to find that element in plant-life which we have hitherto neglected; and if we do this, our eyes must undoubtedly alight upon the fields. Hitherto these have been a greatly neglected quantity with us when planning our Alpine gardens, and their possibilities have been almost entirely overlooked in respect of our home-lands. Why should we not make more pronounced attempts to create such meadows, either as befitting adjuncts to our rockworks or as embellishments to our parks? I venture to think that such an extension and direction of our enthusiasm would add much sterling popularity to that already acquired by Alpines in our midst, besides doing far greater justice to many of their number. I venture to think, also, that it would add much to the joy and health of home-life. These thoughts, therefore, shall be developed and examined as we push forward with this volume, first of all making a careful study of the fields on the spot, and marking their "moods and tenses."

CHAPTER II

ALPINE FLOWER-FIELDS

“If you go to the open field, you shall always be in contact directly with the Nature. You hear how sweetly those innocent birds are singing. You see how beautifully those meadow-flowers are blossoming. . . . Everything you are observing there is pure and sacred. And you yourselves are unconsciously converted into purity by the Nature.”—YOSHIO MARKINO, *My Idealized John Bull*.

ALPINE FLOWER-FIELDS ; it is well that we should at once come to some understanding as to the term “Alpine” and what it is here intended to convey, otherwise it will be open to misinterpretation. Purists in the use of words will be nearer to our present meaning than they who have in mind the modern and general acceptance of the words “Alp” and “Alpine.” The authority of custom has confirmed these words in what, really, is faulty usage. “Alp” really means a mountain pasturage, and its original use, traceable for more than a thousand years, relates to any part of a mountain where the cattle can graze. It does

not mean merely the snow-clad summit of some important mountain. Nor does "Alpine" mean that region of a mountain which is above the tree-limit.

Strictly, then, Alpine circumstance is circumstance surrounding the mountain pasturages, whether these latter be known popularly as Alpine or as sub-Alpine. To the popular mind—to-day to a great extent amongst even the Swiss themselves—Alpine heights at once suggest what Mr. E. F. Benson calls "white altitudes"; but that should not be the suggestion conveyed here. For present purposes it should be clearly understood that the term "Alpine pastures" is used in its old, embracive sense, and that sub-Alpine pastures are included and, indeed, predominate.

Of course, we may be obliged to bow occasionally to a custom that has so obliterated original meanings, or we shall risk becoming unintelligible; we may from time to time be obliged to use the word "sub-Alpine" for the lower sphere in Alpine circumstance (although, really and truly, the word should suggest circumstance removed from off the Alps—circumstance purely and simply of the plains). We shall therefore do well to accept the definition of "sub-Alpine" given by

Dr. Percy Groom in the "General Introduction to Ball's Alpine Guide,"—"the region of coniferous trees." Yet, at the same time, it must be clearly understood that our use of the term "Alpine" embraces this sub-Alpine region.

It is absolutely necessary to start with this understanding, because, in talking here—or, for that matter, anywhere—of Alpine plants we shall be talking much of sub-Alpine plants. After all, our own gardens warrant this. Our Alpine rockeries are, in point of fact, very largely sub-Alpine with regard to the plants which find a place upon them. As laid down in the present writer's "Alpine Flowers and Gardens," it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw any definite line, even for the strictest of Alpine rock-gardening, between Alpines and sub-Alpines. The list would indeed be shorn and abbreviated which would exclude all subjects not found solely above the pine-limit. A ban would have to be placed upon the best of the Gentians, the two *Astrantias*, the *Paradise* and the *Martagon Lily*, to mention nothing of *Campanulas*, *Pinks*, *Geraniums*, *Phyteumas*, *Saxifrages*, *Hieraciums*, and a whole host of other precious and distinctive blossoms. It would never do; our rockworks would be robbed of their best

and brightest. Therefore, because there is much that is Alpine in sub-Alpine vegetation (just as there is much that is sub-Alpine in Alpine vegetation) we must, at any rate for the purposes of this volume, adhere to the etymology of the word "Alpine," and give the name without a murmur to the middle and lower mountain-fields, in precisely the same spirit in which we give the name to our mixed rockworks in England.

No need for us to travel higher than from 4,000 to 5,000 feet (and we may reasonably descend to some 3,000 or 2,500 feet). No need whatever to scramble to the high summer pastures on peak and col (6,000 to 7,000 feet), where abound "Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost"; where, around a pile of stones or *signal*, solitary Swallow-tail butterflies love to disport themselves; where the sturdy cowherd invokes in song his patron-saint, St. Wendelin; and where the pensive cattle browse and chew the cud for a brief and ideal spell. No need to seek, for instance, the rapid pastures around the summit of Mount Cray, or on the steep col between the Gummfluh and the Rubly, if we are at Château d'Oex; or to toil to the Col de Balme or to the "look-out" on the Arpille, if we are at the Col

de la Forclaz ; or to scale the Pas d'Ensel or the Col de Coux, if we are at Champéry ; or to clamber to the Croix de Javernaz, if we are at Les Plans ; or to follow the hot way up to the Col de la Gueulaz, if we are at Finhaut ; or to take train to the grazing-grounds on the summit of the Rochers de Naye, if we are at Caux or at Les Avants. We shall find all we desire—as at Randa, Zermatt, Binn, Bérisal, or Evolena—within a saunter of the hotels. Such fields as are above are, for the far greater part, used solely for grazing, and we must stay where most are reserved for hay. Here we shall find the particular flora we require, and shall be able to study it without let or hindrance from “the tooth of the goat” and cow. The only hindrance will be when those strict utilitarians, the haymakers, appear and change our colour-full Eden into a green and park-like domain, with here and there a neglected corner to remind us of what a rich prospect was ours—

“Till the shining scythes went far and wide
And cut it down to dry.”

Thus, we are to remain in a region comfortably accessible to the average easy-going visitor to the

TROLLIUS EUROPAEUS, the Globe Flower,
on the cloud-swept fields in early June.



Alps—the region in which so well-found a place as Lac Champex is situated.

And what a wondrous region it is, this which is of sufficient altitude for Nature to be thrown right out of what, in the plains, is her normal habit ; where the Cherry-tree, if planted, blooms only about the middle of June ; where the Eglantine is in full splendour in the middle of July and can be gathered well into August ; where the black-bird is still piping at the end of July ; where the wild Laburnum is in blossom in August ; and where quantities of ripe fruit of the wild Currant, Raspberry, and Strawberry may be picked in September.

And Champex, too, what a favoured and beautiful place ! I have chosen this particular spot as the “ base of operations,” because of its variety in physical aspect, and, consequently, its variety in flowers. This plan I have deemed of more use than to wander from place to place, and I think that, on the whole, it will be fair to the Swiss Alpine field-flora. We can take note from time to time of what is not to be found here ; for, of course, Champex does not possess all the varieties of Alpine field-flowers. *Lilium croceum*, *Anemone alpina*, *Narcissus poeticus*, and the Daffodil are,

for instance, notable absentees. The soil is granitic rather than calcareous. Yet, taking all in all, the flora is wonderfully representative ; and it certainly is exceptionally rich.

Situated upon what is really a broad, roomy col between the Catogne and that extreme western portion of the Mont Blanc *massif* containing the Aiguille du Tour and the Pointe d'Orny, Champex, with its sparkling lake and cluster of hotels and châteaux, dominates to the south the valleys of Ferret and Entremont, and to the north the valley of the Dranse, thus offering rich, well-watered pasture-slopes of varied aspect and capacity. Whether it be upon the undulating pastures falling away to the Gorges du Durnand, or upon the steeper fields leading down to Praz-de-Fort and Orsières, 1,000 and 2,000 feet below ; or whether it be upon the luxuriant, marshy meadows immediately around the lake, or upon the slightly higher, juicy grass-land of the wild and picturesque Val d'Arpette, there is an ever-changing and gorgeous luxury of colour which must be seen to be believed. "The world's a-flower," and a-flower without one single trace of sameness. Whichever way we walk, whichever way we gaze, the eye meets with some fresh combination of

tints, some new and arresting congregation of field-flowers.

It is too much, perhaps, to say of any place that it is

“The only point where human bliss stands still,
And tastes the good without the fall to ill.”

But if such eulogy ever were permissible it would be so of Champex and her flower-strewn fields and slopes in May and June and early in July. In any case, we may unquestionably allow ourselves to quote further of Pope's lines and say that, amid these fields, if anywhere, we are able to

“Grasp the whole world of reason, life, and sense,
In one close system of benevolence.”

Like Elizabeth of “German Garden” fame, we English love, and justly love, our “world of dandelions and delights.” We find our meadows transcend all others, and, in them—still like Elizabeth—we “forget the very existence of everything but . . . the glad blowing of the wind across the joyous fields.” But in this pride there is room, I feel sure, for welcome revelation. I can imagine few things that would more increase delight in a person familiar only with English meadows than to be suddenly set down among the fields of the

Alps in either May, or June, or early July. What would he, or she, then feel about "the glad blowing of the wind across the joyous fields"? It would surely entail a very lively state of ecstasy.

And if only we had at home these grass-lands of Champex! Such hayfields in England would create a furore. Hourly excursions would be run to where they might be found. Lovers of the beautiful would be amazed, then overjoyed, and lost in admiration. Farmers, too, would likewise be amazed—then look askance and rave about "bad farming." Undoubtedly there would be a war of interests. Upon which side would be the greater righteousness, it is not easy to decide; but presently we shall have occasion to look into the matter more closely. In the meantime, no particular daring is required to predict that, if these meadows came to our parks and gardens, they would come to stay.

CHAPTER III

THE MAY FIELDS

“This is the hour, the day,
The time, the season sweet.
Quick ! hasten, laggard feet,
Brook not delay ;

. . . Maytide will not last ;
Forth, forth, while yet 'tis time, before the
Spring is past.”

LEWIS MORRIS, *Time to Rejoice.*

It is essential that we arrive amid the Alpine fields in May ; for we must watch them from the very beginning. To postpone our coming until June would be to miss what is amongst the primest of Alpine experiences : the awakening of the earlier gems in their shy yet trustful legions. Indeed, in June in any ordinary year, we should risk finding several lovely plants gone entirely out of bloom, except perhaps quite sparsely in some belated snow-clogged corner ; for, be it

remembered, we shall not be climbing higher than this region: we do not propose to pursue Flora as she ascends to the topmost pasture. As for following the very general rule and coming only in late July, it is quite out of the question. We must come in May; and it should be towards the middle of the month—although the exact date will, of course, be governed by the advanced or retarded state of the season. Speaking generally, however, the 15th is usually neither too early nor too late. It is wiser to be a day or so too early than otherwise, because at this altitude it is remarkable how soon Nature is wide awake when once she has opened her eyes. The earliest floral effects are of the most fleeting in the Alps; and, like most things fleeting in this changeful world, they are of the most lovely. To some it may appear laughable to say that one day is of vast importance; but it is only the truth. Down on the plains things are positively sluggish by comparison (though an artist, wishing to paint them at their best, knows only too well how rapid even are these). As in Greenland, up here, at 4,800 feet, vegetation adapts itself in all practical earnest to the exigencies of shortened seasons. June's glories are quick in passing; so, alas, are July's;

but the glories of May, having usually but a brief portion of the month in which to develop, pass, as it were, at breathless speed.

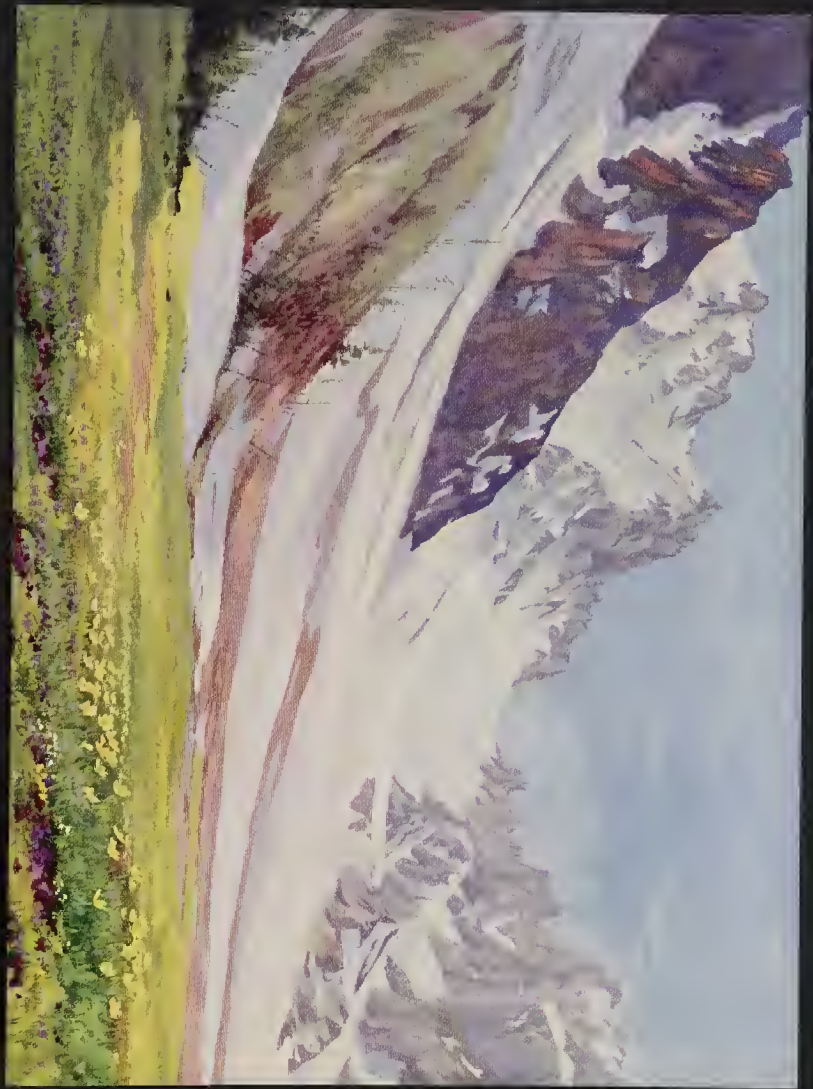
Yes, if ever there is a nervous energy of nature, it is in May in Alpine regions; and it behoves us to be equally quick and timely. For instance, this year (1910) I was struck by the fact that, two weeks after the last vestige of an avalanche had cleared from off a steep slope at the foot of the Breyaz, three or four cows belonging to the hotels were grazing contentedly on rich green grass, and the Crocus and Soldanella had already bloomed and disappeared.

When we quit the plains their face is well set towards June. Spring's early timidity and delicacy are past; the Primrose, Scilla, Hepatica, Violet, and Wood-Anemone have retired into a diligent obscurity and the fields are already gay with the Orchids and the Globe-Flower. But up here at Champex we find ourselves back with the Crocus, springing fresh and glistening from the brown, snow-soaked sward, and with the as yet scarcely awakened Cowslip. As we climb up from Martigny the slopes grow more and more wintry-looking, and we may perhaps begin to regret leaving the wealth of blushing apple-blossom which dominates

the azure-blue fields of *Myosotis* below the Gorges du Durnand. And this regret will probably become more keen when we plunge into the forests just below Champex and find them still choked with snow and ice. But we are soon and amply repaid for what at first seems a mad ostracism on our part. One or two brief days, full of intense interest in watching Alpine nature's unfolding, and all regrets have vanished, and we have quite decided that these May fields are a Paradise wherein, in Meredith's words, "of all the world you might imagine gods to sit."

The Crocus is not for long alone in making effective display. The Soldanella soon joins it after a few hours of warm sunshine; in fact, in many favoured corners it is already out when we arrive. And *Geum montanum* is no laggard; neither are the two Gentians, *verna* and *excisa*, nor the yellow-and-white Box-leaved Polygala. By the time the 20th of the month has come the pastures are thickly sown with pristine loveliness, and by the 25th this is at the height of perfection—a height to which nothing in paint or in ink can attain. Flora has touched the fields with her fairy wand and they have responded with amazing alacrity. Turn which way we will, the landscape

ANEMONE SULPHUREA and *VIOLA*
CALCARATA in the Val d'Arpette in
June.



is suffused with the freshest of yellow, rose, and blue; and broad, surprising acres of these bewitching hues lie at our very door, coming, as it were,

“In our winter’s heart to build a tower of song.”

Our “laundered bosoms” swell with hymns of praise; the plains have receded into Memory’s darker recesses, and we vote these Alpine meadows to a permanent and foremost place in our affections—so much so, indeed, that, with Théophile Gautier, we unhesitatingly declare (though not, be it said, with quite all the musical exaggeration of his poet spirit):

“Mais, moi, je les préfère aux champs gras et fertiles
Qui sont si loin du ciel qu’on n’y voit jamais Dieu.”

We know, of course, Divinity is not absent on the plains. When the poet says otherwise it is a tuneful licence with which we are merely tolerant. We quite understand that there is a more moderate meaning behind his extravagance. We know, and everybody acquainted with Alpine circumstance knows, that in the Alps there is a very strong and striking sense of the nearer presence of the Divine in nature. There is a superior and indescribable purity, together with a refinement and

restraint which defies what is the utmost prodigality of colour; and, much as we love the divinity of things in the plains, the divinity of those of high altitudes must take a foremost position in our esteem and joy.

Mr. A. F. Mummery has a fine passage touching this subject—a passage that may well be quoted here, for it sums up in admirable fashion all that we ourselves are feeling. “Every step,” he says, “is health, fun, and frolic. The troubles and cares of life, together with the essential vulgarity of a plutocratic society, are left far below—foul miasmas that cling to the lowest bottoms of reeking valleys. Above, in the clear air and searching sunlight, we are afoot with the quiet gods, and men can know each other and themselves for what they are.” “The quiet gods”—yes, indeed! Here, if anywhere, in May and June, is quietness; here at this season these hosts of lovely flowers are indeed “born to blush unseen” and, in Man’s arrogant phrase, to “waste their sweetness on the desert air.”

But what nonsense it is, this assumption that the flowers are wasted if not seen by us! It is not for that reason we should be here: it is not because the flowers would benefit one iota by

our presence. What is it to them whether they have, or have not been seen by Man? "We are what suns and winds and waters make us," they say; and, in saying thus, they speak but the substantial truth. Their history is one of strenuous self-endeavour; their unique and dazzling loveliness they have attained "alone," oblivious of Man's presence in the world. After age-long effort, from which their remarkable happiness and beauty are the primest distillations, Man stumbles upon them in their radiance, declares they are languishing for want of his admiration, and at once commiserates with them upon their lone and wasted lot. What fond presumption! How typically human!

Is there not proof abundant of Nature's "profuse indifference to mankind?" Why, then, should Man assume that all things are made for him? why, in his small, lordly way, should he say—as he is for ever saying—"The sun, the moon, the stars, have their *raison d'être* in Me?" In a sense he is right, but not in the arrogant sense he so much presumes. All things help to make him. The sun, moon, and stars are for him, inasmuch as he would not be what he is—he would not, probably, be Man—did they not exist. But neither, then,

would the black-beetle be as it is. Do not let him forget the high claims of the black-beetle.

“Man stands so large before the eyes of man
 He cannot think of Earth but as his own ;
 All his philosophies can guess no plan
 That leaves *him* not on his imagined throne.”

Let us be humble: let us merge ourselves modestly in the scheme of things. It is not to cheer up the flowers in their “loneliness” that we ought to be with them here in the spring. We ought to be here because of all that the flowers and their loveliness can do for *us*, in lifting us above “the essential vulgarity of a plutocratic society,” and in revealing us to ourselves and to each other as rarely we are revealed elsewhere. Here with these pastures are health and vigour—vigour that is quiet and restful; here is unpretentiousness more radiant, more glorious, than the most dazzling of pretensions. Here, if we will, we can come and be natural—here, where Man, that “feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances,” as Mr. Bernard Shaw calls him, can be in the fullest sense a man, and be in no wise ashamed of it. For here, in a word, is Nature—unaffected, unconventional, unconscious of herself, yet in the highest degree efficient. The purity of

it all is wonderful. And it is this, with its beneficent power, that *we* waste.

If spring is reckoned pure below, among "the foul miasmas that cling to the lowest bottoms of reeking valleys," how much purer must it not be reckoned under Alpine skies! The amelioration is already marked after we have risen a few hundred feet from the plains. Our minds climb with our bodies, both attuning themselves to the increasing purity of our surroundings, until at some 5,000 feet we feel, to use a homely expression, as different as chalk from cheese. And nothing aids more potently in this attunement than do the fields of springtime blossoms.

"Why bloom'st thou so?" asks the poet of these flowers—

"Why bloom'st thou so
In solitary loveliness, more fair
In this thy artless beauty, than the rare
And costliest garden-plant?"

The question has been answered, or, at any rate, answered in important part, and far more truthfully than by any blind, patronising remark about "wasted beauty." Wasted! It is an accusation which the flowers should hurl at us! Wasted? Yes; wasted, in so far as we do not yet take

advantage of the Alpine spring; wasted, in so far as we arrive only in late July or early August!

Nor should our praise be counted amongst surprises. Champex's fields bear witness to it being no mere idle adulation. On the flat damp grass-land, intersected by sparkling glacier streams, which stretches away to the north of the lake, great and brilliant groups of *Caltha palustris* (only the common Marsh-Marigold, it is true, but of how much more luscious, brilliant hue than down upon some lowland marsh) lie upon a vast rosy carpet of *Primula farinosa*, effectively broken here and there by the rich purple tints of *Bartsia alpina* and the ruddier hues of *Pedicularis*. And this wondrous wealth of yellow and rose is found again on the extensive sunny slopes to the south of the lake; but here *Gentiana verna* asserts its bright blue presence amongst the *Primula*, and the effect is even more astonishingly gay than it is to the north. Like Count Smorltork's "poltics," it "surprises by himself."

On these southern slopes, too, are quantities of Micheli's Daisy, enlivening still more with their glistening whiteness the beautiful colour-scheme. There are also colonies of the two *Pinguiculas*,

mauve and creamy-white; also of the quaint Alpine Crowfoot and of the yet more quaint, æsthetically tinted *Ajuga pyramidalis*—the most arresting of the Bugles—and of the demure little Alpine Polygala, varying from blue (the type) through mauve to reddish-pink, even to white. Here, also, is the Sulphur Anemone just unfolding the earliest of its clear citron-coloured blossoms. But to see this Anemone to fullest advantage we must turn to the drier pastures to the east and north of the lake, where it is scattered in endless thousands amongst sheets of *Gentiana verna* and *excisa* and a profusion of the yellow Pedicularis (*tuberosa*), the white Potentilla (*rupestris*), the golden Geum (*montanum*), the purple Calamintha (*alpina*), the canary-yellow Biscutella (*lævigata*), the rosy-red Saponaria (*ocymoides*), and many another of the earlier pasture-flowers. And by the side of all this ravishing young life and colour are the still remaining avalanches of piled-up frozen snow—grim reminders of what wild riot winter makes upon these pastures whilst the flowers are sleeping.

Surely, then our praise is not surprising? Surely, nowhere in the Alps in May shall we find anything more admirable or more amazingly colour-full than

are these pasture-slopes and meadows of Lac Champex? In some one or other respect their equal may be found in many favoured places; in many spots we shall find most astonishing displays of other kinds of plants than we have here—of, for instance, the white *Anemone alpina* and the purple *Viola calcarata*, as on the slopes of the Chamossaire above Villars-sur-Ollon (though the *Viola* is in quantity near Champex, in the Val d'Arpette, in June), or of the Pheasant-eye Narcissus, as at Les Avants and Château d'Oex, and the Daffodil, as at Champéry and Saas; but, taking Champex's floral wealth as a whole, it can have few, if any superiors in point of abundance and colour at this early season. Mindful of what Mr. Reginald Farrer has said of Mont Cenis towards the end of June, we may safely declare that the *Viola* and *Gentian* clothed slopes of that district are not the only slopes in the Alps which might be "visible for miles away."

Perhaps some more substantial idea of these fields at this season may be gathered from the pictures facing pages iii and 3; but these transcriptions, though to the uninitiated they may appear reckless with regard to truth, are really far from adequate. Seeing the thing itself must,

EARLY JUNE FIELDS beyond Praz de Fort
in the Val Ferret, backed by the Groupe
du Grand Saint-Bernard et du Grand
Golliaz.



W. H. Russell

in this case, alone bring entire belief and understanding. "Colour, the soul's bridegroom," is so abounding, so fresh, light, joyful, and enslaving, that, after all has been said and done to picture it, one sits listless, dejected and despairing over one's tame and lifeless efforts; one feels that it must be left to speak for itself in its own frank, dreamland language—language at once both elusive and comprehensible. The soul of things is possessed of an eloquent and secret code which is every whit its own; and the soul of these fields is no exception. In spite of Wordsworth, there is, and there must be, "need of a remoter charm"; there is, and there must be, an "interest unborrowed from the eye"; and it is just this vague, appealing "something"—this "something" so real as to transcend what is known as reality—which speaks to us and invades us in the bright and intimate presence of these hosts of Alpine flowers.

In rural parts of England spring is said to have come when a maiden's foot can cover seven daisies at once on the village green. Why, when spring had come here, on these Alpine meadows, I was putting my foot (albeit of goodlier proportions than a maiden's) upon at least a score

of Gentians! Whilst painting the study of Sulphur Anemones (facing page 96) about May 20, my feet, camp-stool, and easel were perforce crushing dozens of lovely flowers—flowers which in England would have been fenced about with every sort of reverence. But sacrifice is the *mot d'ordre* of a live and useful world; worship at any shrine is accompanied by some “hard dealing”; and, sadly as it went against the grain, there was no gentler way in which I could effect my purpose.

Looking at the close-set masses of blossom, it is difficult to realise into what these slopes and fields will develop later on. There seems no room for a crop of hayfield grass. Amid this neat and packed abundance there seems no possible footing for a wealth of greater luxuriance. And yet, in a few weeks' time, these fields will have so changed as to be scarcely recognisable. What we see at present, despite its ubiquity, is but a moiety of all they can produce. June and July will border upon a plethora of wonders, though they will not perhaps be rivals to the exquisite charm of May.

CHAPTER IV

THE VERNAL GENTIAN

“Divin être d’azur au cœur pur qui scintille,
Vis tranquille et joyeux sur le riant coteau,
Car partout, fleur du ciel, où ta couronne brille
Elle enfante la joie et luit comme un flambeau.”

HENRY CORREVON.

Do you ask what the Alps would be without the Edelweiss? Ask, rather, what they would be without the little Vernal Gentian! Ask what would be the slopes and fields of Alpine Switzerland without this flower of heaven-reflected blue, rather than what the rocks and scree and uncouth places would be without *Leontopodium alpinum* of bloated and untruthful reputation. Ask what Alpland’s springtide welcome and autumnal salutation would be if shorn of this little plant’s bright azure spontaneity; ask where would be spring’s eager joyfulness, and where the ready hopefulness of autumn. Ask yourself this,

and then the Edelweiss at once falls back into a more becoming perspective with the landscape, into a less faulty pose among the other mountain flowers.

Perhaps it is not very venturesome to think that if the Edelweiss had become extinct, and were now to be found only amid the fastnesses of legend, it would live quite as securely in the hearts of men as it does at present ; for its repute rests mostly upon the fabulous. But how different is the case of the earliest of the Gentians ! Here is a plant which, despite the romance-breeding nature of its habit, form, and colour, draws little or nothing from legendary sources. Fable has small command where merit is so marked ; imagination is outstripped by reality, and there is scarcely room for invention where truth is so arresting, so pronounced.

Gentiana verna flies no false colours. Its flower *is* a flower, and not for the greater part an assemblage of hoary-haired leaves. It inspires in men no performance of mad gymnastics on the precipice's brink and brow ; it wears, therefore, no halo of unnecessary human sacrifice. It is not a tender token of attachment among lovers. It does not live in myth, nor has it an important

place in folk-lore. In short, it is just its own bright, fascinating self; there is nothing of blatant notoriety about its renown, no suspicion of a *succès de scandale* such as the Edelweiss can so justly claim.

We may laud the Edelweiss as a symbol of advanced endeavour, but the Gentian is more useful, if not, indeed, worthier, in this respect; for it marks no great extreme and therefore its condition is symbolic of less that is incompatible with consistent human effort. Ruskin has somewhere said that the most glorious repose is that of the chamois panting on its bed of granite, rather than that of the ox chewing the cud in its stall; but, however transcendently true this may be, the actually glorious position lies midway betwixt the two—the position of the Gentian in relation with, for instance, the positions of the Edelweiss and the Primrose. We are likely to derive inspiration of more abundant practical value from the Gentian than from the Edelweiss, because there is comparatively little about it that is extreme. Though advanced in circumstance it is reasonably situated; it leads, therefore, to no such flagrant inconsistency with facts, no such beating of the drum of romance as, apparently, we find

so necessary in the case of *Leontopodium*. The Edelweiss is not all it seems; the Gentian is. "*Il ne suffit pas d'être, il faut paraître*"; and this, certainly, the little Vernal Gentian does. In not one single trait does it belie the high colour of its blossom.

With what curiously different craft do each of these flowers play upon the emotions! With what contrary art does each make its appeal to our regard and adulation! To each we may address Swinburne's stately lines: to each we may, and do exclaim:

". . . with my lips I kneel, and with my heart
I fall about thy feet and worship thee . . ."

Yet this act of adoration, when it affects the Edelweiss, seems far more an act of idolatry than it does when it affects the Gentian. For on the one hand we have the Edelweiss stirring the imagination to wild, foolhardy flights amid the awesome summer haunts of the eagle and the chamois, when, in simple reality, we could if we would be reposing amongst hundreds of its woolly stars upon some gentle pasture-slope away from the least hint of danger and of *scandale*; while on the other hand we have the Vernal Gentian calling us

at once in all frankness to accept it as it is—one of the truest and loveliest marvels of the Alps,

“ . . . the fair earth’s fond expression
Of tenderness for heaven above . . . ”!

To each do we accord, as Mr. Augustine Birrell would say, “ a mass of greedy utterances ” ; to each do we lose our hearts ; but only to one do we lose our heads. And that one is the Edelweiss : the plant of leaves which ape a flower ; the plant whose flower is as inconspicuous as that of our common Sun Spurge ; the plant that would have us forget its abundance on many a pasture, and think of it only as clinging perilously to high-flung cliffs where browse the chamois and where nest the choughs.

The Gentian Family as a whole is possessed of very striking individuality, and for the most part its members arrest more than usual attention. Its name is said to be derived from Gentius, King of Illyria, who is reputed to have first made known its medicinal properties—tonic, emetic, and narcotic. Although it ranges from Behring’s Straits to the Equator and on to the Antipodes, its residence is mainly northern. In New Zealand its chief colour is red ; in Europe blue ; and of all

its blue European representatives none can eclipse perennial *verna's* radiant star.

The Vernal Gentian is no stranger to England, though, as an indigenous plant, it is a stranger to most Englishmen. It is still to be found on wet limestone rocks in Northern England (Teesdale) and also in the north-west of Ireland. Like *Gentiana nivalis* of the small band of Alpine annuals and tiniest of the blue-starred Gentians, it lingers in the British Isles, a rare, pathetic remnant of past salubrity of climate and condition; and to its homes in England and Ireland, rather than in Switzerland, we should perhaps go to study how to grow it in our gardens more successfully than we do at present. But it is to the Alps that we must turn to find it revelling wealthily in a setting for which it is pre-eminently suited; it is there that its

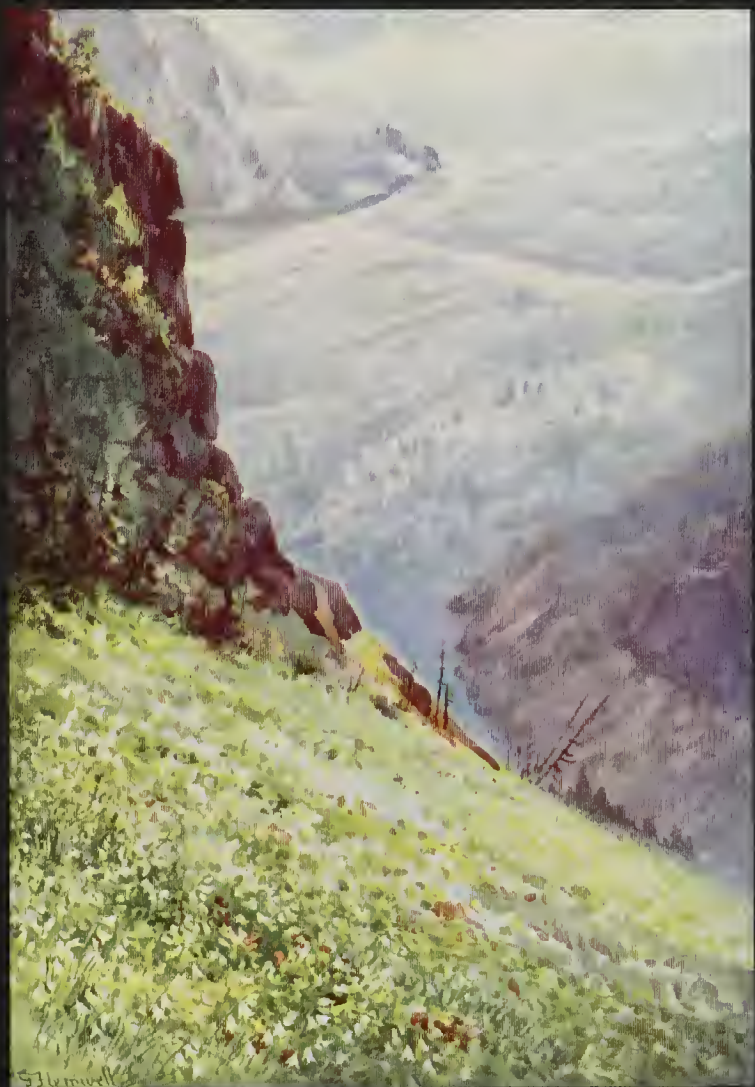
“ . . . living flowers

Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet.”

For, in the Alps, it is an abundant denizen of the pastures in general: both the grazing pastures or “Alps,” and “the artificial modifications of the pastures,” as Mr. Newell Arber calls the meadows.

If we wanted to give this Gentian an English name (and far be it from me to suggest that we

The PARADISE LILY (*Paradisia Liliastrum*)
near the Glacier de Trient about the
middle of June.



S. L. M. W. E. L. L.

should do any such thing) we should probably have to call it Spring-Felwort; Felwort being an old-time title for *Gentiana amarella*, an annual herb common to dry pastures and chalk downs in England, and possibly at one time employed by tanners. In the Jura Mountains *verna* goes by the name of *Œil-de-chat*, and among the peasants inhabiting the northern side of the Dent du Midi, in the Canton de Valais, I have heard it referred to as *Le Bas du Bon Dieu*; but, considering the remarkably suggestive character of the plant, the domain of folk-lore seems curiously empty of its presence. This, possibly, is in part due to its amazing abundance, and to the fact that it is to be found from about 1,200 feet to about 10,000 feet, thus causing it to meet with the proverbial fate of things familiar. But, at any rate, its dried flowers, mixed with those of the Rhododendron and the purple Viola, are used in the form of "tea" by the montagnards as an antidote for chills and rheumatism.

The appearance of *verna* upon the pastures is not confined solely to the early springtime; though this is the season of its greatest wealth, it may be met with quite commonly in the late autumn. Indeed it affects the days which circle round the

whole of winter ; and I have found it several times even at Christmas near Arveyes, above Gryon (Vaud), upon steep southward-facing banks where sun and wind combined to chase away the snow. If, then, for no other reason than this, it seems curious that romance has not gathered this Gentian under its wing as it has the Edelweiss.

As for the radiant purity of its five-pointed azure stars, it is perhaps only outshone by that of the Myosotis-like flowers of *Eritrichium nanum*, King of the Alps ; but even this rivalry is doubtful when *verna* is growing upon a limestone soil, where its blossoms are more brilliant than those produced upon granitic ground.

Blue, however, although it is the superabundant type-colour, is not the invariable hue of its blossoms ; indeed, it shows more variety than even many a botanist suspects, and I have found it in all tints from deep French to pale Cambridge blue, from rich red-purple to the palest lilac, and from the faintest yellow-white, through blush-white, to the purest blue-white. I have, too, found it party-coloured, blue-and-white.

These many variations from the type give occasion for suggestive questions that I fain would indicate, because I believe with Mr. Arber that

such variations can only "arise from deep-seated tendencies, which find their expression in the existence of the individual, and the evolution of the race." For instance, are the mauve and plum-coloured flowers a break-back to the ancestral type; that is to say, was the more primitive *verna* red? Blue flowers are more highly organised than those of other colours; are, then, all flowers striving to be blue—like Emerson's grass, "striving to be man?" The French-blue Gentians are of warmer tint than those of Cambridge hue; are they, therefore, the first decided step into this highest of the primary colours: are they the first strikingly victorious effort of the plant to shake off all trammel of red? And white; what of white? I have seen white *verna* tinged with rose, and white *verna* of a white altogether free from any tint of grossness—a white so positive as to suggest the utmost frailty arising from degeneracy, if it were not known to be the natural consequence of persistent advance through blue. These are nice points for speculation.

But "let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause"! Blue for us is the essential colour for this Gentian: we can dispense with all its efforts to be white. Blue, not white, is the hue of promise.

And it is promise we look for at the turn of the year ; it is promise we must have after long months of snow. When youthful “chevalier Printemps” hymns us his ancient message ; when in penetrating accents of triumph he tells us :

“ C’est moi que Dieu sur terre envoie
 Dans un rayon de son soleil
 Pour mettre la terre en joie,
 Pour faire un monde tout vermeil.
 Quand l’hiver m’a crié ‘qui vive!’
 J’ai dit : ‘Fais-moi place, il est temps!
 Du Paradis tout droit j’arrive :
 Je suis le chevalier Printemps!’ ”

—when, I say, spring thus speaks to us of the rout of winter and the dawn of a wealthier life, it is blue that we look for most upon the frost-stained fields ; blue not white—the blue of the type-flowered Gentian, not the white of the Alpine Crowfoot and Crocus.

Whilst writing these lines on the most fascinating spring flower of the Alps, there comes before my mind one spot in particular where it abounds in May—a certain long and rapid grassy slope at Le Planet, above Argentière (Haute-Savoie). Albeit not in Switzerland, Le Planet is only just across the frontier ; and, as every one who knows

the district will attest, it is difficult to draw a rigid, formal line where flowers and mountains are so knit in common semblance. Other rich scenes of azure I can recall—as on the swelling slopes of the Jura around the Suchet, or on the fields which mount from Naters towards Bel-Alp; but none forces itself to mind with such persistence as does this slope at Le Planet. And it is because the surrounding circumstance illustrates so well all that I have been saying about this Gentian's presence in the spring.

The slope in question is not five minutes' stroll from the hotel. On the plateau itself *verna* is all but absent, but on this broad and steep incline it congregates in such amazing numbers that, as I think on it, I am sure all I have said of this witching flower is poor and paltry. After all, verbal magniloquence is perhaps out of place, and simplicity is the best translator of such magnificence. All shades of brightest blue are here presented; for, excepting a few pale plum-coloured clusters, the brilliant type-flower is ubiquitous, blending delightfully with the little yellow Violet and with the white, fluffy seedheads of the Coltsfoot.

But what, perhaps, makes this particular slope

so appropriate in point of illustration for this chapter is, that above it towers the mighty Aiguille Verte, decked as in winter with its snows and ice, and in the foreground lies the frozen remains of a great avalanche strewn with fallen rocks and pierced by stricken larch-trees.

Yes ; from the lichen, *Umbilicaria virginis*, the furthest outpost of vegetable life as it clings to the Jungfrau's awful rocks at an altitude of 13,000 feet, to the yellow Primrose of the woods and meadows of the plains, there is no plant of Alpland that is so precious, so rare in its very abundance as *Gentiana verna*. Nor is there another Alpine that can make so wide and so certain an appeal. Spread broadcast and alone upon the awakening turf of mountain slope and meadow, it captivates the instant attention of even the merest passer-by. And if amongst its abounding azure there happens, as will often be the case, a vigorous admixture of healthy rose and yellow—the rose of the Mealy or Bird's-eye Primula, the yellow of the Sulphur Anemone and Marsh Marigold—then this were a scene to “make the pomp of emperors ridiculous” ; a scene of subtly true magnificence, of perfectly balanced delight.

See the Vernal Gentian as it lies thus bountifully set, a radiant blue carpet of heavenly intensity, backed majestically by winter's receding snows on mighty glacier and stupendous peak ; note its myriad white-eyed, cœrulean blossoms over which hover with tireless wing its faithful, eager friends, the humming-bird and bee hawk-moths—the very picture of security and peace amid a scene of awful, threatening grandeur. Listen—listen, the while, to the thunder coming from “the vexed paths of the avalanches” ; listen to the sound of falling rock and pine, and mark the great air-tossed cloud of powdered snow ; listen to the alarm-cry of the speckled mountain-jay, and to the shriek-like warning of the marmot ; then tell me if there is any other flower that could so well play the part of hope-inspiring herald to a world as harassed as is that of the Alps in the season that surrounds the winter ?

CHAPTER V

IN STORM AND SHINE

“Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm.”

TENNYSON.

ALTHOUGH Nature is moving apace, and the poet declares he has even “heard the grasses springing underneath the snow”; although one set of flowers is surplanted another in startlingly swift succession, and the first-fruits of the Alpine year are already on the wane, we will take our own time and study this progress with deliberate care and attention. We have seen May smiling; we ought—nay, we are in duty bound—to see her frowning. Like the *récluse* of Walden, we ought each of us to become a “self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rainstorms.”

An undoubtedly noble and proper philosophy assures us that there is truth and beauty in no matter what condition, and that they who see

JUNE MEADOWS of Salvia, Lychnis, &c., in
the Val Ferret, just before arriving at the
village of Praz de Fort.



nothing but what is tiresome or hideous in certain estates, draw the overplus of tiresomeness and hideousness from their own selves. "Beauty is truth, and truth is beauty," says this philosophy; "how, then," it queries, "can any condition be unbeautiful? Is it not yourselves who are in part lacking in a sense of loveliness, since truth can never really be unbeautiful?"

Now, whatever we think of this as a species of sophistry, it behoves us to look into it with quiet and decent care. An everyday world, deep in its old conventions, will declare that it is certainly straining a point to try thus to make all geese appear as swans. With the exception of the poet minded to verse the innate grandeur of gloom, the entire sublimity of storm, the entrancing mellowness of fog and rain, and the wild joy which comes with a blizzard; or perhaps of the painter minded to achieve in paint what the poet is doing in ink (both of them, most probably, contriving their rhapsodies within the snug seclusion of their rooms) —with the exception of these two privileged persons comfortably absorbed in justifying a bias, an everyday world, voting bad weather a kill-joy and mar-plot, will find happiness only in avoiding and forgetting it.

Be that as it may ; be fog, wind, and cloud and driving rain and sleet a luxury in which we should revel—or not ; of all places in the world in bad weather, the Alps at springtide and at the altitude at which we are now studying them, are probably among the most interesting and absorbing. Let an everyday world, or as much of it as can, come and judge for itself.

If in our composition we have a grain of love for Nature and for Nature-study, there is a fund of opportunity for exercising it even in cloudland at its gloomiest ; and if, as in the present case, we are bent upon studying the flowers and the means for their more adequate reception into our English homelands, then bad weather holds for us an amount of experience such as will aid us materially in our object. “ Inclemency ” takes so large a share in the nurture of these flowers. By accompanying with them when steeped in cloud and swept by wind, we catch an important glimpse of the grim and forceful side of their existence which is a prime cause of the superlative loveliness that so impresses us when the sun does shine from out an immaculate azure.

Just as the cheese-mite is a product of the cheese, and has attained its beauty and efficiency because

of the nature of cheese, so are these Alpines the wonderful things they are because of the nature of the conditions with which they have to contend and upon which they have to subsist. It is all very well for us to arrive upon the scene at this late moment in their existence, transplant them to our gardens, and there grow them, maybe, with marked success; it is all very well for us to annex them now to our retinue of chattels, lord it over them, and display them on our rockworks as if it were to us and to our care and trouble that they owe their beauty; but these plants have arrived at what they are without us and our attentions. Our gardens never made them what they are, or gave them one particle of their supreme and striking beauty. Nor are our gardens likely to heighten that beauty in any real way; much more likely is it that we shall arrive at degrading their refinement by bringing it down from the severe purity of the skies to the grosser, easier circumstance of our sheltered soil.

Alpine plants, perhaps because of the extreme conditions with which they have to contend, and therefore because of the extreme measures they have to take in order to defend themselves, seem to be possessed of an efficiency surpassing that

of most other plants. They are what incessant warfare has made of them; they delight in it. Strenuous children of strenuous circumstance, they are self-reliant to a degree, and hold themselves with a winning air of independence. But it is independence begot of strict dependence; they admit as much quite frankly and sanely—an admittal of which man might well make a note in red ink. Nature all over the world is saying, not, "Let me help you to be independent," but, "You shall and must depend upon me for your independence." And no living things have better understood this truth than have the Alpines; no living things have acknowledged and mastered this obligation more thoroughly than they. Hence their beauty; hence their serenity and "nerve"; hence their "blended holiness of earth and sky."

Mark with what consummate efficiency these Alpine field-flowers cope with stern inclemency. Tossed and torn by storms for which the Alps are famous, see how they anchor themselves to Mother Earth! Washed by torrential rains upon the rapid slopes, or parched by the most personal of suns, small wonder that their roots, in many cases, should form by far the greater part of their bulk and stature. They recall to mind that learned

professor who, wishing possibly to postulate something "new," declared to an unconvinced but amused world that what it saw of a tree was not the tree—the tree was underground.

Whilst painting in the Val d'Arpette in June of this year (1910), I met with a striking instance of the boisterous treatment to which these plants must accustom themselves. The day was radiantly fine (as any one may see from the picture facing page 24), yet suddenly, and without warning, a most violent wind tore through the little valley, sweeping everything loose and insecure before it, upsetting my easel and camp-stool, carrying my Panama hat up on to the snow, and making of the Anemones and Violas a truly sorry sight.

This violence, albeit of a somewhat different nature, reminded me of several experiences I had had of uncommonly powerful eddies of wind, travelling, like some waterspout at sea, slowly, in growling, whirring spirals, over the steep pastures, tearing up the grass and blossoms and carrying them straight and high up into the air; whilst all around—except myself!—remained unmoved and peaceful. I have seen such eddies strike a forest, shaking and swaying the giant pines like saplings, wrenching off dead wood and

many a piece of living branch, and whirling them aloft. Under a glorious sky and amid the solitude and stillness of the Alps, such violence is at least uncanny, if not a little unnerving. One is moved to turn in admiration to the ever-smiling Alpines and ejaculate :

“ Brave flowers—that I could gallant it like you,
And be as little vain ! ”

With this as a sample—and a by no means uncommon sample—of what they have to withstand, small wonder that so many of these plants have endowed themselves with such a deep, tenacious grip upon their home ! Try with your trowel to dig up an entire root of, for instance, the Alpine Clover (*Trifolium alpinum*), or the Sulphur Anemone, or the Bearded Campanula, or the tall blue Rampion (*Phyteuma betonicifolium*), or even so diminutive a plant as *Sibbaldia procumbens*, or of so modest a one as *Plantago alpina*, and you will be astounded at the depth to which you must delve. You will find it the same with a hundred other subjects ; and, unless you be digging in some loose and gritty soil, most probably your amazement will end in despair, and in destruction to the plant. More likely than not, you will hack

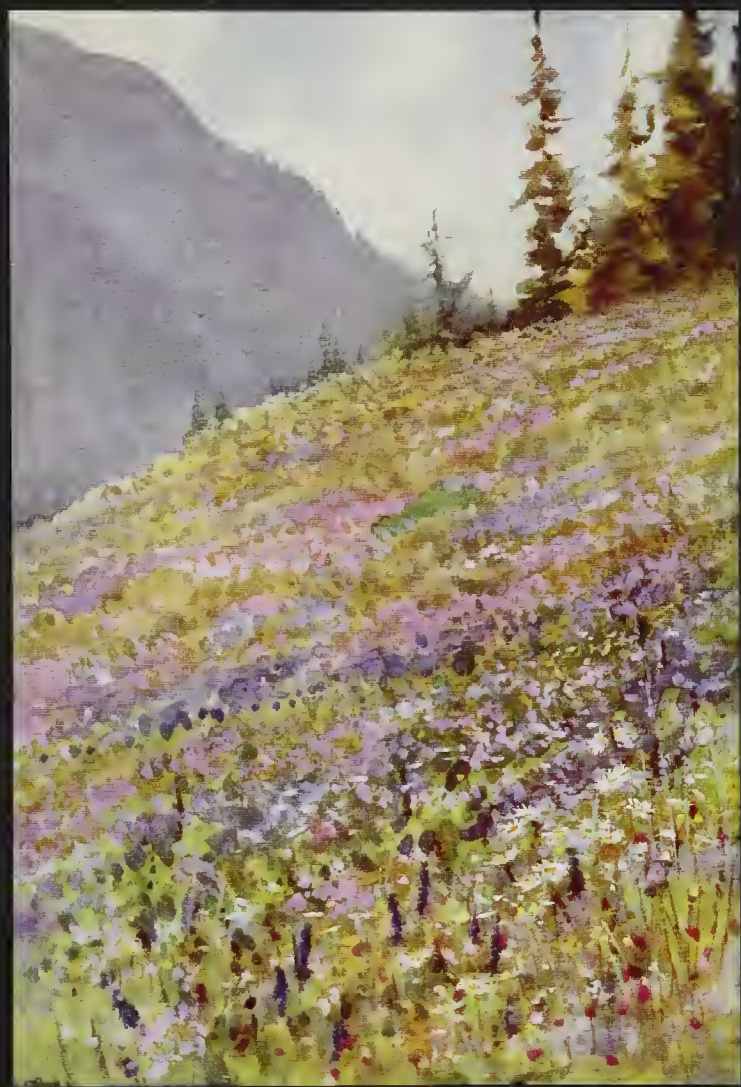
through the main root long before you have unearthed the end of it. If for no other reason than this, then, it is at least unwise to try to uproot these pasture-flowers. Should they be required for the home-garden, it is far wiser and better behaviour to gather seed from them later in the season. Most of them grow admirably from seed thus gathered and *sown as soon as possible*; most of them develop rapidly and blossom within two years; and with this grand advantage over uprooted plants—they are able to acclimatize themselves from birth to their new conditions and surroundings, their translation being no rude and abrupt transition from one climate to another.

In this and in many other directions, it is when bad weather sweeps the Alps that we can perhaps best learn from Nature what Emerson learnt from her: that “she suffers nothing to remain in her Kingdom which cannot help itself.” And, in learning how these plants help themselves, we are also learning how best we can help them when we remove them to our gardens. Bad weather is the greatest of teachers all the world over. On sunny days we enjoy and admire what is very largely the product of the storms.

Everything, even the worst thing, in its place,

is a good thing. As all sunshine and no storm would make man a nonentity, so would it produce Alpines devoid of their present great ability and comeliness. A thing of complete beauty is a thing of all weathers; and it is a thing of present joy, and of joy for ever, because of much anguish in the past. You and I could see nothing of loveliness if it were not for ugliness; and these Alpines would not be worth looking at were it not for the awful attempts made by Nature to overwhelm them. "A perpetual calm will never make a sailor"; or, as Mr. Dooley says, "Foorce rules the wurruld"—and keeps it peacefully disturbed, bewitchingly "alive."

And Alpine inclemency possesses an æsthetic value which is as important as it is alluring. Whether "in the smiles or anger of the high air," these flower-fields are invariably things of beauty; even as the diamond glitters in the gloom, so do these pastures shine throughout the storm. What could be more æsthetically beautiful than the rosy expanses of Mealy Primrose bathed in dense, driving mists, or (as in the picture facing page 16) the regiments of Globe-Flower, standing pale but fascinating, in weather which, were we down on the plains, we should consider "not fit for a dog



to be abroad in" ? Or what more winsome than the widespread colonies of *Bartsia*, Micheli's Daisy, *Pedicularis*, *Biscutella*, and Bell-Gentian (*Gentiana verna*, unfortunately, is closed when the sun hides itself), lying subdued but colour-full beside the steaming waters of the lake ?

Ah ! where one of these Alpine lakes is in the landscape, what wonders of Nature's artistry we may watch when rough winds howl and toss the seething cloud into ever-changing combinations of tint, form, and texture !

“ With how ceaseless motion, with how strange
Flowing and fading, do the high Mists range
The gloomy gorges of the Mountains bare ” !

A hundred hues of grey fill the vapour-laden air and are mirrored in receptive waters—hues with which the fresh rose of the *Primula* and the rich, full yellow of the Marsh-Marigold blend with perfect felicity, lending that touch of human appeal which makes the scene ideal.

The forests, too, are never so picturesque as when clouds cling to the pine and larch, softening the tone and carriage of these somewhat formal trees, and breaking up every suggestion of monotony in their reiterated masses. A soft, weird, intimately mysterious beauty reigns over everything.

What matter the winds and the rains if they bring us such expression? By what is regret justified in all this witchery? Regret that the sun no longer shines, inducing the Vernal Gentian to open wide its bright blue eyes? Nay; here, in Alp-land, if nowhere else, does an ultimate philosophy speak possibly of what is actual; here, if nowhere else, bad weather is but a delightful foil to bright and sunny days. Regret! There is no right room for such repining: no sound and balanced reason to moan, as moans, for instance, the Chinese poet:

“If only to darken the darkness, O Thou in Thy
 heavens above,
 Why dost Thou light for a moment the lamp of
 a beautiful thing?”

For in the Alps the lamp of Beauty burns without cessation; and where wondrous flowering pastures border some rough-cut lake, legacy from glaciers long since retired, the lamp burns always brightly.

By writing of inclemency in such full-flavoured tones, I am not trying to make the best of a bad case; I am simply and honestly setting forth the undoubted good there is in what may seem “impossible.” Any one who has lived with these things and has watched them springtime after springtime,

is usually in no way eager to run away, although well aware that the sheltered distractions of the towns are within quite easy reach. One finds no really compensating counterpart in kursaals and shop-windows for an Alpine springtime where flowering pastures kiss "the crystal treasures of the liquid world." One need not be a poet, one need not be a painter, one need not be a mystic, and one certainly need be no "neurasthenic" to appreciate the figurative sunshine of which spring's Alpine inclemency is redolent. One has but to be natural—a sanely-simple human being, dismissing the hampering prejudices and conventions born of towns, and allowing the appeal of Nature to come freely into its own. Then oneself is busy a-weaving—a-weaving of cobweb dreams; and the cobwebs are woven of material worthy, substantial, and real. One's dreams are not of that solid, sordid order, nor of that frail, unhealthy nature so common with dreams arising from unnatural town-life. They are children of completest sanity, and they are in no part begot of *ennui*. One builds, and one builds for health's sake; nor does the building know aught of "castles in Spain." There is no question here of anæmic fancy. All that one dreams is not only possible, but sound,

touching upon realities which control and direct the best of destinies. Compared with town-life, one is in a new world ; and it is often astounding to think that town-life is a necessity to which one is obliged to add the important word "imperative."

And all this may be so even in wet weather. Here, even when clouds hold everything in damp and clinging embrace, we may

"Grow rich in that which never taketh rust."

And grow rich quite comfortably ; for have we not our mackintoshes and goloshes !

The Alps are not ours for climbing purpose only. They are not for us only when winter rules and gives us sports abounding, or when the snows retire to the cradles of the glaciers, and the days of late July and those of August and September grant us the conditions we most seek for long excursions. They are ours also for an intermediate season : a season of the utmost value, though, maybe, not for "sport." Mr. Frederic Harrison, speaking of "the eternal mountains, vocal with all the most majestic and stirring appeals to the human spirit," and of the treatment of them by those who think only of "rushing from pass to pass and from peak to peak in order to beat

Tompkins time or establish a new record," says : "Switzerland might be made one of the most exquisite schools of every sense of beauty, one of the most pathetic schools of spiritual wonder." And Mr. Harrison is right : this school exists, and is no mere fiction wrought of sentimental thinking. Nor is it ever closed to students—although there be periods when the attendance is lamentably slack. We know that its doors stand wide open in the winter and in the summer ; let it be known, and as well known, that they stand equally wide open in the spring. Let it be known, moreover, that in spite sometimes of fickle, fitful weather, it is in the spring, above all other seasons, that this school is "one of the most exquisite schools of every sense of beauty, one of the most pathetic schools of spiritual wonder."

Then once again,

"The sunlight, leaping from the Heights,
Flames o'er the fields of May,

And butterflies and insect mites,
Born with the new-blown day,
Cross fires in shifting opal lights
From spray to beckoning spray,"

and we are aware that during the brief period of inclemency a very astonishing change has been taking place in our surroundings under cover of the heavy mists. Nature has been speedily busy, robing the fields in garments fit for June. Before the mists closed down upon us a few days ago insect-life was noticeable mostly by its scarcity. Except for the Orange-Tip and Dingy Skipper butterflies, and for the Skipper-like moth, *Euclidia Mi*, flitting among the Saponarias, Daisies, and Geums, and for a dainty milk-white spider on the rosy heads of *Primula farinosa*, there was little of "life" among the flowers. But now the butterflies are legion, a brilliant pea-green spider has joined the white one, and lustrous little beetles—among the most beautiful of Alpine creatures—are either frolicking or basking in the glorious sunshine on the wild Peppermint and other fragrant herbs. As for the flowers themselves, they have more than doubled in kind, if not actually in beauty and in number.

Indeed, there is such transformation in the meadows as makes us rub our eyes and wonder if we have not slept the sleep of Rip van Winkle! The Gentians have all but gone, the Anemone also, and *Primula farinosa* has become most rare.

In their places stand the Globe-Flower, the Bistort, the Paradise Lily (barely open), the Sylvan Geranium, the blue Centaurea, and the pale yellow Biscutella, while the last blossoms of *Anemone sulphurea* have been joined by the exquisite bluish-tinted heads of *Anemone narcissiflora*. It is as though some curtain had rolled swiftly up upon another landscape—one which, as we are but human, we must applaud more rapturously than we did the last. For—

“To-day fresh colours break the soil, and butterflies
take wing

Down brodered lawns all bright with pearls in the
garden of the King.”

And although we still may say we are in dainty
May, more than the toe of our best foot is
already in gorgeous June.

CHAPTER VI

THE JUNE MEADOWS

“The showers are over, the skiffing showers,
Come, let us rise and go
Where the happy mountain flowers,
Children of the young June hours,
In their sweet haunts blow.”

PRINCIPAL SHAIRP.

“ON prête aux riches,” and here is Nature lending yet more wealth to fields that were already so wealthy! It is simply amazing with what doting enthusiasm she pours her floral riches upon the Alps! Many who know only the June fields in England think that we who write of the Swiss fields at this season are either in a chronic state of hysteria, or else do wilfully point our story as if it were a snake story or the story of a tiger-hunt. But, let the fact be known, in writing or speaking upon this subject, the exigencies of the English language oblige us to be temperate; it

In the EARLY JULY FIELDS at Champex.



W. L. Hammett

is quite impossible to exaggerate. We may use all the adjectives in Webster, yet have we not even then said enough. Acutely conscious of our ineffectual effort, we have, nevertheless, done our best. We could say no more : the rest we must feel, and endeavour that our readers shall feel with us.

Maybe it is with us as it was with Robert Louis Stevenson when he was at Davos in search of a remedy for the malady that afterwards drove him to Samoa and to an early grave upon her mountains—maybe all our “little fishes talk like whales” ; but, believe us, whale-talk is the only talk befitting. If Stevenson finds “it is the Alps who are to blame,” we find it is quite as much the fault of the Alpine flora ; and if Stevenson found comfort in the fact that he was not alone in being forced to “this yeasty inflation, this stiff and strutting architecture of the sentence,” so also can we.

We English are not the only ones to find ourselves at the ineffectual extreme of language. The German tourist—and he is nowadays more enterprisingly early than are we in visiting the Alps—is equally at a loss, as he stands in wonderment and, with characteristic emphasis, repeatedly

utters the one resounding word "Kolossal!" Even the Englishman loses his habitual reserve, and, if he does not voice his wonderment as loudly as does his Teutonic brother, he is at least amazed in his own insular way. Assuredly, if these flowers themselves could speak, and speak out frankly, they would declare our seemingly over-coloured appreciation a very tame performance; they would vouch that we are a long way from being in the shoes of the proverbial amateur fisherman.

But let me, without further ado, attempt to describe some of the cause for this. Let me turn again for example to Champex and to notes made on the spot, and speak of a seven-hours' walk down the rapid southern slopes which fall away from the lake, by the village of Prassorny, along the Val Ferret to Praz de Fort and the *massif* of Saleinaz, and back again to Champex by that scramble of a path which mounts the slopes directly from the village of Ville d'Issert. This walk takes us from 4,800 feet down to some 3,300 feet, and affords us as representative a range of slopes and fields as we could find anywhere. Starting amid rolling *hectares* of Orchids and Lilies, passing along wide slopes bestrewn with

Lychnis and Anthericum, winding through copse and forest-edge peopled with Everlasting Pea and Alpine Eglantine, we arrive by entrancing stages amid crowded meadows of Salvia, Bistort, Ranunculus, Campion, Marguerite, Geranium, Campanula, and Phyteuma—meadows which, in long and wide-flung swell, sweep like a multi-coloured wave to lave the snowy sides and graceful, flowing forms of the Groupe du Grand Saint-Bernard and Grand Golliaz.

Used as I am to the glories of the mountain flora, I am moved afresh to wonder each time I come intimately amongst them, and such a walk as I took this day, the 15th of June, is always a revelation. From the very start to the very finish there was a continuous procession of as amazingly rich and variedly coloured fields as, surely, any quarter of the globe would find it difficult to surpass. Sometimes the predominant colour was clear yellow, sometimes rich French blue, and not infrequently, when there was no such distinct predominance, the fields, especially when the sun was at the back of me, were as bewildering as, I imagine, would be fields flashing with a profusion of every known gem. Steep grassy slopes—in places almost perpendicular ; long, hot stretches of

grass-grown grit and rubble ; rich ousy dips and hollows ; undulating acres of wavy, feather-light meadows—all were decked alike in such kaleidoscopic abundance as forced me repeatedly to exclaim : “ Oh that some of this loveliness could be translated as fields to England ! If only England would try ! ”

Here I must beg leave to make a slight digression from the strictness of my subject. At one spot in the steep descent, just outside the tiny hamlet of Prassorny, I came upon a blaze of colour which stood out from all else—a pre-eminently arresting object in the landscape. It was, of all things, our old friend the scarlet Field Poppy ! To come upon this inimitable flower spread in serried numbers over a large square of ground on a steep slope at an altitude of over 4,000 feet, was not a little surprising. Waving its battalions of fiery blossoms against the grey mist-filled valley beneath, with old sun and wind-stained châteaux standing just beside, it was an irresistible *motif* for a painter. Seemingly as much at home as in any field in England, it appeared of even greater brilliance than with us—having, perhaps, caught something of the humour of the Gentian. That this Poppy can

possibly intensify its hue over and above what we know it can achieve in the cornfields of the plains, will seem incredible—another instance of whale-talk on the writer's part! And yet such is certainly the case—as, indeed, it is the case with many another lowland flower whose powers will allow it to climb. These poppies, here on this slope, stood witness for the fact; and so, too, did the other lowland flowers growing with them. There were Cornflowers and Larkspur of a blue more rich and radiant than it is even in the plains; and *Viola tricolor*, too, the Pansy of our own cornfields, was of a purple and yellow more deep than we are accustomed to have it. There was, also, the exquisite *Adonis aestivalis* of most vivid salmon-orange—its dainty blossoms standing like fire-flies against the rich blue masses of *Salvia pratensis*.

Yet this was not a corn-patch (one can scarcely call them corn-fields at this altitude, where they are mere terraces, many of them, like potato-patches, standing almost at an angle of 45°, carved from out the steep mountain-side by generations of thrifty peasants). In all probability, however, this particular terrace with its wealth of corn-field flowers had in quite recent years been sown

70 FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

with oats or rye. Anyway, it were well worth taking note of this Poppy's presence hereabouts, if only because on the slope next door was the Bell-Gentian!

After this "parenthetic enthusiasm" over so homely an intruder, we will hie us back to the more usual denizens of these slopes and fields. Perhaps enough has already been said to show what a poor thing language is when in the presence of such splendours as June spreads before us in the Alps. Very few, if any, of the flowers were growing singly or even sparsely; they were usually in dense bright masses, or close and broad-spread legions, forming an "infinite floral broidery" stretching above, below, in front, and behind as far as eye could reach. What a difficult, almost impossible matter it has been to select for pictorial presentation such sections of this wealthy panorama as shall give some small idea of the whole, will readily be understood. Halting attempts, however, will be found in the pictures facing pages 32 and 48. And to supplement and reinforce these, there is, at the end of this chapter, a short list of the chief grass-land flowers met with during my walk. The rock-plants, and those liking the poorest of soil, though they

certainly add an important quota to the brilliant prospect, have not been taken into account, as they fall somewhat outside our present purpose.

In his poem, "In Praise of June," Leigh Hunt sings:

"May, by coming first in sight,
Half defrauds thee of thy right;
For her best is shared by thee
With a wealthier potency;
So that thou dost bring us in
A sort of May-time masculine."

But this is only in small part true of these Alpine fields. There is, to be sure, something of the May fields in the June fields, but all of May's best is certainly not shared by June—not, that is to say, unless we climb up higher than we intend to do. The Crocus and Soldanella have gone; they came "to show the paths that June must tread," not to tread those paths with the Orchid and the Lily. Gone, also, is the pure yellow-petalled Mountain Geum. The Marsh Marigold, too, is no longer with us in rich, golden crowds; nor does the Mealy Primula spread its rosy carpet over acre upon acre. One

misses, also, the bright white presence of Micheli's Daisy; and the Vernal Gentian, "blue with the beauty of windless skies," though still lingering here and there, is, for the most part, hidden by the Grasses and the Clovers.

Ah! yes, the Clovers—pink, rose-red, crimson, cream, white, yellow: we must not forget these! Of goodly and varied company, they are such important units in the rich composition of most Alpine meadows, and, where they grow, they form so compact a groundwork of colouring and so admirable a setting for many of the taller flowers, that it were, indeed, a dereliction of memory to overlook them! What could be lovelier than a wide area of these Clovers in June sown with lilac, rose-tinted, and white Orchids, deep, lustrous-blue *Phyteumas*, paper-white Paradise Lilies, and infinite hosts of the bright and fascinating little *Euphrasia*? Or in July, when the orange *Arnica*, the porcelain-blue *Campanula barbata*, and the graceful, distinguished-looking little *Thesium alpinum* make their ever-welcome appearance in the fields? Of course, there are degrees even in natural felicity, and the Orchids—with the exception of the creamy-white Butterfly Orchis—are not at their best if the predominant Clover be

EVENING among the fields of pink Bistort at
Lac Champex; sunset-glow on the Grand
Combin, July.



red. But, speaking generally, the groundwork of Clovers is a most valuable element in the colouring of these pastures. Were this groundwork removed we should wonder why the fields and slopes looked so meagre and thin. And this is also true of *Euphrasia officinalis*, the Eyebright, a very precious, though humble denizen of the fields in July. This plant, by the way, owes its English name, not to its flower (as in the case of the little bright-blue Speedwell, *Veronica Chamædrys*, often erroneously called Eyebright), but to an infusion of the plant which long ago was supposed to cure defective vision. Milton, indeed, causes the Archangel Michael to use it upon Adam :

“ . . . then purged with Euphrasy and Rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see.”

Like the Clovers; the Eyebright should certainly not be ignored, though it is easy to do so. It may be numbered amongst those things we should miss without being able to say *what* we do miss—those things of a high and unobtrusive value, partly composed of half the worth of things in greater evidence. In other words, it is amongst those things which,

in a quiet, self-effacing way, enhance their surroundings.

In applying the term "distinguished-looking" to the little Thesium, I am minded to do so because, just as with the flowers of the plain, there is an *élite* among Alpines. One can hardly explain why. Like the Roman Emperor who, when asked to define time, said, "I know when you do not ask me," one feels there is an *élite* among flowers, though one is scarcely able to define it. And the feeling is real and undoubtedly well-founded. Nor, to feel this, is it necessary to go to florist's garden-flowers, where vulgarity is rampant (though often highly prized and priced). The feeling comes in the presence of any field of wild flowers—the feeling that, by their form and bearing, some plants are more well-bred than others. This cannot be altogether accounted for by their colour or conspicuousness. The little Thesium, or the little silver-leaved Alchemilla are neither of them bright, conspicuous plants. It is the general habit that impresses: the "atmosphere" with which they surround themselves. How manifest this is when one meets with the Paradise Lily surrounded by a sea of Hieracium, Bistort, Blue Bottle, Trollius, Geranium, and Salvia. One

singles out the Lily at once, though it be close beside the exquisite white Marguerite; and one's heart goes out to it, above its companions, as a thing of greater breeding—a thing taking rank with any *Loelia* or *Dendrobium*.

A cat is not a horse because it is born in a stable; and all Alpines are not of the same caste because they are born in the Alps. Among things Alpine, as among things of the plain, there is degree in attainment. Some things have had occasion to travel along lines that have led them to greater refinement than others—just as man, himself, is evidently the product of particular occasion for such travel. We cannot blink ourselves to the fact that there are weeds even among the Alpines—though there are not so many as 280, the number said to exist in England.

Degree in refinement is, perhaps, to some extent indicated by the way a plant will take care of itself. All plants have some means of fending for themselves, and these means are as varied in morality as are such means among human beings. Some are born fighters, brazen, pushing, and quarrelsome; others win through life by comparative self-effacement. Some elbow their way

to any place they want; others, seemingly, are content to be where they are wanted. All, of course, battle more or less faithfully, but some are forceful, self-assertive, while others resign themselves to unobtrusiveness. No plant can accept with entire equanimity what does not altogether agree with it; but many can rough it, putting up with conditions that will kill others or compel them to retire. Hence we have weeds: rough-souled invaders who make themselves too common.

Although "the invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common," and although, therefore, we may admire, and quite reasonably admire, all that so capably wrestles with extremes of circumstance as do the Alpines, yet we can and must admit that some are more "classy" than others. For instance, the Alpine Plantain is, according to our instinct and possibly according to fact, on a lower rung of the ladder of vegetable society than is the Alpine Auricula. Both struggle with much the same rigours and disabilities, but we feel obliged to find that the latter has evolved greater refinement than the former from its struggles. In short, Maeterlinck's "*goût du mieux de la Nature*" is as pro-

nounced in degree among Alpines as it is among valley flowers ; there is an aristocracy even in the Alps.

And how admirable, for the most part, are the names these plants bear ; how befitting the romantic character and circumstance which surrounds them. *Linaria*, *Saponaria*, *Salvia*, *Ajuga*, *Anthyllis*, *Potentilla*, *Artemisia*—what could be more charming ? Are they not a thousand times more suggestive and more æsthetic than their English counterparts—Toadflax, Soapwort, Sage, Bugle, Kidney Vetch, Cinquefoil, Wormwood ? Indeed, I am not sure but that, taking them as a whole, Latin names are not more satisfactory and picturesque for every kind of flower—quite apart from the important and simplifying question of a common vantage ground for gardener, scientist, and general public. The anonymous writer of “*Studies in Gardening*,” an admirable series of essays contributed to the *Times*, pleads persuasively for the use, as far as possible, of English names in both gardening books and papers. He holds—and in so doing he is by no means singular—that “the rage for Latin names has gone so far that you will now sometimes see lilies called *liliums*” ; he bemoans the growing use of *Sedum* instead of Stone-

crop, and of *Antirrhinum* instead of Snapdragon, and he calls it an "unnecessary use of botanical terms," and thinks that "the want of beautiful English names to many beautiful flowers seems a reproach to their beauty." But there are other authorities, equally numerous, who hold a contrary view, considering that too much is being made of English names, and that "confusion worst confounded" is a very natural consequence. One catches the sound of more than two voices in the discussion: one hears not only the several plaints of botanist and flower-lover, but also the claims of the champion of folk-lore, the mere amateur gardener, the uncompromising patriot, and the incorrigible sentimentalist. And something in reason is said by each one of them—although honours are not so easy as to enable one to call it a case of six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. For, perhaps, those who strive for a *langue bleu* in this domain and choose Latin have the weightier cause at heart. George Crabbe, the poet, once wrote an English treatise on botany, but never published it, because of the remonstrances of the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, who objected to degrading the science of botany by treating it in a modern language. Such rigorous

adhesion to Latin is of the relatively narrow past ; nor is this dead tongue likely ever again to be a subject for such blind idolatry. No doubt in time a becoming compromise will be arrived at by the two camps—a compromise that will allow a rose to be a rose, and not oblige it to be always and only a *Rosa*.

“Men of science are pitiless tyrants,” says Alphonse Karr in “Les Fleurs Animées.” “See what they have done for Botany, that charming and graceful study! . . . Without pity or mercy, they have brutally seized upon the frail daughters of sky and dew ; they have crushed and mutilated them ; they have thrown them into the crucible of Etymology, and after all these awful tortures, and as if to assure themselves of impunity, they have hidden their victims beneath a heap of barbarous names. Thus, thanks to them, the Hawthorn, that symbol of virginity and hope, sighs under the dreadful name *Mespilus oxyacantha*. . . . All that is frightful, is it not ? . . . Unfortunately, it is all very necessary. To admire is not to know, and, in order to know, system and method are indispensable. . . . How could we do without the help of Etymology ? Pardon, then, these men of science, who have done nothing

but obey the law of necessity, and enter into the beautiful domain from which they have dissipated the darkness." This is delightfully put and is all very true. Latin nomenclature does tend immensely to dispel confusion, though in certain quarters it may wound the sense of sentiment, and we shall no doubt always have confirmed adherents of popular names.

But, however it may be with the use of popular names in England, I venture to think we have better things to do than to Anglicise the Alpines in their Swiss home, and that—as says a well-known botanist—"when English names are coined for species which do not even occur in Britain, the result is sometimes ridiculous, *e.g.* 'Dodonæus's French Willow' for an *Epilobium*." And it is not alone ridiculous: it is often paltry and in the worst of taste, and it will frequently drive romance and beauty from the Alpine landscape. What is there æsthetic, or even useful, about "Mignonette-leaved Lady's Smock" for *Cardamine resedifolia*; "Neglected Pinkwort" for *Dianthus neglectus*; "Doronic Groundsel" for *Senecio Doronicum*; or "Glacier's Yarrow" for *Achillea nana*? Are not the Latin names truer and more beautiful? And are they not



as easy of retention as their English substitutes? Shall we say that *Campanula barbata* is not a truer title than "Bearded Harebell" for a plant that has nothing of the English Harebell about it except "family"? Or shall we say that it is not just as easy, as the botanist already quoted points out, to remember *Atriplex deltoidea* as "Deltoid-leaved Orache"? Those who, advocating English nomenclature to this extent in the Alps, plead the cause of intelligible simplicity, irresistibly recall the complicated efforts of those who aim at the Simple Life. And, on the whole, their efforts are no less ugly.

But let us not stand haggling over such contentious matter. *Revenons à nos moutons!*

Scanning these fields and slopes, noting "the lavish hand of June," and remembering that July's hand will be no whit less lavish, we realise without any difficulty that there are more than twice as many flowering plants indigenous to Switzerland as in the whole of the British Isles. Indeed, June alone could easily convince us of this. What wealth! One feels that the proper way, the only adequate way of enjoying it is to abjure hotels and camp out in the midst of it all. When the meal-time bell rings out from the

Hôtel-Pension, one turns in answer to it with reluctance, declaring :

“I could be content to see
 June and no variety,
 Loitering here, and living there,
 With a book and frugal fare,
 With a finer gypsy time,
 And a cuckoo in the clime.”

And when the end of June arrives, and with it the Arnica, the Greater Astartia, the orange-red Hawkweed, the Burnet butterfly, and the passage of the bell-decked cows to the higher Alpine pastures—“Liauba! Liauba! *por alpa!*”—we may tremble for the coming of the scythe. Already it will be commencing its deadly work 2,000 feet below, and its advance is rapid and quite regardless of all we flower-lovers may mutter under our breath, or more probably say aloud. However, we must be reasonable. Complaints of this description are not in order. The world must be helped round: hay must be made, and the flowers are not, and cannot be, our all-in-all. We benefit most by being seasonable; sufficient for the day is the good thereof; and the good of a day need not die with the day. We take our fill of these flowers whilst

we reasonably may ; recollection does the rest for us in the gap of seasons. An emotion passed is yet part of our life—our life's memory ; and, in Meredith's words,

“ Dead seasons quicken in one petal spot of colour un-forgot.”

For enough is far better than a feast. It is one thing to be spiritually sentimental ; it is quite another thing to know where to draw a right line in spiritual sentiment. Happy the man who is endowed with the double capacity ; happy the man who can allow these flowers to lift him to a higher plane of being ; and then, when reasonableness begins to flag, turn to his floral cicerones and say with firmness : “ Excuse me, but I must now be getting back to dinner. And you, in your turn, you know, must be preparing to be dinner for the cows.”

SOME PROMINENT PASTURE FLOWERS
IN BLOOM AROUND CHAMPEX, JUNE 15, 1910

Ajuga pyramidalis (Alpine Bugle).

Alchemilla alpina.

„ *vulgaris* (Lady's Mantle).

Anemone narcissiflora.

„ *sulphurea*.

84 FLOWER-FIELDS OF ALPINE SWITZERLAND

- Antennaria dioica* (Cudweed ; Cat's-ear).
Anthericum Liliago.
„ *ramosum*.
Anthyllis vulneraria, *forma alpestris* (Kidney Vetch or Ladies' Fingers).
Biscutella laevigata.
Campanula rhomboidalis.
„ *rotundifolia*.
Centaurea montana (Bluebottle ; Knapweed ; Mountain Cornflower).
Cerastium arvense (Field Mouse-ear).
Dianthus Carthusianorum (Carthusian Pink).
Echium vulgare (Viper's Bugloss).
Euphrasia alpina.
„ *minima* (Yellow Eyebright).
„ *officinalis* (Eyebright).
Geranium sylvaticum (Wood Crane's-bill).
Geum rivale (Water Avens).
Globularia cordifolia.
Hippocrepis comosa (Horseshoe Vetch).
Lathyrus heterophyllus (Mountain Everlasting Pea).
„ *sylvestris* (Wood Everlasting Pea).
Linum alpinum (Alpine Flax).
Lotus corniculatus (Bird's-foot Trefoil).
Lychnis dioica (Wood Campion).
„ *Flos-cuculi* (Ragged Robin).
„ *viscaria* (Red Catchfly).
Muscari comosum.
Myosotis alpestris (Alpine Forget-me-not).
Onobrychis viciæfolia (Sainfoin).

ORCHIDS :

Cephalanthera ensifolia } Helleborine.
 „ *rubra* }

Gymnadenia odoratissima and *G. conopsea*.

Habenaria (Cæloglossum) viridis (Frog Orchis).

Nigritella nigra (angustifolia) (Vanilla Orchis).

Orchis latifolia.

„ *maculata*.

„ *ustulata*.

Plantanthera or *Habenaria bifolia* (Butterfly Orchis).

Paradisica Liliastrum (Paradise or St. Bruno's Lily).

Pedicularis tuberosa (Yellow Lousewort).

Phyteuma betonicifolium } Rampion
 „ *orbiculare* }

Pimpinella magna rosea.

Polygala alpestris } Milkwort.
 „ *vulgaris* }

Polygonum Bistorta (Snake-root ; Bistort).

„ *viviparum* (Alpine Knotweed).

Potentilla rupestris (Strawberry-flowered Cinquefoil).

Ranunculus aconitifolius (Fair Maid of France).

Reseda luteola (Mignonette ; Weld or Dyer's Weed).

Rhinanthus angustifolius (Yellow Rattle).

Rosa alpina (Alpine Brier or Eglantine).

Salvia pratensis (Meadow Sage ; Clary)

Scabiosa lucida.

Silene inflata (Bladder Campion).

Trollius europæus (Globe-Flower).

Valeriana tripteris (Trefoil Valerian).

CHAPTER VII

ON FLORAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND COLOUR

“We, having a secret to others unknown,
In the cool mountain-mosses,
May whisper together . . .”

HENRY KENDALL, *September in Australia.*

OUR knowledge of life behind the balder manifestations of life is as yet so deficient that it would be pure conceit to pretend more than lightly to suggest certain thoughts that may possibly commence to explain something of the affinity existing between ourselves and the flowers. That such an affinity does actually exist there appears sufficient evidence to warrant our believing, and no one, I imagine, with an interested eye for these matters, would care to pronounce against this evidence without making careful reservations. And if this affinity exists for one it exists for all, though in some, because of the variable nature of the human

mechanism, it is less demonstrable than in others. Nor does it show itself merely in our admiration and care for the flowers; there are many instances of its appearing in a form which borders upon the "uncanny"—a form of that universal and universally sympathetic sub-consciousness which Psychology is doing its best to investigate.

Thoreau in one of his Essays mentions how that one day he wished to find a certain rare orchid, but had no idea in which direction to seek it; and, setting out in this blind state of mind, his steps took him straight to the very object of his quest. Of course those in whom prejudice is a more real possession than open-mindedness will dismiss such evidence as pointing to mere coincidence or to an unmistakable case of chance. They will say the same, too, of the instance mentioned by Mr. H. Stuart Thompson in an article, "Ten Days in Co. Kerry," which appeared in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* for October 22, 1910. "My companion," says Mr. Thompson, "makes no claim to be a botanist, but he has an innate faculty for finding good plants if they are to be found; and let it be said here that during a ski-ing holiday in Switzerland last winter he managed to grub up through the snow quite a wonderful collection

of interesting Alpines which are succeeding capitally on his rockery." This will also be called coincidence; but there is, I believe, far less justification for doing so than for calling it sympathy. Personally, I have more liking for design in these matters than I have for luck. Surely it were a poor world—nay, an impossible world—that were governed by chance in whatsoever degree. Evolution may know no "categorical imperative" and yet be a stranger to aimless drifting. The law of cause and effect seems to guarantee this. And is it not also guarantee of a universal sympathy, since the prime essential of this law is that all things are linked up in one continuous chain?

My own experience among the flowers biases me in favour of this sympathetic rule and causes me to believe there is some means by which our several beings can communicate. On many occasions I have been led, with seeming intention, to some rare white form that I was wishing to find. Apparent purposelessness and lack of decision have filled my mind, and yet, time after time, have I taken the very path, or have scrambled up the precise trackless slope which has brought me to the whereabouts of the rarity I have been

The AUTUMN CROCUS in the fields near the
village of Trient, with the Aiguille du Tour
in the background, September.



seeking. On other occasions I have been arrested in my walk and in the midst of quite other thoughts of my own or of some conversation with a companion by an impelling impression that a floral rarity was in my immediate neighbourhood. I have noticed, too, that this seeming guidance has invariably happened in connection with white flowers—the white form of *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, for instance, or of *Gentiana excisa*, or of *Soldanella alpina*, or of *Viola calcarata*, or of *Aster alpinus*. It may sound preposterously mystical, but I do really suspect that I have found these uncommon or rare flowers—perhaps there was only one specimen within the district for miles round—by something in their nature being in tune with something in mine. I do not imagine success would attend upon conscious effort, my own experience being that the promptings have come without any striving on my part. I have had most mixed and unconvincing results and many total failures when experiment has been conducted upon such lines as one might follow with a water-finder. I am aware that however much in earnest one may be in speaking of this class of phenomena, it is difficult to appear reasonable; for the matter is so wrapped in haze. I can only

repeat that the thing has happened to me when I have been least expecting it

I remember one case in particular, when I was rambling with a friend upon the rapid slopes of Dent de Bonnavaux, near Champéry. I was longing to find the white form of *Gentiana asclepiadea*, the Willow Gentian, about which I had been reading. We had arrived where this Gentian was growing in profusion in a semi-shade afforded by giant cliffs, and had proceeded nearly to the foot of the Pas d'Encel, when, feeling suddenly persuaded that the plant I wanted was near by, I called a halt. My friend said, "Oh, let's get on; there's nothing here!" But I begged for indulgence. "I feel," said I, "that the white form of the blue Gentian is growing hereabouts, and I'm going to hunt it up." For some time I scrambled about without the required result, and I was beginning to suspect that I was being prompted more by a fussy imagination than an intuitive sympathy; and yet I felt unable to abandon the search, and determined not to do so until I had gone all over the ground twice. And then, at last—Eureka! there amongst the grasses behind a big boulder were two lovely sprays of purest white! Now, it was not as if

this were the first time that I had been amongst this Gentian ; many times before, and in many districts, had I passed through quantities of it ; but never had I seen any variation except in the depth and brightness of the blue, and never before had I experienced the sensation of the near presence of its white form. Nor can I recall any occasion when this sensation has played me false. Over and over again have I felt it, and with whatever plant it has been associated it has invariably proved truthfully prophetic. Will coincidence or luck satisfactorily account for this ? I am unable to think so, though I confess I must exclaim as Faust does :

“Lo! here I sit no wiser than before”!

But now that we are thus far, let us grope a little further within the dim-lit domain of sub-consciousness ; I would fain touch upon a matter closely allied to the foregoing—that of the significance of the colour of flowers, and the part played by colour in the sympathy existing between the flowers and ourselves. Let us first of all speculate briefly upon the significance of floral colouring. Speaking vaguely—and who can speak with any very great distinctness ?—colour is one of many

manifestations of one and the same fundamental condition. Sound is another ; odour another. Our five senses, in fact, appear to deal with the self-same set of fundamental truths and to translate them differently : possibly upon the principle that variety is charming and is much more likely to arouse our complete inquisitiveness, ending ultimately in our thorough appreciation, than would these vital truths if brought to our notice in just a single form. There are people to whom odours represent colours ; there are others to whom Wagnerian music is largely coloured by scarlet and all other reds, and to whom the note of the blackbird is magenta and purple, and that of the greenfinch yellow. There is, too, a case recorded by the late Professor Lombroso, where a girl could see things with the tip of her nose ; Miss Helen Keller, blind, deaf, and dumb, can feel if a person is dark or fair ; and it is said that recently in Germany there was a man who, having undergone an operation upon his head, was, after recovery, obliged to seek the peace and comfort of a dark cellar on fine days, because he could hear the sun shining. Without staking the soundness of my argument upon this last quotation, there would seem enough evidence in the world to assure

us that our senses deal with one and the same set of realities, and that colour, sound, and odour have birth in a self-same cause. What, then, are these realities ; what, then, is this cause in relation with ourselves and the flowers ; and what part does colour play therein ?

Of course, I am supposing that colour is really in the flowers and not in us or in the bee, as was suggested a few years ago by an American *savant*. I am unable to think that either myself or a bee can determine the white form of some blue Gentian, some rose-pink Ononis (Rest-Harrow), or some yellow Primrose. If colour is not in the flower, then neither is it in a lady's dress, nor in a nation's flag, nor in a picture. What reason should the world and his wife have for unanimously declaring a dress to be brown and purple if, in reality, it is no colour at all—if, that is to say, it is black, or the highest refinement of black, which is white ? How comes it that a whole nation with one accord looks upon its flag as a combination of red, white, and blue when, in reality, it is simply a design in black and white ? What are we doing by painting our hives a variety of bright colours in order to lead the bees safely home, if paint is no colour and bees can

colour the hives as they will? It is beyond me; I imagine it is beyond my readers; and I suspect that if the truth were known it was even beyond the American *savant* in his less imaginative moments. Maybe things are not what they seem, but can this be possible to the extent implied by our Western cousin? I know, of course, that we do largely befool ourselves; I know that in part measure we are "All valiant dust that builds on dust"; but I cannot believe we befool ourselves to the extent of painting pictures every imaginable tint when, really and truly, all this colour is in ourselves. I, personally, am old-fashioned enough to think that when I squeeze gamboge out upon my palette I undoubtedly have there a yellow, not a colourless pigment. And I imagine that a bee thinks the same when he flies, as frequently he will, head-foremost into it, believing it to be a buttercup or a marigold.

Yes, I am presuming that we human beings, endowed though we are with abundant powers of which we are greatly unconscious, have little enough to do with a flower's being mauve or orange; and it is upon this possibly antiquated and false understanding that I ask myself, What

tale has the colour of flowers to tell us? In the first place, I am not sure that I am content to see white appearing solely between yellow and pink in Dr. Percy Groom's scale of floral colour; the scale does not look quite true, running in the following order: yellow, white, pink, red, crimson, violet, blue. I should be more content if the order ran like this: white, blue, green, yellow, orange, red, violet, blue, white; for scales such as these, if continued, form a circle, a complete and continuous whole. They cannot rightly be cut up into abrupt sections of straight lines if they are to tell the whole truth. The green flowers appear to stand as proof of this, for they draw their tint from both extremities of the scale—from blue, the highest of primal colours, and from yellow, the lowest; they link up the extremities and complete the circle; they have no definite qualities, but are at once high and lowly.

If we start with the lowliest of flowers of clean-cut individuality, it must be with the yellow ones; and yellow stands for the dawn of definite life. After that, for flowers of distinct position, we must go to the red ones, those of orange tints being intermediary; and with red we reach the fulfilment of animal or worldly vigour. From this

point onwards, through magenta, lilac, mauve, violet, purple, refinement is increasingly marked until blue is reached. Then blue, starting darkly, advances to "Cambridge" tints, and so into white.

Now white is the "colour" of which we know the least—and talk the most. Really, it indicates nothing—that which is as "a bunghole without a barrel round it"—and of this, naturally, we can have but a very inaccurate appreciation. We speak glibly about white, and we soar with it to giddy, dreamy heights, but we speak and mostly dream of colour not of white. For—

"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity."

We talk of snow as if it were of no colour; but we are able to talk about it only because it is so colour-full. We talk arrogantly of ourselves as "white people," and we are able to do so because we are not white people, but people with a rude amount of red in us—"animals with red cheeks," as Nietzsche calls us; indeed, it is possible that the negro has more right to call himself a white man, for he is nearer to black than we are to white, and, according to the well-known formula, "Black is

ANEMONE SULPHUREA and *GENTIANA
EXCISA*, painted directly in the fields
at the end of May.



white, white is black, and black is no colour at all.”

But what part does white play amongst the flowers? To begin with, I believe we have no right to restrict it to one particular place—between yellow and red. It would seem to have no precise position in the scale, for it is found appearing here, there, and everywhere along the line. It occurs amongst all colours, but if it has one more permanent place than another, that place is outside the line of colour altogether; and white, as a permanency, is an extreme. The appearance of a white form is often hailed as a case of anæmia in the coloured type; and no doubt this is so frequently, though it cannot be so always. Where a white form is the issue of a blue type-flower, such as a *Gentian* or a *Campanula*, it is most probable that it is a case of natural evolution, and that such a white plant is no more anæmic than is anything which arrives naturally, progressively, upon the higher plane of being. We of a lower plane are not a little apt to regard as weaklings things which emerge upon the higher plane. Certainly a white flower is not necessarily “too good to live.” If it be issue of a blue type-flower, it is more likely than not to be in every

way well bred. Where, however, it is issue of a yellow or a red type-flower, then I think we are justified in suspecting anæmia, for yellow or red must pass through blue before it can healthily and with all warrant emerge as white. There are no leaps in progressive evolution ; soundness is sequence.

Now in no instance, I think, have I been influenced by the unknown presence of yellow or of red as I have by that of white and sometimes of blue flowers. Why should this be : why should the influence of white be more remarkable than that of yellow ? Is it not probable that in special cases the human organism is in pronouncedly sympathetic accord with the organism of flowers, in some such way as there is sympathetic attunement between transmitter and receiver in wireless telegraphy ? Is it not possible that some natures are attuned to blue and white flowers, and will ignore yellow or red ones, while other natures are in accord with yellow or red flowers and are unresponsive to blue and white ones ? I know of a judge at local flower shows who invariably, and without much demur, gave first prize to the table decoration containing scarlet ; and if such a decoration was mainly

composed of the Oriental Poppy it secured the top award without a moment's hesitation. Is it not possible that this judge was in sympathetic attune with scarlet; is it not possible that, were he to have been blindfolded, and set down in a field of blue Cornflowers with one red Poppy hidden away amongst them, he would at once have been persuaded of the Poppy's presence?

Thus we end upon a question mark. But let us not feel abashed. "A man is wise," says Oliver Goldsmith, "while he continues in pursuit of wisdom, but when he once fancies that he has found the object of his inquiry he then becomes a fool." Let us find comfort in this dictum, and confess that we have discovered scarcely a trace of that for which we have been inquiring. Cardinal Newman once observed that men know less of animals than they do of angels, and I think we may safely put the flowers by the side of the animals—especially when our knowledge deals, as it has here been dealing, with that mysterious subconsciousness which is the domain of angels. Familiarity is the much-travelled road to ignorance. We often deny to familiar things qualities that we stoutly insist belong to things of which we know really nothing. The flowers are too obvious, too near to

us to share the intimacy in which we live with things hidden and secret. Even we ourselves suffer in this manner, and we deny to ourselves qualities we "see" and "know" in what we cannot see and do not know. What a very curious blend of contradictions we are! In one and the same breath we will unduly belaud and unduly belittle ourselves; but we are no more the restricted creatures of our fancy than we are the centre and hub of the universe. Although, manifestly short-sighted, we stumble about in most awkward fashion, still we are delicately receptive of subtle, moving influences. We are instruments of far-reaching powers, but we look upon ourselves as freer agents than the case warrants. We imagine we go here and go there entirely of our own volition, yet if we were really such lonely automatons as this we should be immeasurably more stupid than we are.

It must not surprise us, then, if Science some day convinces us that both in thought and in action we are moved by many things with which we now say we have no connection, and that amongst these things will be found the flowers; it must not astonish us if such a phrase as "The Call of the Wild" is possessed of an intrinsic meaning, the fulness and scope of which we now consider it an

eccentric folly to admit. There is a wondrous education in store for us. We are, actually, in our right place, but we know little of how or why. When some day our eyes are opened more widely to the forces that direct our lives, we shall be humbler than at present. But we shall be happier. And I venture to predict that few things will help more materially towards this greater happiness than will a real and knowing intimacy with the flowers.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RHODODENDRON

“Wonderful, hidden things wait near, I know,
Perchance fulfilment of our noblest aim,
Or marvels that would set the heart aflame,
Which an obscure and mystic sense might show—
Snatching us—in a moment—to the glow
Beyond yon filmy barrier without name
That no eye pierceth !”

FANNY ELIZABETH SIDEBOTTOM, *A Spiritual Sense.*

ACCORDING to authority, there are about 186 species of *Rhododendron* in the world. The greatest number of varieties inhabit India and China, and they are important plants in the Caucasus, where often—as with *Rhododendron ponticum*—they cover the entire side of a mountain. In Switzerland there are but two varieties, *R. ferrugineum* and *R. hirsutum*, and they are to the Swiss Alps what the Heather is to the Scottish mountains (with, however, this difference—the Alps have also the Heather). They clothe the open

mountain-side with a deep evergreen growth, invading the lichen-scored rocks and even the pine-forests, and robing themselves, from mid-June to mid-July, in such rosy-red attire as fascinates even the accustomed peasant, causing him almost as much delight as they cause the stranger. Indeed, their flowering is a masterpiece of Nature's art, and few things are more fitting the sun's ascendancy and the advent of cowbells upon the pastures. Wherever on the fields there is a rock, there shines the rosy shrub against the grey mass, and the steep slopes glint and glow as they will do in the autumn when the Bilberry and other groundlings catch afire. I have met visitors in disappointment at the smallness of the blossoms, and inquiring where the large-flowered forms of our gardens might be found. Certainly, these plants are not those of the Himalaya, but I warrant they can boast a glory all their own—one inspired by its particular circumstance and surroundings, and vying in that respect with the glory of the kinsfolk of India or of the Azalea in Afghanistan. Abundance rather than size is the keynote of this present splendour; and the abundance is amazing, giving us a mass of colour which larger individual flowers could scarcely rival.

Wet or fine the glow abides, but in fine weather its rich brilliance is certainly of summer's best and goes far to reconcile us to the lost glories of the Vernal Gentian. There can be few more satisfying recollections of early summer days than when, waist-deep amid the Rhododendrons overgrowing some ancient rock-fall, one gazed across a rosy expanse, sparingly broken by grey boulder and blasted pine and falling away towards the snout of some sea-green glacier backed by snow-draped crags and *aiguilles*, with, in the foreground, on occasional turfy intervals, groups of orange Arnica and of *Gymnadenia albida*, the Small Butterfly Orchis, close consort of the Rhododendron, whilst the Swallow-tail and Alpine Clouded-Yellow butterflies flirted with the blossoms and chased each other in the thin, clear air and joy-inspiring sunlight. "The Alpine Rhododendron . . . once gave me," Mr. George Yeld tells us in his chapter contributed to the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge's "The Alps in Nature and in History," "one of the most effective sights in the flower-world that I can recall. I came upon it in a late season—acres of *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, in a forest where the trees grew at some distance apart. The brightness of the colour—a rich red—the extent of the flower

PRIMULA FARINOSA, *GENTIANA VERNA*,
Micheli's Daisy, *BARTSIA ALPINA*,
POLYGALA ALPINA, and the two
Pinguiculas or Butterworts, painted directly
in the fields at the end of May.



show, the setting of pines, and the background of stately ramparts of rock, with an occasional waterfall, made the scene unique ; and the memory of it is proportionately vivid." Scarce can such experience need enlargement along the line of pleasure, and surely no well-regulated mind will wander in search of larger-flowered varieties ! Such scenes are satisfaction itself—except that they play upon some secret human chord, awaken "an obscure and mystic sense" and waft inquisitive mentality

"to the glow
Beyond yon filmy barrier without name
That no eye pierceth!"

The Rhododendron is commonly spoken and written of as the Alpine Rose ; but it is a member of the Heath family, and not of that family which fable says was created by Bacchus. This is a ready instance of where popular nomenclature, without discipline, leads to confusion ; for there is an Alpine Rose (*Rosa alpina*), a very lovely rich magenta-coloured Eglantine often growing cheek-by-jowl with the pseudo *Alpenrose* of the Germans. It is quite possible that the word "Rose" really springs—as in *Monte Rosa*—from *roisa* or *roësa*, meaning "glacier" in the

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remains of *Rhododendron* being found in peat deposits on the plains, gives us a glimpse of this plant slowly retreating up the mountains with the glaciers. And yet, on the south side of the Alps, it is still to be found upon the plains! This is one of the mysteries of Alpine plant-life, and one for which I have seen no satisfactory theory. *Gentiana verna* shows us, I believe, the same seeming inconsistency, descending to the sea-coast in Ireland, yet rarely, if ever, found below 1,300 feet in Switzerland.

Like the English Dog Rose—and this, perhaps, is its greatest likeness to a Rose—the *Rhododendron* develops galls (Oak-apples or Robin's Pin-cushions, as they are called in England) upon its leaves. Some of these are produced by insects and some by a fungus (*Exobasidium rhododendri*), the latter gall being yellow, and turning pink or rose on the sunny side. The leaves and flowers are used in infusion for rheumatism; also as an ingredient of Swiss tea. This shrub, too, is the food-plant of one of the handsomest of Alpine butterflies, *Colias Palæno*, a Clouded-Yellow—anything but clouded, though it lives where clouds are born, for with its clear citron wings boldly bordered with jet-black and rimmed with

tender rose, it is a bright, true child of high altitudes.

Nor should the Rhododendron be forgotten as a subject for our gardens. When raised from layers or from seed, it takes quite kindly to our climate. Indeed, the plants at "Floraire," M. Henry Correvon's charming garden near Geneva, come from England—a fact that will sound much in line with that of living at Brighton and receiving one's fish from London! This anomaly, in the case of the Rhododendron, is due to the great difficulty of acclimatising the plant to the Swiss plains. When, however, it has once been acclimatised in England it will transplant to Switzerland with the greatest success. I cannot remember ever to have seen in Switzerland a successfully transplanted native plant of Rhododendron, even though, as is frequently the case around mountain hotels, it has been a question of moving it only some few yards from where it was growing wild. These wild plants have a strong objection to being tamed. But in England's humid climate it is quite easy to cultivate, and if fields are to be added to our rockworks the Rhododendron must have a place in them—a place around the solitary rocks, a place with the Daphne and the shrubby Honeysuckles.

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With what fecundity of resource Nature marshals her forces ; with what amazing ingenuity she passes to her goal ! As if to show her wayward child how academic strictness in one straight line is not the road to greatest success, she takes a thousand ways to reach one and the same end, causing extremes and opposites in method to give a common high result. And this she does on every hand, and in all of her domains. In the world with which we are now dealing—the plant-world—she is particularly rich in ways and means. See how, for example, some flowers need the wind to assist them to propagate their kind, and note the many ways such flowers have of courting the wind's assistance ; see how others need the bees and flies to busy themselves about them, and note the many ways such have of attracting the attentions of bees and flies ; see how some will call in a beetle to eat his way to their hearts, whilst others will just hob-nob together, independent of any intermediary. See, again, how some plants bury their roots in the earth for sustenance, whilst others, with like object, will bury them in the air ; see, too, how some will climb by the help of their thorns, whilst others will do so by the aid of tendrils, or of rootlets, or of adhering fingers. An

admirably efficient way of achieving a purpose does not preclude the possibility of there being a score or more other and equally efficient ways of achieving the same purpose. One species of Orange-tree may carry its seed in the core of its fruit, whilst another may carry it in a special exterior annexe ; or one species of Mangrove-tree may breathe by means of its leaves, whilst another may do so by means of tube-like organs thrown up through the soft mud.

It seems strange we should be so strictly narrow in our outlook, surrounded as we are by so much clearly demonstrated resourcefulness ; it seems strange that all day long our dogmatic finger should point here, then there, and the presumptuous cry go up, "*This* is the only right and proper way !" It seems strange : for it is thus a person is a savage in our eyes if, instead of wearing ornaments in his ears, he wears them in his nose and lips. To be sure, we are improving in this respect, for at one time we readily burnt people who had another way of doing things. But there is still vast room for progress. And, surely, it is no fond trick of the imagination to believe that an appreciable amount of this room will gradually be appropriated to progress made

through Nature Study. For Nature is too far-sighted to be dogmatic, too capable to be academic; she leaves an illimitable margin for what is right, incidentally giving a complete exposition of the truth of our much employed, but much neglected adage, "All roads lead to Rome."

Now, in these two Swiss Rhododendrons there is excellent occasion for noting two very different means of offering highly effective resistance to a common foe. The foe is drought—the drought of the hot, ungenerous, porous moraine, and of the rapid, rocky, sun-baked, wind-swept slope. Mountain circumstance, such as is affected for the most part by these Rhododendrons, is the outcome of comparatively recent disturbance; soil is in the forming, and what there is of it but thinly coats a tumbled bed of crevassed rocks and boulders. Casual observation may lead visitors to suppose the Swiss Alpine climate to be by no means devoid of moisture and to be liable at all seasons to its fair share of damp, all-enveloping cloud and fog, and to storms of snow and rain. And casual observation will be right. But no section of the globe's face is more thoroughly and more promptly drained than that of the Alps, and a "deluge" of rain is like so

GENTIANA VERNA, the type-plant, and some
of its forms.



much water on a duck's back. Hence, an incomparable system of drainage is one of the prime disabilities against which Alpine vegetation has to contend. And the Rhododendrons meet this disability in two ways—*ferrugineum* with hard leaves, varnished above, and felted and resinous beneath; *hirsutum* with softer, pliant leaves fringed by hairs. Thus do both fence ably the evil of too rapid evaporation; thus do both, by their diverse methods, give to the student

“The subtle hintings of a perfect whole.”

CHAPTER IX

THE JULY FIELDS

“Through rich green solitudes,
And wildly hanging woods
With blossoms and with bell,
In rich redundant swell,
 And the pride
Of the mountain daisy there,
And the forest everywhere,
With the dress and with the air
 Of a bride.”

DUNCAN BAN MACINTYRE.

AMID the brilliant floral gathering which crowds into the arena of the Alps upon the blazoned entry of July, one marks no sign of the fair and frail St. Bruno's Lily. Nor is this as it should not be. Dainty to the point of extreme delicacy, this flower of Paradise is justly of a season more restrained, and one should not heap regrets upon its absence from so flamboyant a concourse as this present. The rich-blue Bell Gentian is likewise absent from the gay and jostling crowd, having at

last vanished from the shadier nooks where, in fond persistency, it has been continuing the cult of spring. But these two precious field-flowers form, possibly, the sum of June's distinguished absentees.

“Why fret about them if to-day be sweet!”

And, surely, to-day is as sweet as ever yesterday was! The glory of the Bistort is not yet on the wane, and to it the tall Buttercup has wedded its lustre, and *Ranunculus aconitifolius*, the Fair Maid of France; consequently, the moister meadows are a knee-deep wealth of pink, yellow, and white. On the drier fields, too, the rich blue and mauve expanses of *Salvia* and *Geranium* are now reinforced by the crowded blue bells of *Campanula rhomboidalis*, and hosts of the mauve-blossomed Scabious; while upon the slopes the now declining *Biscutella* and Strawberry-flowered *Potentilla* have for new companions *Hieracium alpinum*, *Hypochaeris maculata*, *Crepis aurea*, *Campanula barbata*, and *C. Scheuchzeri*, the tall lemon-yellow *Hypochaeris uniflora*, and the lilac *Gentiana campestris*. The tall blue and tall white *Phyteuma betonicæfolium*, and the blue, round-headed *P. orbiculare* are everywhere, and have been joined

by the tall blue *P. Micheli* and the little blue *P. hemisphæricum* of onion-like leaves. The Orchids, also everywhere, are still in full beauty, their numbers having been swelled by the arrival of *Gymnadenia albida*. The stately *Veratrum album* is in flower, companionship the equally stately Yellow Gentian, to which, in habit and foliage, though not in blossom, it bears a strong resemblance. The Arnica, also, is coming into bloom: the tall, red-brown Martagon Lily is fast filling out its buds; the Yellow Rattle and Anthyllis are ubiquitous; the graceful Thesium, with sprays of olive-coloured stems and leaves and tiny white stars (and ugly English name of Bastard Toad-flax), is looking its daintiest; and hosts of Ox-eyed Marguerites and pink Umbelliferæ top the meadows far and wide. On the rough banks and edges of the fields, or on the rocks that so often crop up in these pastures, *Saponaria ocymoides*, *Helianthemum alpestre*, *Calamintha alpina*, *Veronica saxatilis*, and *Silene rupestris* add respectively their bright pink, orange-yellow, mauve, blue, and white abundance to the radiance of the field-flowers proper. In "the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring," *Myosotis palustris* is opening its myriad blue eyes; the

Bartsia lingers by "the flower-lit stream" and is joined by the tiny bright blue *Gentiana nivalis*, here and there showing its rarer white form; whilst up upon the mountain-sides, backing and dominating the whole of this crowded, gay array, the *Rhododendron* is fast putting forth its red, amazing fulness.

If June be reckoned as a millionaire, then surely July must also, and with the additional prefix "multi"! "It is with flowers as with men," says Major Reginald Rankin in "The Royal Ordering of Gardens," and "Providence is on the side of big battalions." And, of a truth, this is so in these fields; bigger battalions it would indeed be hard to find. Is there not here some striking suggestion of an element in ultimate beauty—that of an harmonious brotherhood? One certainly seems to catch a glimpse of that economic state where individuality is general rather than particular; where personality is absorbed by the mass, and beauty is conspicuous only in the whole; where, so to speak, the red neckties of leadership do not flare out in designed and conscious isolation. Among themselves plants have their likes and dislikes. It is well known that, for example, certain flowers are only found in the company of

Corn, and it is said that in the kitchen-garden the Radish simply detests the Thyme. But here, on these meadows, all trace of discord seems lost in one great accord, and the plants, both great and small, blue-blooded and plebeian,

“ A social commerce hold, and firm support
The full adjusted harmony of things.”

And what pageantry it all is ; what consummate pageantry ! “ The flowers are at their Bacchanals ! ” The Old Mother, unlike many other parents, is not outdistanced by her children. Though man be loath to admit it, she holds the lead, and sets him both pace and tune. What are his pageants beside the pageantry of this his age-full parent ? He summons up his past for glory, and, rightly or wrongly, sees magnificence only in what he has been ; but his old mother, as here on these fairy fields, seeks naught further than the present. Were it not well that he read in this the lesson : “ Nature must once more become his home, as it is the home of the animals and angels ” ? Were it not well that he should shift his ground and thus amend his outlook ? Scarcely does it befit him to brag about

“ Nature’s fair, fruitless, aimless world
Men take and mould at will ! ”

“Fruitless, aimless world”? Why, willy-nilly, Nature moulds *him*—even by allowing him to think he is moulding *her*.

Behold these meadows! Will he take them and mould them to anything better than they are? No, he certainly will not. Will he give them an aim higher than they possess at present? Possibly. There is, however, only one way by which he may succeed: let him unbend, and let him gather these meadows closer to his heart and understanding: let him transport what he can of them to his parks and gardens. But let him not for one moment imagine that by so doing he is “moulding” them; for, indubitably, it is they who will be moulding him.

And for this reason: Alpine fields are such superlatively true art that he cannot but find in them, as in all true art, a common ground of interest, fellowship, happiness, advancement; “a means”—as Tolstoi says of true art—“of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings”—feelings that must ameliorate, must refine.

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We are now nearing the dread but necessary moment when the scythe will be laying low the

flowers; but ere the arrival of this careful, callous friend of the cows, we have a few more hours in which to cast another greedy look around. The Bistort and Buttercup, Orchid and tall Rampion, have become, or are fast becoming, dingy and seed-full, but there are several handsome and interesting newcomers; and many of these subjects, such as the Martagon Lily and Field Gentian, which at the commencement of the month had only a bloom or two open here and there, are now at perfection. The red *Centaurea uniflora* is a vivid object among the grasses: a "distinct advance," as nurserymen would say, upon *C. scabiosa*, our common Hard-heads or Knobweed, blooming beside it. The sturdy Brown Gentian (*Gentiana purpurea*) and its near relation, the cream-coloured or greenish-yellow *G. punctata*, are conspicuous objects, and *Hieracium aurantiacum*, the fiery, orange-red Hawkweed or Grimm the Collier, burns as a jewel among them. *Astrantia major*, the Great Masterwort, unique and charming—more particularly when its flower-heads take on their truly Alpine tint of rosy magenta—is here with its little brother, *A. minor*, pale and fragile, perhaps from its habit of living in shadier places than *major*. The Campanulas are glorious, and

*GERANIUM SYLVATICUM, POTENTILLA
RUPESTRIS, CENTAUREA MON-
TANA*, the pink Bistort, the little Alpine
Bistort, painted on the spot in the fields at
the beginning of July.



the lilac pyramidal heads of *C. spicata* are striking "bits of colour" where the grass is sparser. So also are the lovely deep-blue, pea-like masses of *Vicia onobrychioides*, associating with Rampion, Arnica, and Martagon or Turk's-cap Lily. *Dianthus superbus* spreads a lace-like mantle of pink and white over the shadier portions of the fields by the forest's edge; and *D. sylvestris* is a glory of flesh-pink upon the hotter slopes by the rocks. *Aconitum Napellus*, blue Monkshood or *Char de Venus*, is not hereabouts as on the higher pastures; neither are the yellow and orange pea-like *Orobus luteus* and that curious Bellflower, *Campanula thyrsoides*, with its stumpy hollow stem surmounted by a close-set mass of washed-out yellow flowers; nor is the handsome large-flowered yellow Foxglove (*Digitalis ambigua*) so plentiful in the Jura Mountains and in other limestone districts. But *Thalictrum aquilegifolium*, most seductive of the Meadowrues, raises its soft-lilac or cream-white plumes—often beside the majestic cream-white plumes of *Spiraea Aruncus*, Queen of the Fields—in luxuriant hollows where dwell bushes of Alpine Eglantine and Honeysuckle. In these rich, grassy hollows, too, are noble plants of the sticky, yellow *Salvia glutinosa*, or Jupiter's

Distaff; the tall mauve *Mulgedium alpinum*, the *Laitue des Alpes* or Alpine Lettuce of the French; the equally tall red *Adenostyles albifrons*; and the Lesser Foxglove (*Digitalis lutea*), with dark, shiny foliage and packed spikes of pale yellow blossoms. The orange-yellow Leopard's-Bane, *Senecio Doronicum*, and the pink and white *Valeriana montana*, are upon the dry, turfy banks; and down upon the lower slopes, among the shrubs or out in the sun-baked open, is a brilliant concourse of yellow *Ononis natrix*, pink *O. rotundifolia* (here and there white in form), blue, Thrift-like *Jasione montana*, tall, rich-blue, open-flowered *Campanula persicifolia*, and pure yellow, red-stamened *Verbascum phlomoides*, finest of the Mulleins. Intense-blue clumps of Hyssop enliven the hot, shaly spaces; and here, too, is *Linum tenuifolium*, a Flax with delicate lilac flowers; the Golden Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), which, with the white *C. acaulis*, is so useful for winter decoration: the exquisite pink and white rambling Vetch, *Coronilla varia*; and *Dianthus sylvestris* and *D. Carthusianorum* are wellnigh everywhere in pink and red abundance—the latter sometimes running to so deep and fiery a shade as to be found worthy of the additional name of *atrorubens*.

Truly, this is a "sun-kissed land of plenty," with July blazoned in tones of utmost triumph! Yet harmony, restraint, refinement, have not in any way been sacrificed. Our sense of this is so acute that when we return to the plains, the gardens and their gorgeous burdens are apt to jar upon us, as will vulgarity or a flagrant want of taste.

After some three months spent in intimacy with these slopes and fields, go down to the swallow's summer quarters—to Martigny, or elsewhere on the plain—and mark the Zinnias and French Marigolds, Asters and Sweet-Williams, and the flaming beds of Petunias, Salvias, and Geraniums. Mark how gross seems all this "cultivation" after the Alpine wildness. You are at once constrained to ask yourself, What is there derogatory in wildness if to be cultivated is to be as these garden flowers? You see at once more clearly than possibly you ever saw before that, after all, refinement is largely a relative quantity, and that even the Rose, Dean Hole's "Queen Rosa," can appear coarse after you have spent a season with the Gentian.

And perhaps it is this feeling that can account in some measure for our habit of isolating all Alpines upon rockworks. Perhaps it prompts us

to treat them with special deference ; and though we will not, cannot deny the Balsam, or the Tropeolum, or the Cactus Dahlia our loudest acclamations ; though we keep for these and such-like products of cultivation a proud place in our affections, hailing them as familiars allied most intimately to our ordinary, worldly natures,—though, I say, we hold this grosser, gaudier vegetation with loving tenacity to our hearts, yet is our rarer self in instant touch with these Alpine wild-flowers, and, as it were, conducts them honourably to a shrine apart.

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The Aster and the Edelweiss are now in bloom above us, and we are “list’ning with nice distant ears” to the chime of the cattle-bells, wind-wafted from the higher pastures, half wishing it were our business to climb. We could, if we would, be again with the youth of the year ; for one of the delightful possibilities of Alpine residence is to be able to follow spring and summer well into the heart of autumn. But this year we dare not ; our task is to watch these half-way fields to the end of the floral seasons. Nor is our lot a hard one. Though flower-land hereabouts is now nearly a dream of yesterday, yet have we much that can

still hold us to the spot, enchanted and instructed ; though for some few days past the fields have seen their best, and are now for the most part spacious park-like pleasaunces of yellowish-green, yet have we still the famous setting of

“ . . . dreaming mountains,
Lifted from the world together ” ;

yet have we still the vast, irreproachable arena which, there is no gainsaying, has helped towards the deep and lasting impression we have gathered from the meadows.

Over yonder, towering high above the Grand St. Bernard road, and reflected snow for snow and precipice for precipice in the placid waters of the lake, is the Grand Combin, one of the noblest units of “ those great constellations of snow-peaks which Nature has massed, in splendid and prodigal confusion,” in this part of Switzerland ; away, at the end of the Val Ferret, are the white and graceful lines of the Grand Golliaz, flanked on the near side by the *massif* of Saleinaz, and on the further side by the Groupe du Grand Saint-Bernard ; while, immediately above us, suffused with the red of the flowering Rhododendron, are the steep and rocky masses of the Breyaz, the Clocher

d'Arpette, and the Catogne, that curious mountain that can be seen from Vevey and Lausanne, a sugarloaf-like cone, blocking the very centre of the Rhône Valley.

What a happy thing it is that in this neighbourhood the mountains are reminiscent of nothing except their own giant individualities. How vexing when this is otherwise—when, I mean, there is a lion rock, or a weeping woman, or a head of Napoleon in the landscape; as when Mark Twain discovered that one of the aiguilles flanking Mont Blanc “took the shapely, clean-cut form of a rabbit’s head.” At Château d’Oex, for instance, the outline of the Gummfluh is a really creditable profile likeness of the great Gladstone with his collar, and that of the Rubli next door presents the profile of O’Connell, the Irish patriot. Apart from the damage inflicted upon the landscape by the intrusion of party politics, such huge examples of Nature’s unconscious incursions into portraiture, when once they have made themselves plain, become a distressing obsession; and especially is this so for the artist who attempts to paint these mountains without producing a puzzle-picture. Fortunately, there are some places which up to the present seem to know nothing of such un-

toward resemblances in their surroundings ; fortunately, there are some beauty-spots which have so far escaped the eye with the disturbing gift of "seeing forms" in clouds and trees and whatnot ; and Champex is one such. At Champex we may rest and dream without fear of our indulgence degenerating into a nightmare.

But this is not such a season for dreaming as was the spring ; we are far more of the world than we were when the Vernal Gentian, that "turquoise lighting a ground of green," was heralding all that is now so rapidly falling before the scythe. Yet it must not be supposed that these fields have lost all power to nourish or stimulate the imagination. The configuration and nature of the ground are so varied that haymaking is a more lengthy and irregular operation than it is upon the plains. We have only to turn to the ousy land where the Grass-of-Parnassus¹ opens its white, green-veined, Ranunculus-like flowers among the large, rich-blue bells of *Campanula Scheuchzeri* and the tall, paler blue spikes of *Polemonium cœruleum*, the well-

¹ The name "Grass-of-Parnassus" often occasions wonder ; for the plant, a member of the St. John's Wort tribe, shows no affinity to grass. Anne Pratt, in her celebrated book on English Wild-flowers, says the name possibly arises from the fact that the plant "is as common as the very grass itself on Mount Parnassus."

known Jacob's Ladder of our gardens ; or to the drier stretches where the Heather is just tinting its olive-green branches with a suspicion of rose, and the Rampions, Arnica, Hieracium, and Brown Gentian are mingling with the warm grey, feathery seed-heads of *Anemone sulphurea*. Here we find the flowers and butterflies as numerous and as gay as ever ; here among the grasses is *Banagna Atrata*, the little dull-black moth with white-tipped wings, seeking sanctuary from the devastating work of the reapers ; *Zygoena carniolica*, one of the most distinct and fascinating of the bright Burnet butterflies, a stranger to England, greedily absorbed upon the flowers of the Scabious ; numberless Fritillaries, speeding hither and thither, their burnished pearl-backed wings flashing in the sunlight,—here, in fact, we have summer at its height, uninjured, undisturbed—a place, as Walden was, where we may “transact some private business with the fewest obstacles.”

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Messieurs les etrangers (how good a name !) are now arriving by the hundred. Flora's Feast in this region may be said to be over, and the table is all but cleared. For full two months have we been revelling in a luxury of colour which no

PARADISIA LILIASTRUM, the Paradise or
St. Bruno's Lily.



other two months make any but an indifferent attempt to approach; and it is when these two months have run their unique, delightful course that the vast majority of our fellows arrive. How strangely perverse a state of things is this! How curiously sunken in the groove of custom!

The fields are bald, the slopes are shorn or ragged, and the grass that is left standing is looking for the most part very "seedy." The golden-flowered, pink-flowered, and white-flowered Sedums are blossoming upon the field-rocks; the Willow-Herb is lighting up the rough and stony places with its rosy-red spikes; the Bilberry's fruit is turning a dusty blue and its foliage here and there is showing promise of a fiery autumn; the Rhododendron is developing on its thick leaves the brilliant red excrescences which, like the hairy, red excrescences on our common Dog Rose, are said to be so efficacious in cases of rheumatism; the dainty, black-bordered Damon "Blue" butterfly flits from the Heather to stray blooms of Arnica and Astrantia, and many a brown Erebia is hampered and tired out by a horde of red parasites beneath its wings. Summer, in fact, is leaning obviously towards autumn, and we can expect nothing more of note from these meadows, except

a lovely wealth of magenta-pink *Colchicum* or "Autumn Crocus" in August and September.

When visitors, arriving at this late stage in Flora's fortunes, see my coloured transcripts of the fields in May and June, they think that I, like any prejudiced enthusiast, have falsified my evidence. They find the pictures *ben trovato*, and they say: "How beautiful! but of course you have used an artist's licence?" They look at the shaven or dingy fields, then again at my paintings, and they tell me plainly they think they can prove an *alibi* for the flowers in spring, or, at any rate, for a greater part of those I have depicted. And I—I can only assure them their case has "no leg to stand upon." I can only insist that if they knew of my despair when seated with my picture among the flowers in spring—my despair of ever being able to give more than an inkling of the glorious riot that surrounded me—they would suspect the truth; and that if next year they came here and witnessed for themselves, then, when again they looked upon my pictures, they would curl the lip and speak of insufficiency.

I am aware that it is, of course, not possible for many of the late-coming visitors to leave the home shores earlier in the year: business is busi-

ness, schooling is schooling, fixed holidays are fixed holidays. But without doubt there are many who could be more timely, if they chose—many who in June are crowding at Montreux, or Geneva, or Lucerne, thinking it too early for the mountains. For there are many who are persuaded that spring is a dangerous period in the Alps. They will tell you in all seriousness, as they have told me, that it is in spring in the Alps that the microbes re-awaken after their winter's sleep, and that, therefore, it is better to be in the towns; in the towns, mark you, where the microbes, more monstrous and numerous, rarely if ever, slumber—or, if they do so, it is with one eye open!

Then there are those who, because they know nothing about flowers, are convinced that the Alps for them would be a place of *ennui* in the spring when high excursions are not yet possible. But what a mistake it is to imagine we must be botanists or gardeners in order to feel a full joy in these fields! No particular knowledge is required to appreciate them; there is no preemptory need to know by name a Geranium from an Orchid, a Pansy from a Cauliflower. Indeed, I am not at all sure but that the "plain man" or woman does not really enjoy them more than does the plant-

specialist. For joy comes mostly fuller with the broader moments of life, and analysis is apt to injure the soul-stirring harmony of things. And as the merely emotional value of these fields is immense, their appeal is quite as general as it is particular, perhaps even more so ; for the emotional qualities of anything are more acceptable to the man-in-the-street than are its precise and reasoned quantities. And, just as there are far fewer musicians within the ranks of executants than outside, so there are more flower-lovers and lovers of floral beauty outside the ranks of botany and gardening than there are within. Thus amid these fields the plain, expansive man or woman need be in no fear of *ennui*. *Ennui* !—why, even when the visitors do come and the flowers have seen their best, there is no *ennui* ! Then how much more inspiring must it be when the fields are in their hey-day, not their hay-day !

It is, then, upon all and sundry that I urge the claims of the Alps from the middle of May to mid-July ; it is to the merest tyro in plant-lore, as well as to the botanical and gardening enthusiast, that I say, and say in all persuasiveness of conviction : “ You know not what you miss by failing

‘ To catch the master-note of Nature’s lyre ’ ;

you know not what you lose by neglecting the call of the flowers from off these Alpine fields."

Go where you will—Champex alone is not the Alpine throne of Flora ; she reigns superbly to right and left, from Neuchatel to Valais, from Tessin to Geneva—go where you will amid the Alps and you will find fields that shall enchant you, rejuvenating your spirit and causing the "knapsack of custom," full of "city estimates of great and small, wise and foolish," to slip from your back. The plains of the world are the better for the mountains of the world, and in no respect more so than when the mountains are a-flower.

CHAPTER X

THE AUTUMN CROCUS

“ Tu viens, Automne,
Tu viens ensevelir dans tes habits de fête
Les cadavres couchés au champ de leur défaite.”

ALOYS BLONDEL (the Swiss Poet).

PERHAPS the only flower to bless, and bless again, the passage of the scythe over the damp slopes and fields of Alpine Switzerland is *Colchicum autumnale*, the so-called Autumn Crocus; for, from the close-cropped grass it pushes up its blossoms when all other field-growth has done its utmost. What sorry plight it would be in if the tall yellowing plants and grasses were still left standing, cumbering the ground with a dense and matted vegetation! It would be smothered; or, at best, it would have a fearsome struggle to see the sky. One wonders how it contrived when, in ages past, these meadows went uncut. One wonders if the active appetites of browsing animals sufficed to

clear the ground in anticipation of its scheduled advent; and, should this not have been the case, one wonders if at that time it were an inhabitant of such fields as these, or whether it were denizened in more propitious places?

For as soon as the haymakers have gone their way, this lovely flower begins its apparition. Often, even within a week of the haymakers' visit, hundreds upon hundreds of its creamy-white pointed buds will show as if by magic above the close turf; and after a day or two more of sunshine, the fields will have regained what is almost springtime life and gaiety. Many of us were sighing whilst we watched the scythe's disastrous progress, and were saying that all was over and it was time to be moving plainwards; but those of us who knew, said: "Wait—wait! These fields have yet another trump-card to play!"

"What awe and worship follow in her wake,
When Nature works wild magic all her own!"

A week ago we looked for colour to the autumn-infected bush and tree, and now quite suddenly, over the tired fields, there steals a pale magenta glow, almost as the spring-glow spread by the Bird's-Eye or Mealy Primrose; a week ago we

lived and dreamed upon the past, and now we are startled back to the present by this, "the last that the damp earth yields"—last but not least—last but in some ways equal to the first.

This *Colchicum* receives, in spring, in summer, and in autumn, as much general attention as any plant in Alpine or sub-Alpine vegetation. In spring and summer the cluster of rich-green Lily-like leaves attracts the eye and raises the curiosity and expectation of even the casual observer, especially when this observer notices what he almost invariably takes to be a flower-bud nestling in the heart of the leaves; for if there is one family of plants which the world worships more than another, it is the Lily family. And this Autumn Crocus is very commonly taken for a Lily—a Lily soon to burst into rare and glorious bloom.

But it is not the flower-bud our casual observer sees; it is the seed-head. The plant blooms, leafless, in the autumn; its seed-vessel is tucked away for the winter a foot or more beneath the surface of the ground, to rise with the leaves in the spring, and to ripen with the leaves in the summer. Yet, if our casual friend is wrong as regards the nature

ROSA ALPINA, the thornless Alpine Eglantine:



of the seed-head in the spring, he is right as regards the nature of the leaves ; though he is again wrong in the autumn, and this time as regards the nature of the flower. For the Colchicum is not a Crocus. Although its magenta-pink blossom is of Crocus-like form, it has six stamens and three styles with which the humble-bee may busy himself ; whereas the Crocus has but three stamens and one style. There does exist a purple autumnal Crocus—*Crocus nudiflorus*, indigenous to England, and with the same habit of flowering and producing its seed as the Colchicum's—but this and the Colchicum belong to different natural orders.

The Colchicum is a member of the Lily family, and, as such, is related to some of the most distinguished members of the flower-world. For this reason, too, it is allied to such diverse plants as the Herb Paris, the Lily-of-the-Valley, the Asparagus, and the Spiked Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*), an indigenous English plant whose young spring shoots are sold and eaten in Bath as “French” Asparagus. It has also as blood-relation the Onion and the Garlic, which, according to Professor G. S. Boulger, “were given divine honours by the ancient Egyptians” ; also the curious Butcher’s Broom or Knee Holly,

and the real Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*), whose bulbs in Palestine are cooked and eaten.

But if the bulbs and young shoots of some members of this singularly "mixed" family are esteemed as table delicacies, not so the bulbs and shoots of the Colchicum, for these are poisonous to a high degree—in fact, the whole of the plant may be labelled "Dangerous." Although the flower is less poisonous than the seed and the bulb, yet many a time I have seen bees which had sought refuge from the night or from rough and stormy weather, lying prone and stark within the lovely pink chalices, victims of a misplaced confidence. The seed contains a deadly alkaloid (colchicin), used especially in cases of gout. Where the plant grows in quantities it depreciates the value of the meadows; for the cattle, wiser in their generation than the bees, give it a wide berth at all seasons. And it is no easy subject to drive from the fields when once it has gained firm footing. It buries its dark chestnut-coloured, scaly bulb at least a foot down in the peaty soil, necessitating the cutting of a good-sized hole before it can be extirpated. Hence, if it is growing as it almost invariably does, in fairly close-packed abundance,

the meadow will have to be deep-dug all over ; and such radical measure as this the peasants as a rule refuse to take, contenting themselves with pulling up the leaf and stalk before the fields are cut, or with sorting them out from the new-mown hay.

As a plant indigenous to the British Isles it is very local, though widely distributed. Saffron Walden, in Essex, is named after it, and it is found in Ireland and in some parts of Scotland, especially upon the damp meadows of limestone districts.

The name *Colchicum*, of Greek origin, is said to be derived from Colchis, a province in Asia famous for poisonous herbs. In England, besides the names of Autumn Crocus and Meadow Saffron (*Crocus sativus* is really the true Saffron Crocus), its flower is known in some parts of the country as Naked Boy, and in Dorset as Naked Lucy, an allusion, of course, to it being bare of leaves. In France its popular names are seemingly more various, and besides the general one of *Colchique*, it has those of *Veilleuse*, *Veillette*, *Violon*, *Vache*, and *Tue-chien* ; while in the patois of Marseilles it is known as *Bramo-Vaco*, and in that of Gascony as *Safra dès prats*. In

Germany its best-known appellation is *Herbst-Zeitlose*.

There is an Alpine form of the Meadow Saffron—*Colchicum alpinum*—and this is to be found upon the fields from an altitude of about 3,000 feet to some 4,500 feet, according to M. Henry Correvon, and from about 1,800 feet to some 6,000 feet, according to Professor Flahault. Mr. Newell Arber calls it a rare plant “sometimes found in Canton Tessin and the Valais,” but my own experience is that it is local rather than rare, and that it is fairly frequent in Canton Valais, especially in non-limestone regions. Its habit is the same as that of *autumnale*: two to three upright leaves surrounding the fruit in the spring, and the flowers appearing “naked” in autumn upon “dim fields fresh with blooming dew.” But the leaves are narrower than those of *autumnale*, and the flower is smaller, daintier, more *petite*, with a suspicion of canary-yellow tinting the stem, which, in *autumnale*, is white or creamy-white.

I have sometimes noted the two—*autumnale* and *alpinum*—hob-nobbing upon the same slope or field. Such fraternity exists, for instance, quite near to the snug little village of Trient, beneath

the Col de la Forclaz and the Col de Balme, and again on a rich grassy slope by the lake of Champex ; and where this occurs the difference between the two flowers is manifest. *Colchicum alpinum* may be only the Alpine form of *autumnale*, but if it is, it is, I believe, a fixed form—a form which, unlike some Alpine forms of lowland flowers (such as, for example, *Anthyllis vulneraria*), steadfastly maintains its highland character when transported to the gardens of the plain. For if instability exists, why should we find upon the fields where both do congregate, no intermediate forms marking the passage of *autumnale* to *alpinum* and vice versa? I believe it to be as constant as is *Gentiana brachyphylla*, although this is said to be but a high Alpine form of *G. verna*. I believe it to be as “constant as the northern star.”

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In a poem to “Noon,” Michael Field sings :

“ . . . Sharply on my mind
Presses the sorrow ; fern and flower are blind ” ;

and this is no uncommon thought, no uncommon “sorrow” for others than poets to have. Pity for the dear, blind flowers ; pity, therefore, for

such a flower as the Autumn Crocus ; is it justified ? I imagine it is not. I venture even to say I am sure it is not.

Here is a flower that is exceptional. It defies the general rule, the usual sequence of life for flowers. It reverses the customary order of events and, so to speak, turns day into night. And it does so with the utmost felicity. Its well-being is ideal, for it shows perfect adaptation to its circumstance. What, then, have we ? "What rumour of what mystery ?" Can it be a rumour of disability through blindness ? Is it a rumour of the mystery of justice ? Is it, that is to say, a rumour of "injustice" ? I think not ; nay, I am sure not. It is, if you ask me, a rumour of that wide and many-sided efficiency to which we refer when we declare : "There are more ways than one of killing a cat."

The fault is quite a common one with us. We fall into it each time we talk of animals—the "poor, dumb animals." Wherefore poor ? Wherefore dumb ? Man, noisily verbose, condescends to commiserate with anything less noisy or less verbose than himself. To him, an absence of capacity for a volubility matching his own marks unhappiness. What, he asks, would not a cow

give for humanity's gift of the gab? Anything short of a garrulous chatterbox of a mouse must be a wretched mouse!

How contorted a view to take when every living thing (except, perhaps, man) is capable of adequate communion with its kind, and when that which is adequate is happy! The method of communication may not be man's method; he may not understand a sound of it, and there may even be no sound for him to hear; nevertheless there is language clear and effective—perhaps more clear and more effective than his own. Who shall say the language of the ant or the bee is not more developed and more efficient than either English or Chinese? Efficiency does not ultimately lie in complexity, neither does it ultimately depend upon noise.

I have no doubt that a horse, unless he has better sense, feels the profoundest pity for his garrulous master, and counts him among the most unhappy of his acquaintances. A lion's roar or a bat's squeak may contain a wealth of information such as it would take Man an hour's hard talking to translate; and both may indicate a world of happiness.

Man, the rowdiest animal in Creation, is also

the most conceited. He is for ever thanking his stars he is not as others are ; and this enables him to misplace a vast amount of pity. I warrant the poor, dumb, grunting pig is perfectly happy—far happier than the most glib of human orators ; and far more to the point. Poor, dumb animals ? Why, what a poor, talkative creature is man ! And how unmindful of his own proverb about “ little pitchers ” !

Eyes are not everything, ears are not everything, tongues are not everything. Neither are eyes, ears, and tongues together everything. There is sight without eyes, hearing without ears, and speech without tongues. Science can prove it, when Science chooses. For there is sense behind our senses—sense as unerring as any declared by our senses. I have, indeed, a shrewd suspicion that we may be poor beside the ant ; and I have a somewhat uncomfortable feeling that in some ways we may be paupers beside poor, blind *Colchicum autumnale*.

Have you ever stayed for autumn in the Alps ? Have you seen the Bilberry glowing among the stolid Rhododendron ; the Eglantine and Berberis bowing beneath the weight of their fiery fruit ; the long-tailed and the crested titmouse hunting

Young plants of *VERATRUM ALBUM*, together with *SALVIA PRATENSIS*, *PHYTEUMA*, *BETONICAEFOLIUM*, *P. ORBICULARE*, the white and the yellow Euphrasia, and the yellow Clover, drawn on the spot at the beginning of July.



in tuneful bands from sombre Pine to yellowing Larch; the massed companies of piping choughs surveying for food-stuff upon the open slopes; and the dark grey or russet viper basking boldly on the sun-baked path? Have you known the mists and mystery that soften the great and gorgeous carnival with which Nature celebrates the closing of the round of her live seasons? If you have, then you will, I know, bear witness with me to the fullness of this season's allure; you will agree that everything around you is in rich accord to sing a glad, gay pæan ere taking a meed of well-earned repose; and you will admit that, as an item in this splendid spectacle, nothing is more important, more appropriate, than *Colchicum autumnale* and *alpinum*.

Among the most delightful of life's moments are many of life's surprises, and in the floral world few surprises can supply more delightful moments than the unexpected advent of this "Crocus"

" . . . fashioned in the secret mint of things
And bidden to be here."

Spring tries hard to repeat herself in the two Meadow Saffrons. One day

"The meadows are waving high
With plummy grasses of grey";

the next, the scythe comes, and, like Harlequin's wand, passes restless athwart the ripe scene—and, hey, presto! the fields have all the closeness of the fields in springtime, and are studded with countless rosy stars of the Autumn Crocus, just as, in the first days of the year, they are studded with the myriad rosy stars of *Bulbocodium vernalis*, near relative of our tardy *Colchique*. It is September struggling to be May or, even, April. It is the goddess of the flower-fields bidding us to a rosy hope in her recurrent reign.

And yet, and yet—autumn is noticeably in the blood of things. This is not quite the rosiness of the year's youth. There is something of mauve in it; something of a becoming consideration for old age. It is obviously an autumnal pink—a pink which falls without ado into the glorious colour-scheme of Nature's kindling funeral-pyre. It has something of the spirit of the colouring surrounding a Chinese burial. There is sadness, if you will; but there is gladness, whether you will or not. Chopin's famous Funeral March might have been inspired by autumn's pale-magenta "Crocus."

PART II

A PLEA

“ Viens au jardin ! Viens au jardin ! Je veux te dire
Ce que je pense, car ma pensée est à toi
Comme la brume au sol et la fumée au toit.
Viens au jardin ! ”

ROSEMONDE GÉRARD, *Les Jardins*.

CHAPTER XI

ALPINE FIELDS FOR ENGLAND

“En multipliant la beauté, en donnant au monde des humbles le sens de la sincère beauté, vous lui aurez fait la plus exquise et peut-être la plus utile des charités.”—PIERRE VIGNON.

THE title of this chapter will come as a shock to some, and they will think it an insult to, and an outrage upon, Nature's existing efforts for English meadows. In my previous volume, “Alpine Flowers and Gardens,” I ventured some mild wonder “that more attempts are not made in England to create Alpine pastures,” and I added: “Alpine rock-works we have in hundreds, but a stretch of meadow-land sown or planted with Alpine field-flowers seems as yet to be but rarely attempted.” And of this mild wonder some of my critics fell foul, and I was told that I seemed “to forget the peculiar beauty of English pasture as it is, with its buttercups, cowslips, and orchis, daisies

and red sorrel." But let me reassure these nervous champions of what is "made in England." I will be the last to slight or traduce the exquisite restraint of our typical home-fields, or to despise the spirit that can appreciate their charm and place it higher than the charm of alien fields. The inhabitants of a country are intimately affected by the country's fields, and an Englishman is far more a product of his meadows than even he would suppose. His sturdy advocacy of a floral sufficiency which stops at Dandelions and Buttercups is part proof of this. Reciprocity in Nature is a very subtle and far-reaching law, and man owes much of his temperament and habit of mind to the landscape and its constituent parts. In this way, undoubtedly, the Englishman is largely indebted to the comparative taciturnity of his fields. Far be from me, then, to under-rate their value and their charm.

And yet, may I not think that this value and charm can perhaps be augmented? We love and revel in our native meadows as they are—their Buttercups, their Dandelions, their Daisies, and their Grasses; how much greater would not the love and revel be if here and there a generous measure of Swiss mountain-wealth were added?

Such measure would be no violent innovation ; it would be a natural amplification of the hereditary trend of our instinct for the beautiful. Swiss mountain-fields are not like Japanese gardens : our nature responds to them without affectation, for in them our mind

“Doth straight its own resemblance find.”

It is all very well for confirmed materialists to say we have not to study this side of the question because it is too fanciful ; it is not to be dismissed by calling us mystics. Fancy has led men to much that is now inseparable from their understanding, and the mystic has stood for ages upon spots where Science is only now confidently placing her foot. Really and truly, too, the æsthetic aspect of life comes under the head of the utilitarian, and it matters more than much that is deemed material. Ruskin thought that “a wood of English trees is of more value to humanity than a Bank ;” but this savours of too dogmatic thinking, and of the extreme dream of a specialist enthusiast. Without drawing invidious comparisons between the utilities of life, we may say that the woods and fields have an importance all their own, and that, by increasing their beauty, we increase their importance.

I do not for one instant think that in Maytime we could improve upon the weighty wealth of Hawthorn set amid knee-deep meadows of Buttercups and Parsnips; for the rare witchery of it all is unmistakable. I would leave it as it stands: British *par excellence*, unrivalled for quiet prosperity, for unique felicity. Nor would I tamper with the wealth of Primrose copse, or attempt to meddle with the woods of Bluebells, Daffodils, and Foxgloves. To do any such thing would be purest sacrilege—and a wild conceit into the bargain! No, no; there is much, very much in Britain's countryside that rightly stands in the front rank of Nature's happiest creations, and it were mad impertinence to think to oust it or to improve it by inept additions. But these front-rank marvels are not everywhere. Many is the spot that might reasonably be bettered; many the wayside field, copse, bank, or railway-cutting that would repay us for a little help; and it is in such places (*pax*, O Farmer! have I not gone round to avoid treading on your property?)—it is with regard to such places that I do suggest we might take a leaf from Nature's Alpine book.

But why, some will ask—why interfere with our indigenous field-flowers, and thus with our pure-

ARNICA, the Brown Gentian (*G. purpurea*),
CAMPANULA BARBATA, and the fiery
little *HIERACIUM AURANTIACUM*,
painted from life in the fields towards the
middle of July.



bred English fields; why cause anything so individual to become mongrel? And this sounds plausible until we examine the pedigree of some of our "indigenous" flowers, and find that they are "doubtful natives," and owe their presence among us to the Roman invader or are "escapes from cultivation." Precedent is therefore on our side. Then why should not we of this twentieth century do as did the Romans for Britain—only with a little more method, not trusting to the seed of Alpine field-flowers coming inadvertently to England in our portmanteaux, our boots, or our hair? We ought not to be afraid of the inevitable trend of things towards a more general, more common aspect. We may well nurse some particular individuality so long as it is eminently useful, but at the same time we should leave our judgment open with regard to accretion, or, as the dictionary calls it, "increase by natural growth." Insularity is a disappearing quantity, and there surely will and must come a time when we shall chiefly hear of it from books of ancient history and scandalous *Mémoires*.

But if for the present we cannot bring ourselves to continue systematically the work of the Romans, let us at least take in hand some of the field-plants

we have already with us, and induce them to become more general and abundant. Even in that way we should approach to something of Alpine prodigality ; for there is quite a goodly number of British plants among the colour-giving subjects of an Alpine meadow. There is, for instance, *Geranium sylvaticum* (the rose or blue-mauve Wood Crane's-bill), rare, and found mostly upon pastures in the north ; or there is *Astrantia major* (the pinky-green-and-white Masterwort), an "escape," near Ludlow and Malvern ; or *Phyteuma spicata* (the cream-coloured Rampion), found only in Sussex ; or *Salvia pratensis* (the rich-blue Meadow Clary), scarce, and confined to fields in Kent, Oxfordshire, and Cornwall ; or *Polemonium coeruleum* (the blue Jacob's Ladder or Greek Valerian), rare, and confined to the north of England. Why should not such as these be brought from out their hiding and be induced to people propitious places in a more abundant way ?

No sooner, however, does "sweet reasonableness" begin to dawn upon our imaginations, and we commence to take kindly to our idea, than we are confronted by the irate farmer—hasty and nervous lest we and our "weeds" have designs

upon his domain—upbraiding us for daring to suggest such palpably bad farming. But we have no intent to meddle with *his* meadows. Yet if we had, what answer can we make him? Is it of any use for us to point to Swiss experience of flowery pastures, telling him that the finest cheeses—those of Gruyère and Emmenthal—are made on the middle or lower “alpen,” and that, in fact, they come from fields which are literally crammed with lovely flowering plants? Is it of any use assuring him that cows fed on the comparatively flowerless fields of Fully, for example, opposite Martigny in the Rhône Valley, give not only less, but less rich milk than those fed on the fields of Chemin, Chables, or Champex, and that, whenever possible, the flowerless hay goes to the horses? Is it of any use pointing out these facts to our scandalised friend? Possibly not. Possibly he will retort: “Necessity makes high use of just whatsoever is within reach; other lands other ways; circumstance creates ideals.” And quite possibly he will be right.

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But whatever may be said in disparagement of the introduction of Alpine plants into England's fields in general, little or no objection can be made

to fields of such plants as adjuncts to Alpine rock-gardens, or as embellishments to park and pleasure. Here we are in a domain which is "orthodoxly" regarded as æsthetic, and not as practical or utilitarian. And, after all, we had best begin by the thin end of the wedge—we had best commence with these flower-fields as a "luxury"; afterwards—as is quite likely—we may be able to chronicle "escapes" into the general scheme of the countryside.

I can think of no feature of the Alpine landscape which could add so much charm and interest to English Alpine gardens as an Alpine meadow, and it is no mean matter for surprise that this feature has not so far claimed the attention it most assuredly merits. Moreover, an Alpine rock-garden shorn of its meadow-setting is less than a picture devoid of its frame. Can any one who knows the Alps imagine what they and their rock-flora would be without the fields and grassy slopes? Would there be the same widespread and immediate interest? It is inconceivable, for these fields and slopes are, as it were, the exquisitely sumptuous hall through which, amazed and wondering, we pass to gain the rudeness and refinement of Alpine asceticism proper.

Then there is another and, I think, a crying reason for the creation of fields to supplement our rockworks ; we garden at present, for the most part, as if all Alpines were rock-plants, whereas quite an important percentage are purely field-flowers. It will be said that in England's comparatively luxurious climate the grasses would overwhelm the Alpines and that, therefore, it is only wise to place these latter out of harm's way. But, although there certainly are some subjects of an Alpine meadow which could scarcely be expected to grapple successfully with English conditions, yet there is a whole host that could do so, especially if care were taken to choose suitable grasses and to exclude certain English weeds (the Field Bindweed, for example, or the Plantain). In advocating any such adoption as the present, we must not be so unphilosophic as to be sweeping and dogmatic ; we must be quick to recognise that such subjects of the Alpine grass-lands as *Viola calcarata* and *Gentiana verna, excisa*, and *nivalis* shall of necessity be ushered to the rockwork when they arrive in our island home. But, frankly, I believe there are many of these plants which would be altogether grateful to find themselves in a field rather than in a garden-border or upon a rockery.

Will any one deny that a plant which, in a wild, free state, invariably chooses to dwell upon the meadows is not more at home there than when robbed of such pressing, self-sought company? Will any one deny that, for instance, *Campanula rhomboidalis*, *Paradisica Liliastrum*, *Salvia pratensis*, *Narcissus poeticus*, *Veratrum album*, or *Phyteuma betonicifolium* are not infinitely happier when growing together in close company with grasses than when standing in select isolation upon the rockery or the garden-border?

Possibly it will be argued that these field-plants show themselves so much better on the border or the rockwork. But do they? Does *Colchicum*, for example, look better against the brown earth of a border than upon a thick-set carpet of green? Does *Veronica spicata* ever look better than when seen upon the fields of the Alps? Is it possible that the Meadow-Orchids are not at their best among the grasses? For my own part, I find many of these plants look thin and lonesome when carefully set apart "to do themselves full justice." In nature they are items in a rich reciprocal scheme of intimacy, and in this assuredly is their truest happiness; therefore, as part of this scheme they must certainly be seen at their best. Snatched

from their social birthright and perched in grandeur upon a rockwork, they cannot but have wistful thoughts of lost companionship.

Owners of rockworks may protest that they do all they possibly can for their captives, treating them as tenderly as they would any beautiful bird in a cage ; they may protest that their captives are fed and watered most carefully and know little or nothing of the struggle for existence which rules upon Alpine meadows. And this is all very right and proper as far as it goes ; but very many of these plants could be treated even more kindly and properly by allowing them something of their ancestral habits. That which untrammelled Nature decrees for her offspring is inevitably best, and we should take practical note of it where possible. We ourselves are rebels and, as modern instance shows, are very conscious of it in our more rational moments, crying aloud in a hazy, frightened way, that we must "get back to Nature !" Why, then, compel rebellion in so many a thing we admire ? Such compulsory estrangement from what is natural is a sorry sort of kindness. Let us put back the field-flowers into the fields—or, at any rate, as many as we may.

To a great number of flower-lovers this would

be a much simpler matter than the building and tending of rockworks (though, of course, the ideal should be for the field to companion or environ the rockery). It would be less complicated, and it would not entail such a variety of specialist knowledge. Many of a kind, and each kind robust and, for the most part, ordinary—that should be the rule among the plants for our Alpine meadow. Fractious, exigent rarities would naturally not be welcome. Fields are perhaps loveliest when planned upon broad lines. There is no need to make extraordinary efforts to find sports and forms; no need to do more than Nature does—here and there a white or porcelain-grey *Campanula rhomboidalis*, here and there a pale-pink *Geranium sylvaticum*, here and there a white *Salvia pratensis*, here and there a white *Colchicum autumnale*. Forms and sports and vagaries are all very well, but in these meadows it is the type-plant which counts. A field of *Salvia*, *Campanula*, and *Geranium* is blue and mauve; that is the general effect, and variation from it rarely counts in the colour-scheme. Eccentricity we may keep for the proud eminence of our rockworks.

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If it is not possible to transplant to the plains

The tall yellow *HYPOCHÆRIS UNIFLORA*,
CENTAUREA UNIFLORA, the Golden
Hawkweed (*Crepis aurea*) drawn from
life in the July fields.



the clean, invigorating air which goes so far to form the joy exhaled of Alpine meadows; if we may not lay on the wonderful atmosphere of the Alps as we may the ozone from the seaside,—we can at least take the flowers, those brilliant children of the Alpine ether, and thus help materially towards mountain purity in our parks and gardens. Some of the gaiety might be lost in the process—some of that intensity of colouring which steals over the very grass as it climbs the mountain-side and encroaches upon the kingdom of the Rhododendron. *Astrantia major* might lose its rosy-magenta blush and assume a more or less livid green-white; *Lychnis*, *Geranium*, and *Salvia* might lack something of their Alpine lustre; a certain mildness might reign generally in the place of mountain briskness; but, on the whole, the loss to the flowers would be small and the gain to the garden or the landscape immense, and we should find that we had annexed much of the charm and joy of Alpine days—

“Days lit with the flame of the lamps of the flowers.”

CHAPTER XII

SOME WAYS AND MEANS

“No gardener has made experiments, however small, in the formation of a rock garden and the culture of Alpine plants without bringing a new gladness to himself and others.”—S. REYNOLDS HOLE, *A Book About the Garden*.

FOR such as wish to set about creating an Alpine meadow, either as an attractive feature of their pleasure-grounds or—which is more to the point—as a completing part of their rock-garden, let me at once say that this volume is no detailed *vade mecum*, and that, for the cultural requirements of the plants mentioned, recourse must be had to the many good books already dealing with that phase of the subject. All that is pretended here is to point the way to a much-neglected path in Alpine circumstance and to attempt to arouse the necessary enthusiasm for its better and more just appreciation, incidentally indicating what may be novel in its aspect and untouched by Alpine-

gardening books. To this end, then, I would try to conjure up a representative field or meadow of the Alps. But, before doing so, let me impress upon the reader that, not only will it be no Alpine field in the popular sense, but that we may occasionally have to descend even to the fields of the Swiss plain in order to find one or two subjects which we can use with advantage to enrich our scheme—plants such as the Star of Bethlehem and *Scilla bifolia*. The Swiss plains lie high when judged by English standards; rarely, if ever, do they fall below some 1,200 feet.

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The field I have in my mind's eye as I write these lines is one which, "with its early and exquisite diversities of form and colour"—to quote again from Dean Hole's little book—"is a new and large delight." It is one in which the bulbs, hundreds upon hundreds in number and about five in kind, burst into life with the grass in the first days of spring. White and purple *Crocus vernus*, rosy Crocus-like *Bulbocodium vernum*, and yellow Gagea are the first-comers, quickly followed by the golden Daffodil (*Narcissus Pseudo-narcissus*), the bright blue *Scilla bifolia*, the green-and-white Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*) and its

handsome large-flowered relative, *O. nutans*. Then, following close upon the Violet, Cowslip, and Oxlip, come the earlier of the Orchids—*Orchis Morio*, *O. mascula*, and *O. maculata*. A little later *Myosotis sylvestris* spreads a blue haze over the field, aiding most admirably the lively pink of *Orchis* (*Gymnadenia*) *conopsea*, and rendering the appearance of *Paradisica Liliastrum*, the paper-white Paradise Lily, daintier than ever. And now I see a glorious multitude of Pheasant-eye Narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus*), with here and there a tall, deep blue or purple Columbine. Lemon-yellow *Biscutella lævigata*, too, clear-blue *Linum alpinum*, and white *Potentilla rupestris* blend their blossoms to produce a lovely harmony in true spring-like key. *Muscari comosum* throws up its curious blue-purple spikes, over-topped by the white sprays of *Anthericum Liliago*. And in the moister part of the meadow I see great colonies of *Ranunculus aconitifolius* and the yellow Globe-Flower (*Trollius europæus*) sown in most happy manner with our Ragged-Robin (*Lychnis Flos-cuculi*), presently to be joined by bright-pink regiments of Bistort or Snakeweed (*Polygonum Bistorta*). And then, when *Centaurea montana*, accompanied by *Geranium sylvaticum*, *Salvia pratensis*, *Lychnis dioica* (the

Red Catchfly), *Silene Cucubalus* (the Bladder Campion), and *Polemonium cœruleum* usher in the summer, the field is rich indeed in blue, mauve, lilac, red, and pink, with a distinct leaning towards blue, mauve, and lilac. And these colours seem to hold their own to the end. White may come with the Ox-eye Daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*) and the many Umbelliferæ; red may come with brilliant *Centaurea uniflora* and crimson *C. nigra*, the common Hard-head; yellow may come with tall *Hypochaeris uniflora* and such Buttercups as *Ranunculus bulbosus* and *R. acris*, but blue and mauve and lilac seem always to predominate; for the Rampions (*Phyteuma betonicæfolium* and *P. orbiculare*) and Campanulas (*C. rotundifolia* and *C. rhomboidalis*) join forces with the Meadow Clary and the Wood Crane's-bill and linger on until the Martagon Lily is gone out of flower and the field stands more than ready for the scythe. Indeed, long after the scythe has done its worst, and *Colchicum autumnale* is a thing of yesterday, and autumn's fires have paled, and

“The few late flowers have moisture in the eye,” those flowers, or the major portion of those flowers, will be blue and mauve and lilac—Campanula, Geranium, and Salvia.

A field such as this is a garden in itself, and a revelation, surely, for those who know only our home-fields. And it will be noted that in such a field there need be no destruction of effective English field-flowers. Indeed, the addition of Alpine wealth to our home-fields ought not to oust any but rank invaders, such as the Plantain, the Nettle, or the Bindweed, or other "volunteers," as Californians picturesquely call them. Our Buttercups, Daisies, Orchids, and Red Sorrel should be secure; Dandelions and Ox-eye Marguerites can, and should, continue their reign as of yore; for all of these are constituents of meadows in the Alps. Thus, if we create meadows to companion our rockworks, we should be growing many an Alpine which at present we do not allow among our Alpines; and in this way, if in no other, our Alpine gardens would be far more complete, far more representative, and, therefore, far more worthy the name.

No; because a flower is already common in England is no necessary reason why it should be taboo in any Alpine field we may create in England. Indeed, such common things as the Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), the two Buttercups (*Ranunculus acris* and *R. bulbosus*) and the

Bladder Champion (*Silene Cucubalus*) are most precious. Who that has seen the Marsh Marigold pencilling with golden lines the course of some mountain rivulet through the spring fields, and lying, with *Primula farinosa*, a brilliant mass, in some juicy hollow; or the two Buttercups, blending with acres of *Ranunculus aconitifolius*, and forming a filmy sea of yellow and white; or slopes packed with the Bladder Champion and the tall Rampion (*Phyteuma betonicæfolium*), a perfect picture of grey-white and blue,—who that has seen these common flowers thus growing but has not vowed rarity to be no essential passport to the ranks of beauty? I remember once—it was at Montroc, near the Col des Montets—passing over a meadow-slope of Bladder Champion and Rampion, with just a sprinkling of that other and closely allied Champion, *Silene nutans* (the Nottingham Catchfly), and the effect so fascinated me, as to send up these Champions considerably in my esteem, as subjects with decorative possibilities of which I had not dreamed.

Objection may possibly be taken to the large area required for the creation of an Alpine meadow in comparison with its short duration as “a thing of beauty.” It will perhaps be objected that our

field must be mown; that the ripening growth cannot be allowed "to lie in cold obstruction and to rot"; that, from July to the end of the year, the field will be a stubbly place of emptiness, whereas our rockwork will bear a continual round of interest until the coming of the frost. And this complaint would be reasonable if we were dealing with just an English meadow set with certain Alpine plants to make it gayer than is its habit. But we are not—not, that is to say, if we are contemplating the meadow as a companioning feature of our rock-garden. A typical Alpine meadow is full of "accident"; there is nothing of the billiard-table about its eventful surface. Palpably, it must have been the scene of utmost violence before Nature decked it out with verdure. Steep depressions; wide gullies; abrupt limits, falling suddenly away in a grassless, rocky bank to a rough path below,—such "accidents" as these break its even tenor. Rocks, grey and lichen-flecked, crop up from it here and there—rocks hurled in some past fury from the heights above or borne from afar upon the breast of some ancient glacier; for an Alpine field, more often than not, is a delightful combination of rockwork and pasture. Hence there is accommodation for a much

GENTIANA CAMPESTRIS and *GENTIANA*
BAVARICA.



wider range of plant-life than in a meadow run upon English lines, and the season of interest is, therefore, as long-lived as that of any part of our garden. "Accident," indeed, is the constant characteristic of it, and floral variety the natural corollary. When the hay has been made upon the richer portions of it, the poorer or more broken parts and the rocks continue to abound in blossom, giving us such things as the *Thalictrums*, *Monkshoods*, *Peas*, *Veronicas*, *Pinks*, *Saxifrages*, *Sempervivums*, and *Sedums*.

When, therefore, we choose the parcel of ground to be transformed into a Swiss mountain meadow, we should not be dismayed if its surface is already more than undulating; we should not summon assistance to level it up and smooth it out. We are not proposing to make a croquet-lawn, but are supposed to be inspired by Nature in one of her wild, "irresponsible" moods. Violence, however, should depend upon size. If we are dealing with several acres, we can afford to be grand with regard to "accident"; but if the land at our disposal is, perhaps, half an acre, irregularity should be to scale; for to be artistic we should avoid extravagance.

Rocks, as has been said, are an almost essential

feature of an Alpine field. The ground should rise towards them and should be of a poorer nature than where the grass is to be really meadowy ; for upon the poorer ground we shall be dependent for many colonies of gay and interesting plants which would be out of place, even they could exist, among the thicker grasses. Here we may count upon brilliance long after the Geranium and its field-consorts have been mown down—brilliance afforded by such subjects as *Ononis natrix*, *Linum tenuifolium*, *L. alpinum*, *Jasione montana*, *Campanula spicata* *C. barbata*, *C. persicifolia*, *Trifolium alpinum*, *Eryngium alpinum*, *Vicia onobrychioides*, *Veronica urticifolia*, *Lathyrus heterophyllus*, *Anthyllis vulneraria*, *Carduus defloratus*, *Verbascum phlomooides*, and *Onobrychis viciaefolia*, the rosy Sainfoin or “whole-some hay,” for which the ass is said to bray.

The rocks employed ought, in greater part, to be of a “generous” nature, not hard and unresponsive. They should if possible be even soft (as rocks go) and somewhat liable to disintegration—rocks upon which, with a little preliminary encouragement, Sedums, Dianthus, and Sempervivums can take root. They ought not to be built up to form what is generally recognised as

a rockwork, but should be large, massive, and sparsely set, cropping up from the ground haphazard and as if their greater bulk were beneath the soil. Grass should be encouraged to grow about them, even upon them in places; and *Poa alpina*, *forma vivipara* is a suitable, as well as a most interesting, grass for this purpose. The Alpine Clover, too (*Trefolium alpinum*), may well be encouraged to spread around the base of these rocks and over the ground that slopes up to them. With its large, loose, rosy flower-heads, sometimes white or lilac, it is an ever-welcome June visitor, especially where it luxuriates; as, for instance, at Le Planet, below the French side of the Col de Balme.

I have said that the rocks ought, *in greater part*, to be of a "generous" nature; and I have said this because a hard and unresponsive rock here and there would not be out of place. Although quantity equally with quality is the predominant note in Alpine floral circumstance, it is not an invariable rule, and something of barrenness only adds to the scene of plenty. Moreover, a cold, bare rock with just one cleft in it where some single tuft of *Dianthus*, or of *Veronica saxatilis*, for instance, can cling is often

a very precious object amid a surrounding exuberance of blossom. Often in English rock-gardens there is too little unoccupied rock. Ubiquity of plant life in this respect is not so artistic as when there is a modicum of reticence; nor is it so truthful.

Another by no means inappropriate feature is that which can be lent by shrubs or bushes; not as hedges, for Switzerland, when compared with England, may be said to be devoid of

“ . . . Little lines
Of sportive wood run wild.”

Characteristic commonplaces in England, where, it is said, they cover one and a half million acres, they are rare in Switzerland; or, at any rate, as Leslie Stephen remarked, “those detestable parallelograms, which cut up English scenery with their hedgerows, are sternly confined to the valley.” And in the valley they are comparatively scarce, and lack the charm pertaining to the English hedgerow.

No; if our field is to have an Alpine allure, hedges must be tabu. But a negligent grouping around the rocks or upon the outskirts of the field, of such bushes as *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, *Rosa alpina*, *Berberis vulgaris*, *Rosa pomifera*, *Juniperus nana*, *Sambucus racemosa*, and the two

Honeysuckles, *Lonicera alpigena* and *L. nigra*, would not only enhance the effect and interest, but would tally with Nature as she generally rules in the Alps. Nor would the Bird Cherry (*Prunus avium*), if kept in bush form, be out of place. This lovely spring-flowering tree, treated as a hedgerow subject on the plateau at the back of Lausanne, is an arresting object in the fields around Chamonix at the end of May. And here, with the shade and shelter of such bushes, may come the nobly plumed Goat's Beard (*Spiræa Aruncus*), the mauve and the cream-plumed *Thalictrum aquilegifolium*, the deep-blue *Aconitum napellus*, the violet-blue *A. paniculatum*, the creamy-white *A. Lycoctonum*, the rosy *Adenostyles albifrons*, the ever-graceful Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum verticillatum*), the blue-mauve *Mulgedium alpinum*, the red-brown *Lilium Martagon*, the brilliant orange *L. croceum*, the pale-yellow *Salvia glutinosa*, the golden *Lathyrus luteus*, the pink and feathery *Dianthus superbus*, the Fennel-like *Meum athamanticum*, the distinctive Umbellifer, *Laserpitium latifolium*, besides such Orchids as *Epipactis atrorubens*, *E. latifolia*, *Cephalanthera ensifolia*, *C. pallens*, *C. rubra*, and *Habenaria (Plantanthera) chlorantha*.

If we are to have some kind of boundary-mark to our field, let it be by preference a low, mortarless wall of fairly large rough stones or pieces of rock built up with earth—a sort of rockwork wall. These walls may be met with almost anywhere in the Swiss mountains, and are frequently composed of fragments of rock which at one time and another have been strewn about the fields by rockfalls or avalanches. They often become the home of brilliant masses of such plants as *Saponaria ocymoides*, *Silene rupestris*, *Gypsophila repens*, *Helianthemum vulgare*, *Arabis alpina*, *Calamintha alpina*, and *Cerastium alpinum*, thus adding considerably to the gaiety and charm of the fields—a gaiety and charm which in the case of these walls lasts well into the autumn.

Some difficulty may be experienced over the grass which is to accompany the meadow-flowers. Indeed, it is an objection usually raised whenever I have broached the subject of Alpine fields to gardening enthusiasts; they fear that English meadow-grass would overwhelm the stranger-flowers by leaving them no room to breathe. But is not this obstacle one rather of hasty imagining than of reality? We are not proposing to put

Viola alpina, *Gentiana verna*, or the Soldanella into the field. Moreover, there are grasses and grasses; and I believe a very suitable selection could be made from any of the leading seed-merchants. I should suggest that the ground be sown with smaller, daintier grasses, and *only after the flowering-plants have become more or less established*; and I imagine that if this were done—and a sharp eye kept for the ever-ready invasion by native weeds—the imported field-flowers would hold their own.

An interesting fact in connection with Alpine fields—one that should not be copied in England—is the tendency of what is usually shade-loving vegetation to creep out into the sunlight. In spite of the intensity and power of the sun's rays, even certain ferns, such as *Aspidium Lonchitis*, the Holly-fern, and *Polystichum Filix-mas*, seem to think nothing of basking upon the hottest slopes. True, their roots are generally sheltered by rock and stone, but the fronds look the sun squarely in the face; and yet, what can possibly be fresher and more engaging than, for instance, the masses of Parsley-fern to be met with in the stony places of the granitic Alps? Wood-Sorrel, too, will come out into the open; so will the little Alpine London

Pride (*Saxifraga cuneifolia*) and the little Yellow Violet; so, also, will the May Lily or False Lily-of-the-Valley (*Smilacina bifolia*). In England, *Astrantia major*, when found, is said to seek the partial shade of copse and spinny, but here on these Alpine fields it is in the full sunshine—and looking very much the better for such boldness. It is as though the higher plants climb, the less they fear the light, extraordinarily searching though this latter be; it is as though they revel in the purity, and, casting retirement to the winds, take on a new and healthier joy in life.

There is, perhaps, just one other matter calling for special attention: the grouping of colours. Alpine fields own immense variety in this regard. Some will be almost of uniform tint, while others are of a bewildering, diverse blend. One will be blue and white (*Campanula rhomboidalis* and Ox-eye Daisy); another will be blue and red (*Salvia pratensis* and *Lychnis diocia*); another, yellow and pink (the Globe-Flower and the Bistort); while another will be a close, irregular mixture of some score or more of colours, with no one in particular predominating. Although Nature in her wildness is almost invariably “happy,” it is only natural that some of her results should be

ASTRANTIA MAJOR, *A. MINOR*, and the
Apollo butterfly.



happier than others ; and it is well to take note of the best she can do. Personally, I find her happiest when she keeps her palette simple, painting broadly, and not indulging in Segantini-like technique. And surely her simpler floral harmonies are among the perpetual delights of the Alps, and incapable of being bettered by even the most fancifully fastidious of " post-impressionists " ? What could be more charming than, for instance, the simple combination of pale yellow and paper-white, or of rosy-pink and rich mauve when, as is quite usual, *Biscutella* and *Cerastium*, or *Saponaria ocymoides* and *Calamintha alpina* are luxuriating around and among the rocks ; or when blue *Myosotis* and white *Paradise Lily*, or canary-coloured *Crepis* and sky-blue *Veronica*, or white *Potentilla* and rosy-mauve *Geranium*, or vivid orange *Arnica* and lilac *Orchids* are blooming in important numbers side by side among the grasses ? I do not advocate formality—the formality depicted in Andrew Marvell's lines :

" See how the flowers, as at parade,
Under their colours stand display'd " :

which suggests the careful horrors of bedding-out. A certain negligence is imperative ; we may be

studious as regards effect, but we must not show it. The question of colour-grouping is certainly one worthy of careful consideration ; for if gardening is not exactly an art that “doth mend Nature,” it is, at all events, a selective art, picking and choosing of Nature’s best and bringing this together within special confines, there to show in a series of close-knit *tableaux* that which wild Nature spreads out far and wide among much that, æsthetically, is of secondary “happiness.”

L'ENVOI

“But none has hope like thine !
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD, *The Scholar-Gipsy*.

PEN- and brush-craft pale their ineffectual fires before the beauty of Alpine grass-lands, and flawful and halting has been the manner of presenting my subject; but I hope a sufficient glimpse of its fascination and importance will have been caught to raise enthusiasm to the point of making amends for a neglectful past. Whatever may be the verdict upon the question of introducing Swiss floral wealth to our meadows generally, perhaps enough has been said to make it plain that very many of the mountain field-flowers cry aloud to be treated *as field-flowers* in every Alpine garden where there is scope for, and pretensions to, completeness.

And I believe that the cry will be answered. I believe that the value of the fields, in the economy of Alpine plant-life, has only to be placed earnestly before conscientious gardeners and lovers of flowers for it to meet with immediate and becoming diligence. I believe it will be seen that a rockwork is not the first, last, and only home we may make for Alpines in England, and that it is as unlovely as it is unjust to tar all of them with one and the same brush and think that, because they are called Alpines, they must necessarily be given a perch dominating the rest of the garden. I therefore believe that one more of our cherished conventionalities will soon be relegated to the "Valhalla of bad taste."

We "are still looking through a kaleidoscope at ever-changing views," and "the eternal verities" have as yet by no means been sounded to their bases. If "Badsworth" can find sufficient sanction to talk like this of auction bridge, with how much more reason may it not be said of gardening and the cult of Nature? It is doubtful if we have reached much that is final in anything; certainly not in gardening. Gardening—or flower-gardening, since that is the department with which we are here dealing—flower-gardening is something

more than the mere growing of blossoms to please, something more than the mere forming of a living herbarium, something more than the mere creation or collecting of "novelties" for the sole sake of novelty; there is something deeper and more difficult to talk about than that—something none the less real because largely indefinable. As earnest, thinking gardeners, our views and sentiments are not limited to a mere toying with the soil and with attractive vegetation. We are not children—though we ought to be, and are. I mean, we do not garden—we do not build Alpine rockworks and plant them with gay flowers quite so irresponsibly as children build mud-castles and stick them over with coloured oddments. There is a significant profundity in the meanest of our efforts—even in the building of mud-castles; and in the maturer effort of gardening it is only natural that this should be of richer meaning.

Gardening is a saving grace in any nation. It would be invidious to name examples; enough to say that nations with marked propensities for gardening figure prominently in past and present history. Such nations, though "insurgent sons," are necessarily less so than they would otherwise be; for they live nearer to the truth of things, nearer

to Nature. Gardening touches well-springs of being, and helps materially towards the moral advancement of a race. It is affected by the same fundamental "psychic" influence as is painting, or, indeed, any other of our kindred enthusiasms. In it we are striving, not so much to express Nature, as to express ourselves through Nature; not so much to transcribe Nature line for line, as to translate—as creatures who consider ourselves so much apart from, so much above, Nature—what we think we feel, perhaps see, and almost certainly dream in her. And far be it from me to aver that we are not striving even to supplant Nature—seemingly a mad ambition, for in the end, do as we will, Nature, and nothing but Nature, has found expression. Yet it is not quite as mad an ambition as a first inspection would lead us to suppose. Indeed, it is good, if not actually great; for it is the biggest of the many bunches of carrots dangling in front of the human animal's nose, inducing him to keep "pegging away."

Independent and original as we may consider ourselves, we yet from time to time have to turn and take our cue from Nature. She, after all, is the source at which we must refresh our jaded imaginations; she is the storehouse from which

The WILLOW GENTIAN (*G. asclepiadea*)
and the Alpine Cotton Grass (*Eriophorum*
Scheuchzeri).



we must draw new blood, new energy, new ideas ; she instigates our ideals and holds the cause and means for inspiration ; without her promptings, in fact, we should go bankrupt. In the Buddhist "Sankhya-Karika" we read how, "like a *danseuse* who retires from the dance after she has shown herself to the crowd, Nature retires after she has shown herself in all her splendour to the soul"—*after she has shown herself to the soul*. The aim of the best art is not slavishly to copy Nature, but to catch and translate the dreams she suggests.

"Stoop to earth's service, and behold
All heaven shall blossom into gold."

We may paint as much as we like "from imagination" or "inner consciousness," but if Nature were not all the time posing at our elbow, and if we did not from time to time cast covert glances at her as our model, our picture would never be "inspired"; it would either harp tediously upon ancient themes and methods, or else "advance" into sheer chaotic incoherence.

And so it is that we have now come, I think, to a time in the history and use of Alpine rockworks when we must turn again to Nature for fresh inspiration, for improved ideals. The time is

passing when Alpine conditions were held to be sufficiently represented by the rock-fortresses of the Alps,

“And all the garrisons were flowers.”

Of course, these garrisons are, and must always remain, the most prominent and unique of vegetation's Alpine marvels, but they cannot properly be thought to speak for all; they are, as it were, the militant *éclaireurs* set upon the craggy heights and watching over the peaceful hosts of their fellows upon the fields. As is the way in all our activities, we hug a truth a long time before becoming aware that it is not the whole truth. Perception has small beginnings, advance is slow, and exaggeration, meantime, is the very breath of progress. We ill-use a truth by over-kindness; our ecstasy forces it to lie. We dwell extravagantly upon it until it becomes partially false; then we move on. And this, I find, is what has happened, and is happening, in the case of Alpine rockworks. We have for long dwelt alone with them as with the last word upon the housing of Alpine plants; we have been so absorbed in them as the whole truth, that we have seen no need, even no possibility, for further helpful inquiry of Nature. But the time

has now arrived when our truth is revealing itself as only a half-truth, and, turning to glance again at our model for a fresh advance in inspiration, we notice in her a feature which had previously escaped us—the fields.

“Many people enter God’s Temple through the doorway of Beauty”; and upon this count, also, the fields of the Alps are of obvious import. I venture to think that an Alpine field, with all its concomitant “accident” and consequent variety, will have more to say to a larger number of men and women than will a rockwork alone; I venture to think that a person who would not stop longer than to patronise a rockwork, would stand arrested and absorbed before the grass-lands and their varied features. To the mass of mortals who are not bespoken specialists in higher Alpines, the meadows have no superiors in breadth, directness, and simplicity of appeal. They are places where the “man-in-the-street” is at once at home. They require no special enthusiasm to make them acceptable. Their beauty is as apparent to the “vulgar” as it is to the elect; their charm is interesting to all.

And this interest means more than mere pleasure,

“Farewell! farewell to the field,
Farewell to the sunny lawn!”

SCHILLER, *William Tell*.

INDEX

A

Achillea nana, 80
Aconitum Lycoctonum, 173
 „ *napellus*, 121, 173
 „ *paniculatum*, 173
Adenostyles albigrona, 122, 173
Adonis aestivalis, 69
Ajuga pyramidalis, 31, 77, 83
Alchemilla, 74
 „ *alpina*, 83
 „ *vulgaris*, 83
 Alpine Auricula, 76
 „ Brier, 85, 105
 „ Bugle, 83
 „ Clover, 54, 170, 171
 „ Crocus, 44
 „ Crowfoot, 31, 44
 „ Eglantine, 67, 85, 105, 121
 „ Flax, 84
 „ Forget-me-not, 84
 „ Knotweed, 85
 „ Lettuce, 122
 „ London Pride, 176
 „ Plantain, 76
 „ Polygala, 31
Anemone alpina, 17, 32
 „ *narcissiflora*, 63, 83
 „ *sulphurea*, 83, 128
Antennaria dioica, 84

Anthericum Liliago, 84, 164
 „ *ramosum*, 84
Anthyllis vulneraria, 77, 84, 116,
 170
Antirrhinum, 78
Arabis alpina, 174
Arnica, 72, 116, 129, 177
Artemisia, 77
Asparagus, 137
Aspidium Lonchitis, 175
Aster alpinus, 89, 124
Astrantia major, 120, 129, 154, 161,
 176
 „ *minor*, 120
Atriplex deltoidea, 81
Autumn Crocus, 130, 134-146
Azalea, 103

B

Bartsia alpina, 30, 57, 117
Bastard Toadflax, 116
Bearded Campanula, 54
 „ Harebell, 81
Bell-Gentian, 57, 70, 114
Berberis, 144, 172
Bilberry, 129, 144
Bindweed, 157, 166
Bird Cherry, 173
Bird's-eye Primula, 46, 135

Bird's-foot Trefoil, 84
Biscutella laevigata, 31, 57, 84, 115,
 164, 177
 Bistort, 63, 74, 85, 115, 120, 164,
 176
 Bladder Campion, 85, 165, 167
 Bluebell, 152
 Blue Bottle, 74, 84
 Box-leaved Polygala, 24
Bromo-Vaco, 139
 Brown Gentian, 120
 Bugle, 31, 77
Bulbocodium vernum, 146, 163
 Butcher's Broom, 137
 Buttercup, 115, 120, 149, 162, 165,
 166
 Butterfly Orchis, 72, 85, 104

C

Calamintha alpina, 31, 116, 174,
 177
Caltha palustris, 30, 166
Campanula barbata, 72, 81, 115,
 170
 „ *persicifolia*, 122, 170
 „ *rhomboidalis*, 84, 115,
 158, 160, 165, 176
 „ *rotundifolia*, 84, 165
 „ *Scheuchzeri*, 115, 127
 „ *spicata*, 121, 170
 „ *thyrsoides*, 121
 Campion, 84, 85
Cardamine resedifolia, 80
Carduus defloratus, 170
Carlina acaulis, 122
 „ *vulgaris*, 122
 Carthusian Pink, 84
 Catchfly, 84
 Cat's-ear, 84
Centaurea montana, 84, 164

Centaurea nigra, 165
 „ *scabiosa*, 120
 „ *uniflora*, 120, 165
Cephalanthera ensifolia, 85, 173
 „ *pallens*, 173
 „ *rubra*, 85, 173
Cerastium arvense, 84
Char de Venus, 121
 Cherry-tree, 17
Chrysanthemum leucanthemum, 165
 Cinquefoil, 77, 85
 Clary, 85, 154
 Clover, 72
Cœloglossum viridis, 85
Colchicum alpinum, 140-146
 „ *autumnalis*, 130, 134-
 143, 160, 165
Colchique, 139
 Coltsfoot, 45
 Columbine, 164
 Corn, 118
 Cornflower, 69, 99
Coronilla varia, 122
 Cowslip, 23, 149, 164
Crepis aurea, 115
 Crocus, 23, 24, 71
 „ *nudiflorus*, 137
 „ *sativus*, 139
 „ *vernus*, 163
 Cudweed, 84
 Currant, 17

D

Daffodil, 17, 32, 152, 163
 Daisy, 149, 166
 Dandelion, 19, 150, 166
 Daphne, 109
 Dendrobium, 75
Dianthus Carthusianorum, 84, 122
 „ *neglectus*, 80

Dianthus superbus, 121, 173
 „ *silvestris*, 121, 122
Digitalis ambigua, 121
 „ *lutea*, 122
 Dog Rose, 108, 129
 Dyer's Weed, 85

E

Echium vulgare, 84
 Edelweiss, 35-39, 124
 Eglantine, 17, 144
 Epilobium, 80
Epipactis atrorubens, 173
 „ *latifolia*, 173
Eritrichium nanum, 42
Eryngium alpinum, 170
Euphrasia alpina, 84
 „ *minima*, 84
 „ *officinalis*, 72, 73, 84
 Everlasting Pea, 67, 169
Exobasidium rhododendri, 108
 Eyebright, 73, 84

F

Fair Maid of France, 85, 115
 False Lily-of-the-Valley, 176
 Felwort, 41
 Field Mouse-ear, 84
 Field Gentian, 120
 „ Poppy, 68, 99
 Flax, 122
 Foxglove, 152
 French Willow, 80
 Frog Orchis, 85

G

Gagea, 163
 Garlic, 137
Gentiana amarella, 41

Gentiana asclepiadea, 90
 „ *brachyphylla*, 141
 „ *campestris*, 115, 120
 „ *excisa*, 24, 89, 157
 „ *nivalis*, 117, 157
 „ *punctata*, 120
 „ *purpurea*, 120
 „ *verna*, 24, 30, 35-47, 57,
 141, 157, 175
Geranium sylvaticum, 84, 115, 154,
 160, 164, 177
Geum montanum, 24, 31
 „ *rivale*, 84
 Globe-Flower, 23, 56, 85, 164, 176
Globularia cordifolia, 84
 Goat's Beard, 173
 Golden Thistle, 122
 Grass-of-Parnassus, 127
 Greater Astrantia, 82
 Grimm the Collier, 120
 Groundsel, 80
Gymnadenia albida, 104, 116
 „ *conopsea*, 85, 164
 „ *odoratissima*, 85
Gypsophila repens, 174

H

Habenaria bifolia, 85
 „ *chlorantha*, 173
 „ *viridis*, 85
 Hard-heads, 120, 165
 Hawkweed, 82, 120
 Hawthorn, 152
 Heather, 102, 128, 129
Helianthemum alpestre, 116
 „ *vulgare*, 174
 Helleborine, 85
 Hepatica, 23
 Herb Paris, 137
Herbst-Zeizlose, 140

Hieracium alpinum, 115
 „ *aurantiacum*, 120
Hippocrepis comosa, 84
 Holly-fern, 175
 Honeysuckle, 109, 121, 173
 Horseshoe Vetch, 84
Hypochaeris maculata, 115
 „ *uniflora*, 115, 165
 Hyssop, 122

J

Jacob's Ladder, 128, 154
Jasione montana, 122, 170
Juniperus nana, 172
 Jupiter's Distaff, 121

K

Kidney Vetch, 77, 84
 King of the Alps, 42
 Knapweed, 84
 Knee Holly, 137
 Knobweed, 120
 Knotweed, 85

L

Laburnum, 17
 Ladies' Fingers, 84
 Lady's Mantle, 83
 „ Smock, 80
Laitue des Alpes, 122
 Larkspur, 69
Laserpitium latifolium, 173
Lathyrus heterophyllus, 84, 170
 „ *luteus*, 173
 „ *sylvestris*, 84
Le Bas du Bon Dieu, 41

Leontopodium alpinum, 35-39
 Leopard's Bane, 122
 Lesser Foxglove, 122
Lilium croceum, 17, 173
 „ *Martagon*, 173
 Lily-of-the-Valley, 137
Linaria alpina, 77
Linum alpinum, 84, 164, 170
 „ *tenuifolium*, 122, 170
 Lœlia, 75
Lonicera alpigena, 173
 „ *nigra*, 173
Lotus corniculatus, 84
 Lousewort, 85
Lychnis dioica, 84, 161, 164, 176
 „ *Flos-cuculi*, 84, 164
 „ *viscaria*, 84, 161

M

Marguerite, 75
 Marsh-Marigold, 30, 46, 57, 71,
 166, 167
 Martagon Lily, 116, 120, 165, 173
 Masterwort, 120, 154
 May Lily, 176
 Meadow Clary, 85, 154, 165
 „ Rue, 121
 „ Saffron, 139
 „ Sage, 85, 154
 Mealy Primrose, 46, 56, 71, 135
Mespilus oxyacantha, 79
Meum athamanticum, 173
 Micheli's Daisy, 30, 57, 72
 Milkwort, 85
 Monkshood, 121, 169
 Mountain Cornflower, 84
 „ Everlasting Pea, 84
 „ Geum, 71
Mulgedium alpinum, 122, 173
 Mullein, 122

Muscari comosum, 84, 164
Myosotis, 24, 177

„ *alpestris*, 84, 164
 „ *palustris*, 116

N

Naked Boy, 139
 „ Lucy, 139
Narcissus poeticus, 17, 32, 158, 164
 „ *Pseudo-narcissus*, 163
 Nettle, 166
Nigritella nigra, 85
 Nottingham Catchfly, 167

O

Oak-apple, 108
Œil-de-chat, 41
 Onion, 137
Onobrychis viciæfolia, 84, 170
Ononis, 93
 „ *natriz*, 122, 170
 „ *rotundifolia*, 122
 Orache, 81
 Orchids, 23, 72, 85, 116, 120, 149,
 158, 166, 177
Orchis conopsea, 164
 „ *latifolia*, 85
 „ *maculata*, 85, 164
 „ *mascula*, 164
 „ *Morio*, 164
 „ *ustulata*, 85
Ornithogalum nutans, 164
 „ *pyrenaicum*, 137
 „ *umbellatum*, 138, 163
Orobus luteus, 121
 Ox-eye Marguerite, 116, 165, 166,
 176
 Oxlip, 164

P

Pansy, 69
 Paradise Lily, 63, 72, 85, 158, 164,
 177
Paradisica Liliastrum, 85, 168, 164
 Parsley-fern, 175
 Parsnip, 152
Pedicularis tuberosa, 31, 85
 Pheasant-eye Narcissus, 32, 164
Phyteuma betonicifolium, 54, 85,
 115, 158, 165, 167
 „ *hemisphaericum*, 116
 „ *Micheli*, 116
 „ *orbiculare*, 85, 115, 165
 „ *spicata*, 154
Pimpinella magna rosea, 85
 Pinguicula, 30
 Pink, 169
 Pinkwort, 80
Plantago alpina, 54
 Plantain, 157, 166
Plantanthera bifolia, 85
 „ *chlorantha*, 173
Poa alpina, 171
Polemonium caeruleum, 127, 154,
 165
Polygala alpestris, 85
 „ *vulgaris*, 85
Polygonatum verticillatum, 173
Polygonum Bistorta, 85, 164
Polystichum Filix-mas, 175
 Poppy, 68, 99
Potentilla rupestris, 31, 77, 85, 115,
 164, 177
 Primrose, 23, 37, 46, 93, 152
Primula farinosa, 30, 62, 167
Prunus avium, 173

Q

Queen of the Fields, 121

R

- Radish, 118
 Ragged Robin, 84, 164
 Rampion, 54, 85, 115, 120, 154,
 165, 167
Ranunculus aconitifolius, 85, 115,
 164, 167
 „ *acris*, 165, 166
 „ *bulbosus*, 165, 166
 Raspberry, 17
 Red Catchfly, 84, 164
Reseda luteola, 85
 Rest-Harrow, 93
Rhinanthus angustifolius, 85
Rhododendron ferrugineum, 41, 89,
 102-113, 117, 129,
 144, 172
 „ *hirsutum*, 102-113
 „ *ponticum*, 102
 Robin's Pincushion, 108
Rosa alpina, 85, 105, 172
 „ *pomifera*, 172
 Rosage, 106
Rose des Alpes, 106
Rue des Alpes, 106

S

- Saffron, 139
Safran des prats, 139
 Sage, 77, 85
 Sainfoin, 84, 170
 St. Bruno's Lily, 85, 114
Salvia glutinosa, 121, 173
 „ *pratensis*, 69, 74, 77, 85,
 115, 154, 158, 160, 164, 176
Sambucus racemosa, 172
Saponaria ocymoides, 31, 77, 116,
 174
Saxifraga cuneifolia, 176

- Saxifrage, 169
Scabiosa lucida, 85, 115
 Scilla, 23
 „ *bifolia*, 163
 Sedum, 77, 129, 169, 170
 Sempervivum, 169, 170
Senecio Doronicum, 80, 122
Sibbaldia procumbens, 54
Silene Cucubalus, 165, 167
 „ *inflata*, 85
 „ *nutans*, 167
 „ *rupestris*, 116, 174
Smilacina bifolia, 176
 Snake-root, 85
 Snakeweed, 164
 Snapdragon, 78
 Soapwort, 77
 Soldanella, 23, 24, 71, 89, 175
 Solomon's Seal, 173
 Sorrel, 151, 166
 Speedwell, 9, 73
Spiraea Aruncus, 121, 173
 Star of Bethlehem, 137, 163
 Strawberry, 17
 Stonecrop, 77
 Sulphur Anemone, 31, 34, 46, 53,
 54
 Sylvan Geranium, 63

T

- Thalictrum aquilegifolium*, 121,
 169, 173
Thesium alpinum, 72, 74, 116
 Thyme, 118
 Toadflax, 77
 Trefoil Valerian, 85
Trifolium alpinum, 54, 170, 171
Trollius europæus, 85, 164
True-chien, 139
 Turk's-cap Lily, 121

U

Umbelliferae, 116, 165
Umbilicaria virginis, 46

V

Vache, 139
Valeriana montana, 122
 „ *tripteris*, 85
 Vanilla Orchis, 85
Veilleuse, 139
Veillette, 139
Veratrum album, 116, 158
Verbascum phlomoides, 122, 170
 Vernal Gentian, 35-47, 58, 72, 104,
 127
Veronica Chamædrys, 73
 „ *saxatilis*, 116, 171
 „ *spicata*, 158
 „ *urticæfolia*, 170
Vicia onobrychioides, 121, 170
Viola alpina, 175
 „ *calcarata*, 32, 41, 53, 89, 157
 „ *tricolor*, 69
 Violet, 23, 164

Violon, 139
 Viper's Bugloss, 84

W

Water Avens, 84
 Weld, 85
 Willow Gentian, 90
 „ Herb, 129
 Wood Anemone, 23
 „ Campion, 84
 „ Crane's-bill, 84, 154, 165
 „ Everlasting Pea, 84
 „ Sorrel, 175
 Wormwood, 77

Y

Yarrow, 80
 Yellow Eyebright, 84
 „ Foxglove, 121
 „ Gentian, 116
 „ Lousewort, 85
 „ Rattle, 85, 116
 „ Violet, 45, 176

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