Children's Flowers.

CHILDREN'S FLOWERS

THE FRIENDS

OF

THEIR RAMBLES AND PLAY.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND 164, PICCADILLY.

PREFACE.

THESE short papers on *Wild Flowers* have been written for children, not in order to give even the most elementary instruction in the science of Botany, but with the earnest desire to excite their wonder and admiration, to cultivate their powers of observation, to increase their love of flowers, and so to help them to read the messages of God in nature.

With this purpose in view I have abstained, as far as possible, from the use of even the best-known technical words, and have sought to describe each plant in the simple language which children use and understand. I have also selected as subjects the commonest of flowers, with which all children are familiar, even though they may rarely wander far from the village or town in which they live.

My hope is that some children may be led by reading these papers to search for themselves into the beauties of the plant-world, and so be attracted to the systematic study of Botany, as they see that the many technical words which are apt to terrify them are only the mask of a world of joy and beauty, and of wonderful laws and contrivances which they have never conceived.

But my chief endeavour has been to induce them to study the wild flowers in the spirit of the words "Consider the lilies," that they may see the finger of God in every plant, and receive the promises of His love and care wrapped up in every leaf and every blossom.

S. L. D.

CONTENTS.

CHILDREN'S FLOWERS.

THE DAISY.

WHEN our little friends from North America come over to see us, they have wonderful *stories to tell of giant trees and splendid flowers, which do not grow in England*; but *there is one thing they cannot tell us about, one thing* which we may show them, our dear little Daisy.

What should we think if we looked up into the sky, night after night, and never saw any stars twinkle there, never anything but darkness! How

sad we should be; and we should be almost as much disappointed if we looked out on the fields, day after day, and never saw any Daisies peeping out.

Did you ever try to put your little foot down on nine Daisies at once, as the old saying tells you, and having succeeded, sing:

"Kissing each other in one little bed,
Whispering soft and low,
Joyously breathing of sunshine and song,
Nine little Daisies grow.
Come to the meadows; old Winter is gone,
Taking his coat of snow;
Spring-time is come, for in one little bed,
Nine little Daisies grow."

The Daisy has always been the child's flower; in Yorkshire, it is called the "bairn-wort," the herb which is supposed to cure the ailments of the little ones; and in very earliest times it was known as "the flower of the new-born babe." One old legend even said that Daisies were first scattered on the earth by an infant-spirit.

What is this little Daisy like? Like silver fringe set in gold. Like a twinkling star. Yes; but what is it that opens every morning when it is light, and shuts every night when all is dark? Your little eye. Yes; so the Daisy is like an eye: at sunset,

it shuts up, and does not open again till sunrise; so that all night long the fields are covered with tiny white tents tipped with crimson, instead of silver and golden stars.

"Before the stars are in the sky
The Daisy goes to rest,
And folds its little shining leaves,
Upon its golden breast.
And so it sleeps in dewy night,
Until the morning breaks,
Then with the songs of early birds
So joyously awakes."

A long time ago, people said: "Whose pretty eye can it be? Let us call it the day's eye: because it opens when the day begins, and shuts when the day ends;" and so they did, and we have called it the "day's-eye"—*Daisy*—ever since.

The French people think that Daisies look like pearls strewn in the grass, and so they call them *marguerites;* for marguerite is their way of saying, Margaret, and Margaret means a pearl.

Would you like a little watch, all of your own, one that keeps good time too? You may make one of flowers, for there are many flowers which, like the Daisy, open and shut at regular hours. The dandelion is opening, it is five o'clock in the morning; the white water-lily, now it is seven

o'clock; the red sand-wort, nine o'clock; and so on. Then, in the afternoon, the pimpernel is shutting, it is three o'clock; the field-convolvulus, four o'clock; the yellow poppy, seven o'clock; the dandelion, eight o'clock; and so on.

Let us gather a nice bunch of Daisies. Why, there are no leaves in the bunch. How is that? Look down into the grass, and you see a beautiful rosette of thick green leaves growing quite close to the ground, and from the centre of this rosette some long, slender stems, each one with a single Daisy at the top. The leaves have too short stalks to be gathered and arranged in our bouquet, and so the Daisies look the prettiest down in their own rosettes. How thick and rough these dark green leaves are; why, they are covered all over with short hairs, and their edge is like a coarse saw. Now, what shape are they? Something like an egg, broader at one end than the other; and like an egg in the egg-cup on our breakfast-table, with the broad part outermost.

Let us find the largest Daisy in the field, and pull it to pieces. You will like that; for we all, men and women, as well as little children, like to pull things to pieces. One thing will perhaps surprise you very much. Do you say that this Daisy is a flower? It is really a great many tiny

flowers all gathered together in a green basket. Botanists say that flowers are divided into families, just as people are; and that all flowers which are like the Daisy, a beautiful head *composed* of a great many perfect little flowers, belong to one family, which they call *Compositæ.*

Very gently and carefully we will pull away the green basket, and then one of the pure white rays of the Daisy-star, and look at this through a small magnifying glass. Quite at the bottom of the ray is a silver thread, standing straight up, and separating at the top into two wee curly horns; and at the bottom of this is a little bag holding a small seed, which, when the Daisy withers, will drop into the ground, and grow into a new little Daisy.

When we have pulled away all the white rays, what have we left? A number of little golden cups. Each cup is delicately cut out into five points; and growing in the middle of it is a seed-bag, with a golden thread and curly horns nearly like that attached to the ray; but round the thread in the golden cup is a little case or sheath, held up by five small threads, which you may just see. This case is made of five yellow heads joined together, one head for each thread, and the threads and heads together are called the *stamens*, or

standing ones, because they stand up in the middle of the flower round the seed-bag.

You like to give your little friends pet names, you call Lilian, Lily, and Charles, Charlie, and Jean, Jeannette, and so on. Now, these little flowers of the Daisy are so very pretty and so very small that we feel obliged to give them a pet name, and instead of calling them flowers we often call them *flowerets*, or, shorter still, *florets*.

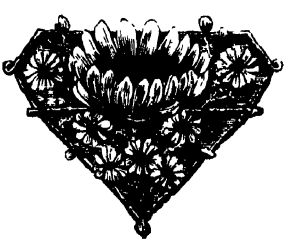
We have now pulled away everything we can, and there is nothing left but the cushion in which all these little flowers or florets have been fixed, a soft green cushion, the shape of an extinguisher or a sugar-loaf. You know that it is hollow, for when you make Daisy ear-rings, do you not put the end of the stalk of one Daisy into the hole in the head of another?

Do you wonder why God made the Daisies with two kinds of florets, silver rays and golden cups? Here is one reason. Those tiny cups hold sweet honey, which insects come to gather, and when they are flying about in the air, looking out for their food, they can see the white star a long way off, and so the white rays are like lights to guide them to their food.

We have some kinds of Daisies in our gardens, red and white double ones, in which all the florets

are rays. Sometimes there are small heads clustering under the large one, looking like chickens sheltering under their mother's wings, and so these are called "Hen and Chickens."

Are not these little eyes of the day as wonderful as they are beautiful? How glad we must be that God takes care of them, turns each curl of the slender thread, forms each point of the golden cup, and gives each Daisy its own place in the world, and its own work. How much more must He care for and love you, His own precious little children, and how much more than the Daisies should you do what He has given you to do.



THE DANDELION.

DID you ever see a Dandelion in a bouquet of wild flowers, or did you ever gather one for your own little posy? "A Dandelion!" You throw it on one side with contempt and dislike, you dig it up from your grass-plot the instant it appears; but still the Dandelion grows on, springing up everywhere from early spring to late autumn. If the little coloured children came over to play with you, they would probably choose the Dandelions for their posies, and willingly leave you the daisies, as they are so fond of all bright colours.

But there are some people who do pick the

dandelion, wise people, who know too much about its usefulness to cast it away with contempt. They dig it, and then grind its root into powder, to mix with coffee or chocolate for making a refreshing drink, or they eat it in salad instead of endive, or they squeeze out a white, milky juice, which, though poisonous, is used in some kinds of medicines.

The Dandelion is first cousin to the daisy, and has the same great family name, *Compositæ*, because its head is *composed* of numerous little flowers or florets. It is one of the little plants which will help to make you a flower-clock, for it keeps very punctual time, it knows even the exact minute, and spreads out its splendid golden face every morning at six minutes past five, and closes it again every evening at nine minutes past eight.

It is so much bigger than a daisy that we can see all its parts quite well without any glass. All those large yellow flowers we see are not Dandelions: let us be careful to choose a real one, before we pull it to pieces. And how are we to tell a real Dandelion? In two ways—*first*, look at the dark basket of little red and black leaves in which the yellow flower is resting. In the Dandelion, as soon as the flower opens and is strong, it no longer needs the support of this basket, so the red and black leaves turn down and fall back upon the

stem, and we have the basket turned upside down and inside out. *Secondly*, the Dandelion has leaves quite different from those of all other plants; they are very deeply cut into points, which curve round towards the stem, and look just as if some little hungry insect had crept along the edge of the leaf, and taken out huge bites.

You have been to the menagerie, and seen the lion marching up and down his cage, and perhaps you have seen his mouth open, and his white teeth gleam. What sharp points those teeth had, and how you shivered and were thankful that there were strong iron bars between you and them.

The Normans, who came over to England with William the Conqueror, fancied that the curved points of the Dandelion's leaves were just like the lion's teeth, and so, in their language, they called it the "dents de lion," or lion's teeth, and thus we call it still the "dents de lion," *Dandelion.*

The Dandelion's head is not quite like that of the daisy: it has only one kind of little flowers or florets, those strap-shaped, like the white rays of the daisy. We can see each ray separating at the end into five little points: we can see the curly horns dotted about all over the flower-head. But the Dandelion possesses something else that the daisy does not need. Circling the golden ray, with

its seed-bag and horned thread and sheath of *stamens*, is a ring of white silky hairs, growing from the top of the little bag which holds the seed. Whatever can this be for? Far finer than your own glossy hair, whiter than grandfather's silver locks, softer than purest silk, what can the Dandelion want with this beautiful shining hair?

Let us look at this Dandelion in a few days. What is it now? No longer a brilliant yellow star, but a white feathery globe. No longer do you toss it on one side, but you spring to it with delight. The child's clock! What time is it? Puff—one o'clock. Puff—two o'clock. Puff—three o'clock. Every bit of down is gone, there is nothing left but a bare plate covered with tiny holes like the pricks of a needle. See how the wind is carrying the white feathers, sailing away like ships on the sea. Wherever those little feathers land, new dandelions will probably grow.

> "Dandelion, globe of down,
> The school-boy's clock in every town,
> Which the truant puffs amain,
> To conjure lost hours back again."

And how did this wonderful puff-globe come, and what is it for? The yellow rays withered and died, the horned threads and the stamens shrunk

up, and then the seed-bags sent up each a slender threadlike stem, with the ring of silver hairs spreading out at the top, and all these rings make this globe of down which you call your clock. The wind gives them puffs, and away they go far and wide, carrying with them their little seeds.

But if so light, how is it that they can ever rest upon the ground? Look at the seed, it is covered with little hooks, so that it can fasten itself to the ground and not be blown away again.

The more we look at a Dandelion the more we find out its beauty. Little child, your hair may not be so shiny, your eyes may not be so bright, and your skin not so fair as another little one's, and those who see you may call you plain; but if you are God's little child, if you love Him, and seek to please Him, you will be beautiful too, and people will look again at you, and see the beauty shining through your face. God made the Dandelion as well as the daisy. He cared for it just as much, and took as much pains in making it; and so He too made you, and takes just as much care of you as of all His little ones.

BUTTERCUPS.

"Do you like butter?" You lie on the grass in the glorious sunshine with a glowing buttercup held under your upturned chin. "Do you like butter?" Wonderfully still you lie, in a second's suspense. Does your little neck reflect the rich yellow, and glow in response, or is it still fair and white as the winter snow?

Buttercups and daisies—the children's flowers—

"Buttercups and daisies,
Oh! the pretty flowers,
Coming in the spring-time
To tell of sunny hours."

If the dandelion is the daisy's first cousin, the Buttercup is its closest friend, living side by side with it. Always in the same field we see the Buttercup and the daisy; it really seems as if they belong to one another, yet they are not at all alike. Not only are they of different families, but even of different tribes or orders.

There are several kinds of Buttercups, three of which you know very well. First, there is the *Spring Buttercup*, that comes out with the daisy early in April. Let us examine this Buttercup, and see what we can find out about it. Pull it up carefully; its root is like a little turnip, with a great many small cords running down from it into the ground. The tips of these cords are hard, so that they can force their way between the stones and into the hard earth; but just above the hard tip is a very soft, tender place, which sucks up moisture from the ground to feed the plant. This is sometimes called the turnip-rooted Buttercup, because the other Buttercups have no turnips, only white cords for their roots.

Now notice the stem—it is not round and smooth, but furrowed, as if several little paths had been hollowed out from the flower to the root. The leaves look as if some one had taken a pair of scissors and cut them up into a great many pieces,

and thus they are called feather-shaped. Those near the root grow on long stalks, and are cut into broad pieces, those higher up near the flowers grow close to the stem, and are cut into very narrow pieces. We noticed that the daisy and the dandelion grew each at the end of a long stem with all the leaves at the root; but there are many Buttercups on one stem, and leaves growing out of the stem as well as near the root.

Now look at the beautiful golden cup, so rich in colour that we call it the *Butter*-cup. First, there is a small outer cup, made up of five tiny yellow leaves turned downwards round the stem. These very soon fall off. Above this outside cup are five bright round leaves, making a golden crown; and at the bottom of each of these shining leaves, just where it is joined to the top of the stem, is a tiny yellow bag filled with honey. All the bees and other insects know about these little bags, though you did not, and they delight to pay the bright flower a visit, to suck out all her sweetness.

"There's not a yellow Buttercup,
Returning with the spring,
But it can boast a golden crown,
As bright as any king."

When we have carefully pulled away all the

golden leaves of the crown, what have we left? *First*, there are a great many tiny threads standing stiffly, holding up long, heavy heads. These are the *stamens*. Their heads will grow and grow till they burst, and then you will see that they are filled with smooth, yellow dust, which will drop upon the insects, when they come to find the honey, and so be carried away to another flower, for each little grain of that dust has some important work to do.

Pull off each one of these many stamens, and we have left a small head of densely-packed green lumps. Each little lump contains one tiny hard egg, which in time will become a seed, that when planted in the ground will grow into a new Buttercup. If you can find a withered Buttercup, which has lost its bright crown, you will see that this head of green lumps has grown into dry, brown fruit, ready to drop off into the ground.

In another month, if you look carefully, you will find the *Summer Buttercup* opening its flowers. How can you tell it from the Spring Buttercup? In three ways; first, look at the root: you will see that it has no turnip, only threads or cords; second, the stem is quite round and even, with no little pathways running up and down it; and third, the outside cup of the flower is not turned back upon

the stem, but stands the right way up, nursing the large bright crown.

There is still another kind of Buttercup which you know very well. In one thing it is like the Summer Buttercup; the outer cup of the flower holds up the crown, but its stem has little ruts like those of the Spring Buttercup. If you find a *Buttercup like this, and try to pull it up, you will find that you have to tug very hard, and even then you break the root. How is this? Because the root has crept along under the ground, and the end* of it is perhaps a long way off. So this is called the *Creeping Buttercup.*

These three kinds of Buttercup are very much alike, as they grow in the meadow side by side; but they may easily be distinguished by looking at the stem and the outside cup of the flower.

Many kinds of Buttercups grow in those boggy places where, if you watch long, you are sure to see some little frogs leaping here and there, in and out of the water. So Pliny, a great Latin writer, who lived about the time of Christ, called the Buttercup "Ranunculus," which is the Latin word for a little frog, and now the family to which the Buttercups belong is called the Ranunculus or little frog family.

Buttercups have many pretty names, King-cups,

Mary-buds, Gold-balls, and the French people call them *Boutons d'Or*, or Golden Buttons.

People used to think that cows were very fond of Buttercups, and that butter was yellow because they ate so many, but now we know that Buttercups have such a bitter taste that cows cannot eat many, unless they are dried, when they lose much of their bitterness. Perhaps when the cows are grazing in the fields, they take a buttercup now and then, just as we take pepper, or salt, or mustard to our meat, to give a nice sharp flavour.

The Summer Buttercup contains a great deal of poison in its bitter juice. If you hold it in your hot hand for long, your hand will begin to smart, and blisters will soon rise. Sometimes tramps cause blisters on their hands and feet by rubbing this Buttercup upon them, in order to excite pity.

"Bachelors' Buttons," the flowers in our gardens with flat yellow rosettes, are double Buttercups.

God made many kinds of Buttercups, some growing in meadows, some in swampy places, and some in water, caring that each one should be perfect after its kind; and so He cares that each one of His children should be perfectly happy and beautiful too. Only let God have His own way, give up your own way, and He will make you far more beautiful and happy than the Buttercups.

The Primrose.

A little child lives in the middle of a great city, no breezes blow roses into her cheeks, no sunbeams dance in her hair, but she looks up to the tiny bit of blue sky between the chimneys, and thinks of heaven, and her eyes grow soft and deep, and a pure light shines in her little face, making it beautiful. Do you know a flower with a sweet, pale face like hers?

April has come, with its sunshine and showers, and the Primroses peep out of the shady places in the hedges and woods, as if longing to watch the

sunbeams, yet fearing lest the raindrops should stain and crack their delicate blossoms.

Little children who live in the town, perhaps you know a place called Primrose Hill; but it is surrounded by houses and gas-lamps, and you have often wondered at its name. Shut your eyes, and picture to yourselves a green bank shaded by trees and shrubs, and made lovely by little plants with dark green leaves and pale yellow blossoms, which nestle in the long grass and under the bushes. Probably that is what your street-surrounded hill used to be when it received its beautiful name, and that is what country children will think of as Primrose Hill.

What do you think the name *Primrose* means?

Cut it into two words, change their order, add to Prim the two letters *us*, and then what have you? Rose Primus. Now, you know that when there are two brothers in a school, the elder is called Primus, and the younger Secundus, so Rose Primus means Rose the elder, or the first Rose.

Why do we call this delicate flower the *first rose?* it is not at all like a rose. Perhaps it is because we love it as much as we love the rose, for it comes out in April, when there are not many beautiful flowers, and long before we expect to find any real roses.

We must look at it very closely, to find out how beautiful it is. It grows something in the same way that the daisy does, each flower is at the head of a long bare stalk, and all the stalks spring from a rosette of leaves. But what strange leaves! They are a great deal more wrinkled than an old lady's face, more puckered up even than baby's when he cries his hardest; you might have been using Dolly's crimping-irons, but you would never have managed to frill them half so beautifully. If you look underneath, you will see what it is that puckers them so strangely. The under side of each leaf is covered with a thick network of small cords, and lined with the softest down. These cords seem to have been drawn so tightly that the thin green covering has had to be puckered to make it fit them. The thickest cord runs up the leaf from the stalk to the tip, like a strong backbone, to make it stiff; then smaller cords branch out on each side and run to the edges, and still smaller ones branch out from these, and so the network is made. These cords are little pipes or *veins*, through which a green liquid called *sap* flows to feed the leaf. If you break away the leaf from the root, the sap cannot flow any longer, and so the poor leaf dies of starvation.

But we must look at the flower. It stands in a

five-sided green vase, which is cut out at the top into five long points. Tear this vase away, but very gently, that we may see how the crown is made. Surely we have found a fairy's table; its pedestal is a slender tube, like a tiny finger-glass, fixed to the end of the stem, and this opens out at the top into five delicate yellow leaves, which spread themselves into a flat surface and make the top of the table. Each pale leaf is rounded at the outer edge into two scallops, as if it were just thinking that it would divide into two, and each has a deep yellow spot at the point where it joins the tube.

Do you wonder what there is in that little tube? The bees and butterflies could tell you long stories about it, for they have been there often to suck the sweet honey which fills it. They would tell that the cows and sheep kindly leave the flowers for them; that pigs, not being quite so thoughtful, as indeed you could scarcely expect them to be, sometimes come for a taste too, but not often; and so the bees and butterflies generally have the honey to themselves. We are glad of this, because they never hurt the little Primroses, and leave them to make us happy.

But see, is that a pin that has got inside the honey-tube, with its head just peeping up through

the opening at the top? Let us open the tube carefully, by making a slit from top to bottom with the point of a needle. Now what do you see? A small green ball is fastened to the end of the stem, and pricked fast in it is the little green pin whose head you saw peeping through the hole at the top. This green ball is filled with wee eggs, which will grow into seeds when the flower is withered.

But now that we have opened our honey-tube, there is something else to be seen in it. Just about half way down, growing fast to the tube, in a circle round the pin, are what seem to be five tiny thumbs covered with deep yellow dust. These are the *stamens*, which are all head, and have no slender threads to hold them up, like those you see in buttercups.

Let us look at a Primrose from another root. Here is one a little different from the one you have pulled to pieces. There is no green pin-head popping up above the hole, but all the yellow thumbs are at the top of the tube, pressing together as if to look out. Open this tube, and see where the green pin is. Why, it is quite short, reaching just to where the thumbs were in the other Primrose. Do you think a mistake has been made in making this Primrose? Ah, no! God made the Primroses, and He cannot make a mistake. All the

flowers on one root are like the first one, with the pin's head at the top of the tube, and the thumbs in the middle, and they are called *pin-eyed Prim roses.* Then all the flowers on another plant are like the second one, with the thumbs at the top and the pin's head in the middle, and they are called *thumb-eyed Primroses.*

God wanted the bee to carry the yellow dust of one Primrose to the pin's head of the other, to be sent down from it to the little eggs, to feed them and make them grow into seeds; so when the little bee, seeking for honey, thrusts his tongue down the tube, the dust falls on it from the stamens. The bee then flies on to another flower, and finds that the pin's head of this one just touches his tongue, where the stamens of the last flower did, and so he leaves the dust sticking on it. This shows us how much care God took in making the little Primroses.

The Primrose has a bonnie little sister, which loves the meadows and open banks better than the shady places. You know the little cowslip, with its deep yellow cups, not each one on a stem by itself, like the tables of the pale Primrose, but many clustered together on one stem, as if they liked company.

Perhaps you once had measles or scarlet fever, and your nurse gave you some sweet cowslip wine,

PRIMROSE, BUTTERCUP, HAREBELL, AND DANDELION.

which made you feel better, and soon helped you to fall into a delicious sleep. That wine was made from the cowslip-flowers, and some people say that Primrose wine is even nicer.

From cowslip-leaves an ointment is sometimes made, which fair ladies rub on their white skins, to take away any freckles the sun may have made.

The cowslip used to be called *palsy-wort*, because it was thought to be good medicine for those who were "sick of the palsy," like the man who was let down through the roof of the house that the Lord Jesus might heal him.

When you roam about the woods in beautiful May, and feel so bright and so happy, look for the pale primroses, and think of a little pale face on a white pillow at home, which would laugh with joy if you carried there some of these beauties. There are long rooms filled with tiny beds, on which lie dear little children, some of them far smaller than you, suffering, weak, and ill. Can you gather some bunches of Primroses for those poor little sisters and brothers whom you do not know? then their little hearts will be glad, and they will not find it quite so hard to know that while the birds are singing, and the sun shining, and the flowers growing, they must lie still and bear great pain.

The little Primrose nestles quietly in its shady

nook, and looks up at you mildly, not liking to say anything, but the beseeching little face seems to ask you if you make your home as beautiful as it makes the bank.

"The hawthorn clusters bloom above,
The Primrose hides below,
And on the lonely passer-by,
A modest glance doth throw.

The humble Primrose's bonny face
I meet it everywhere;
Where other flowers disdain to bloom
It comes and nestles there.

Like God's own light on every place,
In glory doth it fall,
And where its dwelling-place is made
It straightway hallows all."

CHICKWEED.

IT peeps up between the paving-stones in the deserted streets, and squeezes itself between the flagstones of the quiet footway; it spreads over waste places, and creeps along the roadside under the hedges; it hides among the grass in the meadows, and towers tall and strong in the woods. It thrives in dry places and in wet places, in shady nooks and on sunny banks; it would even cover our garden-walks and our garden-beds, if the gardener did not keep constant watch. Yes; it seems to grow everywhere and always.

"Only chickweed!" Why do you say "*only*" chickweed, and laugh as if you thought it too small and too common to notice? Little children are rather small and very plentiful, but you would not like people to say of you, "Oh, they are only little boys and girls, too small and too common to be noticed." Why, the most plentiful things are generally the most important, so let us learn what we can about Chickweed.

Some little girls know better than to despise it, for they have a little bird at home, a singing canary with yellow breast, or some other sweet chickie, and they often set out early in the morning to find little birdie some Chickweed, from which he cleverly picks out the seeds, and eats them with the tender tops and young leaves for his breakfast. So Chickweed is the little birds' bread; and perhaps that is why we find it growing so abundantly everywhere.

"Rapidly, busily, on it crept,
Clothing the land with green,
Small were its blossoms, but white and pure
And lovely as may be seen.

'Only a Chickweed!' murmured the child,
Carelessly turning her head;
Sad were the leaves, and the white star drooped
Low in its lowly bed.

'Beautiful Chickweed!' the glad bird trilled,
Spying the shining seed;
Joyfully trembling the white star spread—
Happy, though 'only a weed.'"

This Chickweed is a wonderful little plant, with many wise ways. Let us watch it grow.

A small, round stem shoots up a little way, and then swells into a tiny, round knob, out of which spring two little leaves on short stalks, one on each side. The stem then shoots up a little higher, swells again, makes two more leaves, and up again higher, doing this over and over again till it is a few inches long, or sometimes much more. The knobs are little joints, though quite stiff ones; the stem cannot bend at them as your arm bends at its elbow and wrist.

Now do you see a single line of short white hairs running up from joint to joint, and at each joint twisting round to run up another side of the stem, and at the next joint off again up another side? There are many creeping weeds with tiny white flowers, but the Chickweed is the only one that is decorated with this line of hairs; it is a fine white fringe that always tells you the name of the wearer.

Besides the beautiful fringe on the outside, the stem has also something wonderful inside. Take hold of it on each side one of the knobs, and pull

it very gently apart. The outer part of the stem will break; but if you are very careful, you will see running down the middle, inside this outer skin that has broken, a fine green thread which is like elastic, for you can pull the stem apart for about half an inch without snapping it; and if you let go, it will spring back and draw the broken stem together again. Have you ever seen such fine elastic as this? It is made of many slender threads, which are curled round and round in long ringlets, so that they will draw up and down, and make the stem tough, not to be easily snapped.

But when the stem has grown up and sent out several pairs of leaves, what happens next? It is strong now, and so it divides into two; and between these two new stems a beautiful flower grows on a slender stalk, not a large flower, not bright red, or blue, or yellow, but a very tiny white star set in a green star a wee bit larger. The green star has only five rays, but the inner white one seems to have more. Count how many. Why, there are ten in this wee flower! If you look closely, you will see these are in pairs, there are really only five, but each one is split quite down to the bottom, so that you think there are ten. You have not seen a sweeter, purer little flower than this; those tiny rays are whiter than snow, whiter than anything

you know, and they are very sensitive. They will tell you any time when it is going to rain, for before every shower they shut up closely, lest the raindrops should hurt them; and when the rain comes on, they hang down their tender little faces as far as their stalks will let them, and sometimes do not venture to raise them again for a few days.

Now look inside the white star, can you see three or five little threads with yellow heads? These are the *stamens*, and in the centre of them is a small green ball with three very fine white hairs springing out of the top. If you can look at these hairs through a magnifying glass, you will see that each one is a tiny feather.

Now we must leave this flower for a little while, and go back to see what the stem does after it has divided; but we will call this Flower No. 1, as we shall want to look at it again. There are now two stems, and these both work in exactly the same way. Each grows up with its fringe, makes a tiny knob, two little leaves, and then divides again, making another little corner for another flower just like the first one. There are now two new flowers and four new stems. These four new stems produce four more little knobs, four more pairs of leaves and four new flowers, and divide again into eight more stems; and so the little

plant goes on as long as it is strong enough; and this is how it contrives to spread so rapidly, and cover so much ground.

But now we must go back to see how Flower No. 1 is getting on. What a wonderful change! Are you sure a flower was there? Yes, you saw it; but now the white rays are gone, they have fallen off, and the green star is clasping tightly a green egg that seems too big for it to hold. This egg is that wee green ball you saw at the bottom of the flower, then only about the size of a pin's head. How it has grown! you can see the three little feathers shrivelled up on the top. Try and open it carefully, and look inside. In the middle of it is a cluster of hard white seeds, which would have grown black if we had left them a little longer Ah! these are what your canary likes so much.

Now let us go back to the beginning again, and see what the lowest part of the stem has been doing all this time. Between every leaf and the stem some more little leaves and stems seem to be coming out. What a busy little plant the Chickweed is, always growing and doing the work God gave it to do.

Now you know what the Chickweed is like, how it grows, and how it shuts up and hangs its head during rain; but it has some other little wise ways.

It will do for one of the flowers in your clock. On fine days the white star opens about nine in the morning, just when you are beginning your lessons; and it closes at noon, when you are finishing. Then every night when you go to bed, and sometimes long before, little Chickweed prepares to go to sleep. It has no cosy little bed with warm blankets to nestle down into, but it wraps itself in quite another way. The two leaves in every pair draw close up together, and keep the cold night air from nipping the baby leaves and stems which are beginning to grow between them; and the two leaves near the end of the stem are long enough when drawn close together to wrap up the little growing leaves or flowers, so that at night all the plant is folded up comfortably, not to spread out again till the sun warms the air once more.

If you have only seen Chickweed by the wayside, you will hardly know it again in the wood. Sometimes it grows half a yard high, with large leaves, two inches long and one inch broad; but you may always recognise your old friend by the single line of white fringe growing up the stem.

When the leaves and young stems of Chickweed are boiled, they taste so much like spinach, that you would scarcely be able to tell the difference, and they are quite as good and wholesome.

Now you see what a wonderful plant little Chickweed is. God made even the commonest weed with all His wisdom and care, and gave even the smallest some work to do.

You are only a little child, not a man or woman, not a prince or princess, and perhaps you are weak and poor; but remember that the little Chickweed feeds the birds, and God has given you something to do for some one. Remember also the little plant has much to do before its seeds are ready for the birds. There is first the stem, and then there are the leaves, and then the flowers,—the seeds do not come till the very last. So when you are learning your lessons, and helping your mother, think that you are making the leaves, and God will tell you all about the seeds when the right time comes.

The Wild Hyacinth.

You have been into the wood on a bright spring morning, when the sun's slanting rays were glancing beneath the branches. Have you seen there a sheet of blue, glimmering between the green of the grass below and the green of the leaves above? Not a lake of deep blue water, but a bed of Wild Hyacinths, the dear old Bluebells of the spring, sending forth their sweet delicate scent to greet you.

"I know a spot, which oft I deemed
Of rural haunts most fair,
And I have thought that heaven's light beamed
With brighter sunshine there.

It is a sweet, sequestered vale,
Where quiet brooklets flow,
And oft is heard the ringdove's wail,
Down where the bluebells grow."

In the beginning of the winter perhaps you saw large, brown, shelly balls called *bulbs*, something like onions, put into coloured glasses and placed in your rooms. A few fleshy white strings had just forced themselves through the bottom of each ball, and hung down into the water. Day after day went by, and you watched these little strings strike downwards into the water, seeking for food for the brown ball. At last you were rejoiced to see a little green point breaking through the top; it grew and grew every day, looking like a little hard, round pyramid; but at last it opened and unfolded some long green leaves, showing what they had been wrapping up so carefully, a thick stem with many buds laid close upon it. Then your anxiety and interest grew more intense than ever—what colour would those buds be? Would they be fine or poor, or simple or double? How delighted you were when at last there towered above the glass a gorgeous Hyacinth, white or yellow, or blue or red.

Is the Hyacinth of the woods anything like that? Look and see. First, pull it up. Yes, there is a

little white shelly bulb, and there are the white strings or roots striking down into the soil in search of food. See, you can pull off shell after shell from the white ball till there is nothing left but a small, hard, white lump. That is a little bud, the heart of the whole plant; and all those many wrappers have been folded closely round it to keep it warm, and to feed it during the long cold winter. But what sticky wrappers they are, see how the soft white juice squeezes itself out of them. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, when those large stiff white ruffs, which you have seen in the pictures, were worn instead of collars, the laundresses who washed them dipped them in starch made of this sticky juice to make them hard and erect. It needed very stiff starch indeed to make such large frills stand well; and the ladies and gentlemen of those times were very particular, and did not like their collars and ruffles to be soft and crumpled.

This white juice was also made into stiff gum, which bookbinders used for binding the covers on their books, and which was also used for fastening the feathers upon arrows.

Upwards from the sticky ball spring the long, narrow leaves which wave about in the breezes so gracefully. They are more like grass than like the leaves of other plants; you can see no thick network

of cords like that of the primrose leaf, and no fine network like that you see in other leaves when you hold them up to the light, but only a great many little ridges, running side by side, from one end of the leaf to the other.

If you bend a leaf backwards and forwards, so as to snap it slightly, and then gently draw it asunder, you will see a great many fine threads connecting the broken parts, almost like the threads of a spider's web. How is it that you can pull these fine threads without breaking them? It is because they are coiled round and round like very fine wire. They are laid side by side in the long leaf, to make it elastic, so that when the wind blows it can bend easily without breaking.

But see how the lovely blue heads are bowing to us, inviting us to look at them. The stalk on which they grow is very thick and hollow, and so brittle that it snaps directly; but near the end it grows thinner and softer, and bends with the weight of the bonny bells. There are a great many flowers on that one stalk, and they are all bending one way. Have they all turned to look at their little visitors, do you think? Ah no! they are only turning their backs to the wind.

Each grows on its own little blue stalk, which looks as if it were fastened to the green stem by

two narrow blue ribbons. This flower is altogether blue, it grows out of no green cup, but directly from the end of the tiny stalk hang six delicate blue leaves, fastened together at the bottom, and touching one another, as if afraid to be alone, only curling back their tips, so that till we put them apart we think the flower is a little blue bell.

On the inside of each blue leaf a blue thread is growing. It keeps fast hold of the leaf for a little way, and then stands off by itself, grows smaller and smaller to quite a fine point, on which it balances a long blue head with wonderful skill. These are the *stamens*. Each head has opened on the side looking towards the middle of the flower, and you can see the pretty blue dust which fills it, not yellow like that you see in most flowers, for this little Hyacinth loves only one colour,—it is altogether blue.

But there, in the middle and best of all, is the beautiful blue bottle you have picked out so often and set on your doll's dinner-table as a decanter, pretending that it would hold the water. Beautiful blue bottles, how elegant they are! Some children delight in them so much that they call the flowers bluebottles instead of bluebells. Perhaps you do so sometimes yourselves.

When the spring has gone, and you are gathering

all kinds of summer flowers, go to the Hyacinth beds again and see how they are changed. They are no longer blue: the flowers have withered away, and only the blue bottle remains; but you cannot recognise your old friend, it is so changed. It is no longer a blue bottle, but a large green bladder with a withered string dangling from the top. Is the bladder going to be hung up somewhere by that string? No, it is only the neck of the bottle, which has done its work and withered away. If you split open the bladder, you will find it is divided into three rooms, each of which is filled with seeds, lovely seeds like little pearls. If you hold them up to the light, you can almost see through them, they are so clear and bright.

At the lower part of the stem you may find some bladders that have grown dry and shrivelled, and have cracked to let their seeds fall out. Those seeds are ripe and ready for the ground; but see, are they really like the other seeds you looked at? How they have changed in growing ripe; they are no longer tiny white pearls, but are bright and black like little birds' eyes.

Now that you know what your bluebells are like, you must listen to a pretty fable about their history.

Long ages ago, there lived in Greece a boy

called Hyacinthus, who was so beautiful that Apollo, the beautiful god, loved him dearly and often visited him. One day, when Hyacinthus and Apollo were having a game at quoits, the wind-god being jealous of beautiful Hyacinthus, blew against him the quoit which Apollo had just thrown, and so killed him. On the place where he fell a lovely new flower grew, a flower which had never been seen before, so they named it after him Hyacinthus, or Hyacinth; and when they looked at its leaves, they saw written on them the letters AI, the Greek cry of sorrow or pain, and the first letters of his name when written in Greek.

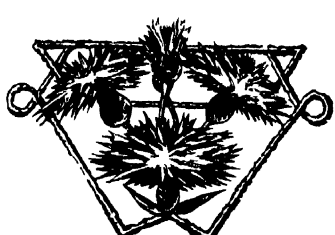
If you look on the leaves of the Hyacinths which grow in our houses and gardens, you will find some very faint dark lines which you may fancy are these letters. There are no such marks on the leaves of the Wild Hyacinth, and so it is called by botanists the Hyacinth not-written-upon, to distinguish it from the other, though some people think it is not a Hyacinth at all, but only a Hyacinth's cousin. Whether it is a real Hyacinth or not, it is always our lovely spring bluebell of the woods.

A little tired child felt the sweet scent of the bluebells coming out of the wood, and her soul

became so glad that she burst into a little song, for she knew that spring had come.

"The flowers are blooming everywhere,
On every hill and dell,
And oh! how beautiful they are,
How sweetly too they smell.
The trees that looked so stiff and gray,
With green leaves now are hung,
Oh, mother! let me laugh and play,
I cannot hold my tongue."

The winter had been so long that the little child thought that God had forgotten to bring the flowers; but the sweet scent of the bluebells told her that God never forgets His children, and she wanted to rejoice and thank Him for His goodness in bringing the spring-time again



THE HAREBELL.

TINKLE, tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
Hark! the fairy chime,
Witching bluebells ringing, ringing,
In the summer-time.

I beautiful butterflies hear the faint sounds, and fly off to the sweet-scented lanes. Are the fairies ringing for an evening concert, or for an airy dance, or are they only calling the butterflies to go and look at the beautiful summer-bells with which they have just decked the hedges, delighting to draw the bright insects with their enticing chimes?

There is a beautiful fable of a poet of the olden

times, who used to play and sing so beautifully that the trees and plants and even the rocks moved out of their places to follow his wonderful music; and the music of the summer bluebells seems to be so sweet that the butterflies cannot keep away from them.

Let us follow the butterflies, and go and look at the bonny bells as they shake away on their slender stems. Are these really stems, or only hair? We might almost fancy the wind would soon break them; but no! the breezes blow gently round, wishing only to tinkle the bells, but not to destroy them; and when the strong wind comes, each little flower bends so low, that it does not often get injured. It is because of this slender stem that this little plant is called the *Hairbell*, or Harebell, as it is generally spelt.

Why does it not hold its head straight up as many flowers do? Would it rather be a bell than a vase or cup? If it held its head up, when the heavy rains came, it would get full of water, and as it is so well made that it could not let the water run out, it would soon be spoiled, so it hangs its head, and the rain runs down its sides as down an umbrella, and never wets the inside of the flower.

These little flowers are real bells, not imitation

ones, like those of the wild hyacinth; instead of being made of six pieces folded closely together, each is made of one piece only, which is cut at the top into five vandykes, these being turned gracefully back. How beautifully they are shaped! If you try to cut some like them out of paper, or even to draw them, you will find it very hard to do so, and you will have to practise a long time before you can do them well; but God makes all these plants grow in these lovely forms without difficulty.

Each bell has a very pretty collar of five rather stiff green ribbons, not standing up round its neck, but falling back upon the stalk. Inside, it is sprinkled with white down, and outside too; it is not quite round and smooth, for it has five ribs, one running down from the point of each vandyke to the stiff green ribbon just below.

Look at the five yellow *stamens* clustering inside the bell; and is that the clapper in the middle? is it that long blue pendant which makes the tinkle, tinkle when the fairies ring the bells? See how it divides at the end into three velvety cushions of the most delicate green; no wonder the music is so soft and faint that only the butterflies hear it, if it is made by clappers such as these. But this is a very firm little tinkler; see how well it is fastened at the bottom, well

fixed into a small ball, which grows on the end of the stalk, but inside the bell. This ball seems to be covered with a sort of whitish skin; and if you look you will see that it has five sides. What! five again: this flower seems to be made very particularly, all the parts match in number; there are *five* green ribbons, *five* points and *five* ribs in the bell, *five* stamens, and now *five* walls round the inside ball. Yes, and sometimes there are *five* green cushions at the end of the tinkler, instead of only three.

Each of those five sides is a little door which you can open and look inside; but you must not open it on one side, as you generally open doors; you must begin at the top where the point is, and turn it down to the bottom. Now look in; ah! there are all the tiny green seeds nestling closely. They are very little ones yet, not at all ready to have the door opened and the air let in.

But we have not looked at the bluebell's dress of leaves. Now, it is rather a peculiar little plant; it has two dresses quite differently made. When first it comes up, it wears a great many little green leaves that are quite smooth, and as broad as they are long, nearly round, in fact, slightly gimped round the edges, and on very long stalks. These it leaves on the ground, flowing about it most

beautifully; but as it grows up it puts on another dress, and throws out of its stem leaves of quite a different pattern. These are long and very narrow, some of them being more like ribbons than anything else, they have nearly smooth edges and only short stalks. In a little while all the leaves at the base wither away, and only those on the stem remain. Thus the bluebell has first a dress of round leaves, then two dresses at once, one of round and the other of long narrow leaves; and lastly it puts off the round, and only wears the narrow ones; so you can generally tell how old a bluebell is by looking at the pattern of its leaves.

The Harebell is very particular about another little matter. It does not like to be removed from the place where it has always lived, and also it only likes to live in certain kinds of places: it gets very unhappy anywhere else, grows sick and dies. And what sort of place do you think it likes best? It has rather a strange taste, for it prefers barren soils, where there are plenty of stones, or where the ground is poor, and does not contain much food, so that other plants will not grow there. It is like a beautiful, gentle little child in a poor home, with not much comfort, with rough people all about it, but a very loving little heart of its

own, clinging to its rough home and trying to make it beautiful.

Bluebells have sisters and brothers scattered up and down the world, which are not blue like themselves. In Switzerland they are pale yellow, with black spots; in India they are deep purple; and in Africa violet, with white and rose-coloured stripes; but we like our old bluebell best, and should not like to change it for any of these gayer ones. The Scotch children specially would not like to change it, for then they could not sing about the "Bluebells of Scotland!" Also those people who squeeze the bells, and make beautiful blue ink out of the juice, would not like to change.

In the olden times people used to worship God in the open air, and hold their meetings and services in the fields and woods; but the time came when this was not convenient. Sometimes the weather was too cold and too wet, and so they built churches and cathedrals. In building these at first, they made the roofs like interlacing branches of trees. Then they put bells in the towers to call people to meet there for the praise and worship of God.

The little summer bluebells ring out the same call: they tell us to go and see the glorious woods, and look at the lovely flowers, and hear the sweet

singing of birds, and praise God for His goodness and power.

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, tinkle!
What do the bonny bluebells say,
As they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
All the livelong summer-day?
"Like the breezes, like the flowers,
Like the songsters in the wood,
Come and praise Him, come and praise Him,
God is great, and God is good."

CLOVER.

IN the bright summer holiday, when you are weary of running about in the fields, under the sun's hot rays, how delicious it is to lie down on a dry bed of clover, soft and warm, with the gentle breezes fanning you to sleep and singing sweet songs in your dreams. You have had no pleasanter bed; there are sweet scents floating around you, and sweeter songs soaring above you, and you can stretch out your hand to pluck the blossoms and lazily suck their sweet honey.

If you were to go to one part of South America

you would be greatly astonished to find the Clover, instead of being low enough to make a nice bed for you, growing so tall that when men and cattle walk about in it they cannot see one another over the clover-heads.

Did you ever look into one of those sweet little heads to see how it was made? Look, now, at this head of white Clover: it is not all one flower, but a beautiful globe, made of a great number of perfect flowers clustering together at the end of the stem, each on its own little stalk. The outermost flowers have had their day,—they have grown old and brown and withered; but, though their sweetness and beauty have gone, they have a precious treasure wrapped up inside their faded blossoms. This treasure is a tiny green pod, almost exactly like a pea-pod with four wee peas in it. You could shell it just in the same way if it were big enough; but it does not need your help, for it is growing fast, and will soon be able to open itself, and drop the little peas from their stalks to the ground, there to nestle in the warm soil, waiting to grow up into new Clover next spring.

How pretty this small head looks, like a little hill covered with white banners and flags. It seems a pity to pull it to pieces, but you must do so if you wish to see how it is made.

Take off one of the largest of the white flowers. It is like a bonny white butterfly sitting in a tiny pink cup, with five slender points clasping it to keep it steady on its seat. First, you notice a large white leaf, half-folded over the rest of the flower, but turning backwards about the middle, and standing straight up, as if to say to every one, "Come and look what I am sheltering below," but really being a little signal telling the bees where to find their dinner.

And what is it this flag or standard shelters? There is a little leaf on each side like a pretty white wing; but what is this between them? A tiny boat, made by two little white leaves, like the wings being joined together. What a dear little boat! It must be waiting for the fairies to come and take a voyage through the air, for here, lying in the bottom of the boat, are ten small oars. One is apart by itself, but all the others are fastened up in a bundle. Perhaps one little fairy has been having a voyage by himself, and has forgotten to fasten his little oar in the bundle again. But these little oars are not quite like those you have seen and used on the water. Instead of broad blades at the end, they have little heads, or indeed they are more like mallets than oars. They are the *stamens* of the flower, and their heads

are all filled with fine dust, which will be used to ripen the little peas in some of the pods; and perhaps the bees will carry some of it to their nests to feed the little ones with, for this is "bee-bread." Inside the bundle you will find a long thread, at the end of which, well covered up, a treasure like that you saw in the withered flower is just beginning to grow. Are not these the most curious flowers you have seen?

If, instead of plucking off the tops of the white Clover, you try to pull it up by the root, you have harder work than you expected, for the stem creeps on a little way underground, and then sends upwards another stalk with a white head; and so on for some time, so that you find all these flowers and flower-stalks growing out of the same underground stem.

But something else grows up as well as the sweet flower-heads,—stalks with the most beautiful leaves you have ever seen. Is this one leaf or three? It is like three, and yet they all grow together at the end of the same stalk. It is one leaf divided into three perfect small leaves called *leaflets;* and each of these has an edge like the finest and most delicate saw, and is stamped in the centre with a beautiful white arch, which looks as if the fairies had gone away from the boat on

horseback, and left here the marks of their horses' shoes. At the bottom of the leaf-stalk there are two more leaves almost exactly like the leaflets above, but they have no stalks of their own; and as there are only two of them, they seem to be only a little pair of attendants on the beautiful leaf.

When the dark clouds come, you say there is going to be rain; and when the sun goes down you know that night is coming on, and you leave the meadow to run indoors; but look first at that field of Clover. Those little leaves seem to know all about it too, they are hanging down their leaflets and drawing them close together, for they are as wise and as sensitive to changes in the air as the daisy, the chickweed, and other little plants.

Though the red and white Clover are sisters and very much alike, like all sisters, they are a little different. The red Clover is sweeter than the white, and its red head rests on a beautiful collar made of three leaflets without stalks; then its stem is rough and hairy, and the two leaflets at the base of each leaf-stalk are longer and narrower than the three leaflets on which they attend, and each one has a long bristly point at the end. You can pull up the red Clover easily, for its stem does not creep away underground.

If you had lived four hundred years ago, you

would not have been able to find a bed of Clover in England; you would have had to go to the Continent for your nice summer couch, and that would have been rather a long journey in those days. White Clover was first brought into England from the Netherlands, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; but the sweet red Clover did not come till even later. How happy the English cattle must have been when they found that first field of Clover!

This little plant used to be called Cock's Foot, and sometimes Honeysuckle; but it is now generally called Clover, because its leaf is *cloven* or divided; and it has another common name which you may have heard, *trefoil*, which means three leaflets. Perhaps you know another little plant, called the wood-sorrel, which has its leaf divided into three leaflets, as this Clover-leaf is, and so it is called a *trefoil* too.

All these three-parted leaves have been famous from the very earliest times. In the days of old, when people believed in witches and in wicked fairies, they used to wear them as charms, thinking they contained a secret power to keep off evil. They even said serpents would never touch that leaf, nor any one who wore it.

You have often heard of old Ireland's "native shamrock," and perhaps you have wondered what

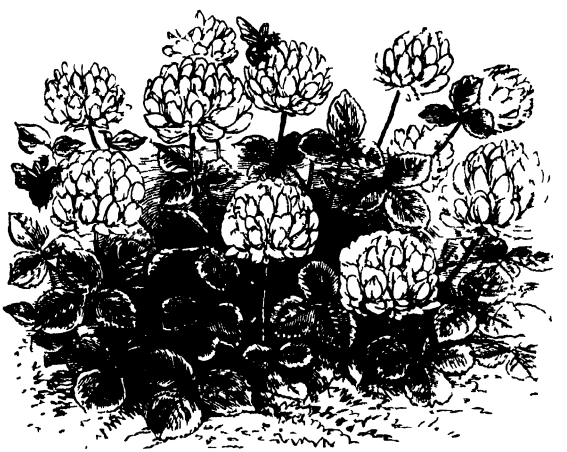
sort of flower that was, though you may have seen it twined with the English Rose and the Scotch Thistle on the Royal Standard. It is not a flower at all, but simply this beautiful three-parted leaf of the Clover or the wood-sorrel.

The people of Ireland love this leaf very much, and think, like the people of old, that it is a sacred leaf, possessing some strange, secret power. If you ever see a picture of St. Patrick, you will see that he holds in his hand this sacred leaf. Perhaps you do not know that St. Patrick was one of the first missionaries: he went about fifteen hundred years ago to teach the people of Ireland about Jesus Christ. The Irish call him their patron saint, and think that now while he is in heaven he is still taking care of them and watching over them. They say that when he was teaching them about God our Father, and about the Lord Jesus Christ, and about the Holy Spirit, he held this trefoil leaf in his hand, and pointed to its three leaflets to help them to understand and remember what he taught them. So now you will understand why they always paint him in pictures with this leaf in his hand.

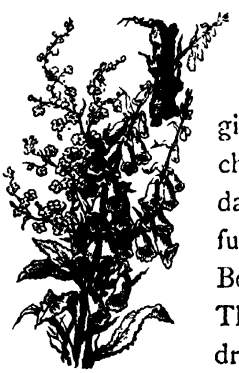
So the people of olden times loved Clover, the Irish love it, little children love it, cattle love it so much and are so happy in the Clover field, that

when people are in very comfortable circumstances they are said to be living in Clover. Bees love it, and rabbits love it too; you have often served it for breakfast to sweet little Pink-eyes and frisky Grey-coat.

How nice it must be to be loved by everybody; surely you would all wish to be as much loved as the Clover. Then you must be like the Clover, sweet and soft and beautiful,—sweet with loving smiles, tender with gentle words, and beautiful with unselfish deeds.



THE FORGET-ME-NOT.



IN the days of the good King Arthur, when Jack killed the giants, and Cinderella sat in her chimney-corner all day, and danced at the ball as a beautiful princess at night, when little Bo-peep lost her sheep, and Tom Thumb drove about in his mice-drawn coach—in those wonderful days of old there lived a brave knight and his beautiful lady. One day, as they were wandering together along the banks of a river, the lady uttered a cry of delight and astonishment, for there floating on the water were some charming, bright blue flowers which she had never seen before. The

gallant knight leaped into the stream and secured several lovely sprays, and was returning to the bank when he saw one a little farther off, which he thought would specially delight his dear lady. He stretched out his hand to reach it, but in doing so he lost his foothold, and was carried away by the violent current, being able only to cast the flowers on the bank at the feet of his lady, and to call to her "Forget-me-not" before he was lost in the dark waters. And that is why those little blue gems are called Forget-me-nots.

But some people shake their heads and look wise when they hear these stories of the olden times, as if they know so much better; and such people would tell you these flowers are only called Forget-me-nots because they are so pretty that when you have once seen them, you can never forget them. All little children and most grown-up people like the old story better than this wise one.

What is the day when the postman comes so late, and little eyes watch for him more eagerly than on any other day in the year? Valentine's Day, when you get letters all for yourselves, funny little pictures or beautiful cards with flowers and verses painted on them, and you guess and wonder for many a day where they have all come from.

Perhaps you get one card with a wreath of blue Forget-me-nots painted on it; it does not take long to guess where that has come from. It must be from the little friend who has gone away to live in another town, and who sends you this as a love-sign telling you to remember the absent one.

You love stories dearly; and there is one of your lesson-books, your History of England, which is full of stories, generally about kings and wars and laws, but sometimes even about flowers. You have read of those dreadful wars called the Wars of the Roses, which were carried on in England about four hundred years ago between two great families called the Houses of York and Lancaster. Henry, Prince of Lancaster, afterwards Henry VII., was at one time obliged to leave England and live in France with the Duke and Duchess of Brittany. When he left them to return to his own country, he gave to the duchess some Forget-me-nots, and had them engraved on his golden collar, as a sign that he would always remember the friends who had been so kind to him during his exile. Ever since then absent friends, following the example of the prince, have exchanged Forget-me-nots as a love-sign, and little friends have sent pictures of them to one another on Valentine's Day.

But it is time we looked at the flowers which

have such a long history, and about which so many stories are told. Where are we to find them? In the woods, in the fields, and by the water-side. Those which grow by the water-side are the largest and most beautiful, and they are often called the Poets' Forget-me-nots, because poets love to sing their praises.

Let us gather some of these that are growing in the soft damp ground by the clear pool. See how they hang their heads, and look down into the water looking-glass, as if to admire their own bonny blue faces. Are they vain little flowers, thus wanting to look at themselves? No; they are not vain, but they are glad to be beautiful, and are thinking how good it was of God to make them so.

In the spring-time you will not be able to find these, but must be content with the smaller, paler ones that grow in the fields and woods.

What is this picture like, at which they are gazing down in the glassy pool? You need not look in the glass for the picture, as you can see the flowers themselves.

The end of the stem, with its two rows of tiny pink buds, is curled round, as if it were trying to imitate the curl of a scorpion's tail; and this is the reason that Forget-me-nots are often called Scorpion-grass.

The bud farthest from the end of the stem and on the outside of the coil, gets plenty of light and air, and soon opens into a flower, at the same time changing its colour, until, instead of pink, it is a brighter and deeper blue than the turquoises which you often see set in ladies' ornaments or shining in jewellers' shop-windows. When this flower is well opened, the stem uncoils a little, so that the next bud may have a little more light and a little more air, and also open; and so it goes on till the stem is quite straightened out, and all the buds have become beautiful flowers. By the time that the last ones are open, the first ones are all withered; so that in the same spray you can see little pink buds, bright blue flowers, and dull withered ones.

If you gather some Forget-me-nots, and place them in water, you can watch them gradually uncoil; and as new flowers open at the same time as the old ones wither, you will be able to keep them in flower a long time—far longer than you can keep most flowers after you have gathered them.

Now look at a well-opened flower, and see how it is made. Does it not remind you of a primrose, only that it is so much smaller? Like the primrose, it has a little green vase, which holds a tiny tube

with the flat crown divided into five round blue leaves; though in the field Forget-me-not the crown is not flat like a table, but rounded like a cup. At the opening of the tube is a yellow ring, which looks like a small eye peeping out of the bright blue face: what can it be? Open the tube, and see what it is like inside. Now you see that at the foot of every blue leaf is a small yellow knob; and between the five knobs, a little lower down, so that they were quite shut up before you opened the tube, are five tiny heads filled with yellow dust. These heads are the *stamens;* and the little knobs which make the yellow eye look as if they had tried to become stamens too, but had found it too hard work to make the dust, and so had been obliged to be content with making the bonny flower a little more beautiful with its yellow eye.

There is something else at the bottom of the tube; but you will see that better if you take a withered flower, and draw off both the green vase and the blue crown. There, at the end of the flower-stalk, are four tiny green globes, fastened close together in a square. Each of those shining globes is a little round chamber covering and protecting a smooth seed. They are growing very fast, and that is why you can see them best in the oldest flowers.

Now look at the leaves. They are of a peculiar shape, very long, wide and round near the end, but gradually growing narrower and narrower as they get nearer to the stem. What is it they remind you of so strongly? Sometimes you hear a queer, scraping noise in one corner, and suddenly a little mouse scampers across the room in a great hurry, much fearing lest your pussy should see him. Perhaps he gets into the pantry, and takes a little taste of a few things he likes, and so you set a trap for poor little mousie. The next time you catch one of these little mice in a trap, or find one hanging its nest in the long grass before the haymaking season, take particular notice of its ears, and then you will see directly what it is that these leaves remind you of. Yes! they are almost exactly the same shape as a mouse's ears. Botanists were so much astonished at this likeness, that they christened Forget-me-nots, *Mouse's Ears;* and that is the name they always give them, though not in English, for some being Frenchmen, and some Englishmen, and some Germans, they call all flowers by Latin names, as Latin is a language which they all know.

See how these long leaves raise themselves round the stem, as if they were trying to wrap it up and keep it warm. The leaves of the water Forget-

me-nots are generally quite smooth and glossy; but if you touch those which grow in the fields and woods, you will find that it is as pleasant as stroking the softest fur, they feel like the mouse's back, because they are covered with such long soft hairs.

Forget-me-nots are often cultivated in gardens, and there they change a little, but not very much; the first pink colour seems to stay longer, and sometimes they are white instead of blue. If you live in the town, and there is no room for a pretty garden round your house, perhaps you have a window-garden, a box on your window-ledge or a stand for flower-pots inside. If so, you should be sure to have plenty of Forget-me-nots, for they grow very well in these window-gardens, and keep in flower a long time.

Forget-me-nots are love-signs from your absent friends, always telling you to remember them; but they have also another message to you:

"Thou sweet little flower, with the bright blue eye,
That peepest from the bank so modestly,
Thou art come from a source invisible,
And thou hast some important words to tell."

And what are these important words which this sweet little flower says to you? It has come as

God's love-sign to His little child, telling you always to remember Him. It shows you its bonny blue face with its bright yellow eye, and tells you how God made it, and how He feeds it, and keeps it bright and beautiful, and then it says to you—"Does He not much more love you? Does He not much more care for you?" And it ends with God's message in its own name "Forget Me not."

"Thou art come like the still, small voice of Him,
God whispers in thee, 'Forget Me not!'"

HAWTHORN.

THE days are nearly gone by now when the children look forward to the first of May and its festival.

When you read of the May-day of years ago, you almost wish you had been a child in those days; and you sigh mournfully, wondering why all those good old customs are given up.

How you would have liked to go out early in the fresh morning on the day before the festival, helping the birds to sing May carols before the houses of your friends; then to rush off with your companions to the woods, to rob them of flowers and branches, and come home laden with spoil, to

turn the streets of your village into woods, and all the doorways and windows into gardens. How splendid it must have been to watch the huge maypole garlanded with Hawthorn boughs and dressed with flowers, and then set up in the centre of the green for all to dance round it. Most of all, what joy it would have been to be chosen the Queen of the May, to be dressed in snowy white, and decorated with flowers; to be seated in an arbour of Hawthorn boughs, and to have all the gifts of garlands and flowers laid at your feet, while you watched the dancing round the pole on the green. No wonder the Queen of the May was wild with joy on the night before her flowery reign.

"You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear,
To-morrow 'll be the happiest time of all the glad new year,
Of all the glad new year, mother, the maddest, merriest time,
For I'm to be Queen of the May, mother, I'm to be Queen of the May."

But though the festival was once so beautiful and joyous, as the years went by it was often marred by drunken quarrels and riots; and so the good old Puritans, who sought to serve God with

pure heart and pure customs, put a stop to the May-day festival.

There are one or two places in England where May-day is still a happy day to children, though not such a festival as of old. The little girls go about from house to house in the early morning, carrying garlands and a doll dressed in white and decorated with flowers, to do duty for the Queen of the May; and they sing as they go the old May carol:

"We have been rambling all this night,
And almost all this day,
And now returnèd back again,
We have brought you a bunch of May.

A bunch of May we have brought you,
And at your door it stands:
It is but a sprout, but it's well budded out
By the work of our Lord's hands.

The hedges and trees they are so green,
As green as any leek,
Our heavenly Father, He watered them
With heavenly dew so sweet.

The moon shines bright, and the stars give a light
A little before it is day;
So God bless you all, both great and small,
And send you a joyful May."

But though this festival of thanksgiving has died out,—thanksgiving for the fresh spring-life which

God causes to re-bud,—we must all thank God in our hearts, when we walk through the beautiful lanes and see the hedges covered with the sweet-scented May blossom.

Nearly all our hedges are made of Hawthorn bushes, because they grow so shrubby and thick; and sometimes you may hear the Hawthorn called "Quicks," because it is used thus to make *quick* or living fences.

It is also called the "Tree of Strength," because its wood is so hard and tough. If you try to rob the bush of its beautiful blossoms, you will find it almost impossible to break them off by hand alone.

With what longing eyes sometimes you have looked into the field over the hedge,—where can you get through? is there a hole anywhere? Yes, you have found one at last; but if you do scramble through, it will be with sadly-torn clothes, and perhaps scratched hands and face, so you had better keep on the right side. "Those tiresome thorns," do you say? Ah! if the farmer is listening on the other side, he will smile and say, "Those useful thorns;" for why do you think that hedge is there at all, but to keep all intruders out of the field? and these thorns greatly help it to do this duty. Besides this, they are very useful to the trees themselves. Cattle are very fond of rubbing

themselves against trees, and especially deer and other horned animals, which find this rubbing very soothing to their heads when the young horns are beginning to grow—just as babies like to rub everything they can between their gums when their little teeth are wanting to peep out. Though the animals like this very much, it greatly injures the trees, so that in parks you often see a little fence built round a tree, to protect it from the cattle grazing there; but there is no need for a fence round the Hawthorn trees, as their own thorns are their armour, and defend them from injury.

See how they grow, a prickle just between a leaf and a branch. It is a tiny branch, one which stopped when it had only just begun to grow, and finished itself off in a sharp point, instead of growing on, and producing leaves and flowers. If you break it off you will see it is hard and tough, just like the branches, and it leaves just the same kind of white scar on the tree.

How these dark green leaves shine! Has some passer-by polished them? That would have been far too great a work for any one, and yet they all have a glossy polish. They are also cut out into three or five or seven tongues, these again being cut into smaller ones. You know these leaves well,

for you often nibble them as you pass down the lanes, and offer your friends some "bread-and-cheese," and profess to get a very good luncheon, though the luncheon is even better if you can find some nice young flower-buds. The Scotch children must like this wayside meal even better than the English children do, if we may judge from the much finer name they give the leaves, which is, "ladies' meat."

Each leaf has, like the clover, two little attendant leaves sitting at its feet; tiny leaves these are, shaped like the new moon.

But notice how the flowers grow, some on long and some on short stalks; for, wherever they start from, they all want to spread out their white faces as near the same level as they can. The white crown of each flower rests inside a small crown of five little green leaves, which grow round the top of a hard green knob; and in the centre of it are a great many *stamens*, white threads standing upright, and each bearing a pink or black head: pink when young, black when old and ripe. In the middle of these, just out of the centre of the green knob, grows a thicker white thread with a yellow head, which belongs to the seeds.

Soon all the flowers have gone, and the tree will look green for a short time; but then it will be

gayer than ever, decorated with gorgeous bunches of red berries, the *haws*, which in their turn you will pluck and taste as you pass down the lane. The hard green knob goes on growing thicker and bigger, still wearing its little green crown, though its white one has gone, till at last it stops growing larger, and begins to grow softer, and to change from green to bright beautiful red, and so to invite the little birds to come and eat it. If you cut one of those haws through, you will see there is a little chamber in the middle of it holding one seed.

The haw is sister to the apple, which grows just in the same way, only that it has five chambers in the middle, with two or three seeds in each, which you know as the *core and pips.*

The haws stay on the trees till the winter; and the birds come again and again, always finding their meal ready for them: they have not to wait while it is prepared.

When the Hawthorn is not planted for a hedge, but stands by itself, it grows into a beautiful round tree, just the one to sit beneath; the thick branches make such a splendid shade, and the flowers give such sweet scent. On village greens there is often to be seen one of these trees with a seat placed beneath it.

In gardens there are cultivated Hawthorns, with

pink flowers, and some with double flowers, and others again with variegated leaves.

The Hawthorn has been put to several uses besides forming hedges. The juice of its flowers is said to put away the evil effects of poison, the outer coat of the branches yields a yellow dye, and from the fruit the French make a fermented liquor of great intoxicating power.

The Hawthorn is also one of the royal flowers. When King Richard III. lay slain on the battle-field of Bosworth, a soldier, who robbed him of his armour and jewels, hid his crown in a Hawthorn bush, where it was found soon after, and given to King Henry VII., who succeeded him. Henry then had pictured on his family standard a Hawthorn bush in full fruit, holding a crown in its branches; and this sign was kept by all the kings and queens of his family—the House of Tudor. This is the same king who had the forget-me-nots engraved on his golden collar.

A little piece of Hawthorn sent to a friend is a sign of hope; and to you it is God's message of hope, when it comes in the early spring, telling you that the long bright days of summer are coming, the flowers, and the sunshine, and the gladness. It tells you also to hope for another summer, a time of wonderful gladness, when there will be no

more sin and sorrow in the world; when Jesus will have finished His work, and have made perfect all who give themselves to Him; when God's children will have turned to Him, to love and serve Him with all their heart and mind and strength. It tells you too that as each little flower does its work, and thus helps to bring on the summer glory, so each little child by doing just what his Father in heaven tells him to do will help and bring nearer his Father's kingdom

The Blackberry.

How many a holiday have you begged in the late summer and autumn to go a-Blackberrying! Yes, and sometimes little boys on their way to school have been so greatly tempted by the beautiful black clusters hanging so invitingly on the hedges, that their nice bag of books has been thrown in the grass, and left there while they have rambled on and on, enjoying the rich sweet fruit, seeming quite to forget that they were playing truant.

How eagerly you watch in June for the flowers, wondering what sort of a crop there will be; and

we all, men and women, as well as little children, rejoice when Blackberries are going to be plentiful.

> "Thy fruit full well the school-boy knows,
> Wild bramble of the brake,
> Go put thou forth thy small white rose;
> I love it for his sake."

When you gather Blackberries you often wish that there were not so many prickles in the way, scratching your hands, and tearing your clothes, and you wonder what they were made for. Now, if it were not for those troublesome prickles, there would probably be very little of the nice fruit for you to gather. That sounds strange to you, perhaps; but it is quite true, for the prickles are the armour of the bush: they keep the cattle from grazing on it, eating the leaves and nice young tops, and thus greatly injuring it.

These are not such hard sharp thorns as those which grow on the hawthorn bush, but there are a great many more of them; and though they are only little prickles, they are well able to scratch, as we know when we go too near them. The bramble is not a great strong tree, like the hawthorn, and so it would not be natural for it to produce as hard thorns. Its prickles are not little branches, like those of the hawthorn, but only hairs that have

grown so strong that, instead of allowing us to stroke them softly, they now refuse to bend, and scratch our interfering fingers.

The Blackberry bush is not able to stand up and grow into a tree; its branches are weak, and straggle over the ground or cover the hedge.

How rough the leaves are, and how hardy they look, as if they would fear nothing, neither wind, nor rain, nor hail, nor sun, nor man, nor beast. When we see the beautiful white flowers growing among them, it reminds us of a sweet child's face appearing above rough woollen garments. Sometimes the poor rough clothes make the face look all the more beautiful, though sometimes a child looks best in rich clothes. Mothers are not always able to make their children look their best; but God is always able to make His flowers look their best. So He dresses the Blackberry bush in rough green leaves; but even these He makes beautiful, cutting their edges, and dividing them into three or five separate small leaves or leaflets, one all by itself at the end of the long stalk, and the other two or four opposite one another a little way farther down, so that they have all plenty of room in which to spread. If you turn one of the leaflets over, you will see that it is well-armed, for on the under side of it there is a rib which runs from the stalk to the

tip, and this has a row of little prickles upon it. These would not be pleasant in a cow's mouth, and so she leaves the leaf unharmed.

Look down to the bottom of the leaf-stalk, and you will see that this leaf, like those of the hawthorn and clover, has two little attendant leaves, which are growing fast to the stalk, as if they were trying to creep up to get nearer to their masters.

When you make your bouquets of wild flowers, you never gather the Blackberry blossoms, because you know that if you do there will be no fruit; and so you get into the habit of thinking the flowers are nothing, and scarcely notice them. But look at them now, why, even their stalks are armed with tiny prickles. How closely and tightly each young bud is folded up in those five tiny rough flower-leaves which have wrapped themselves round it, and fastened together their long slender points above, to keep the frost from nipping the tender little bud, and thus preventing it growing into a sweet Blackberry for you to come and pluck in the autumn. When the sun has been out a great deal, and has shone down on it for several days, and the rays feel very hot, then the little green wrapper seems to know that the frost is over, turns back its five folds, and spreads itself out into a beautiful star. Sometimes the frost comes back again, and

then it nips the poor flowers, and kills them, and there are very few Blackberries for you that year. When the wrapper has fallen down, five crumpled flower-leaves spread themselves out over the green star in a white satin frill, showing in the middle quite a regiment of the little standing threads, which are called *stamens*.

"How delicate thy gauzy frill!
How rich thy branchy stem!
How soft thy voice when woods are still,
And thou singest hymns to them!"

This satin flower is very like the milky hawthorn blossom, and like the beautiful wild rose; and sometimes like them it blushes into a lovely delicate pink.

But best of all, in the middle of the flower is the little pyramid of tiny hard green lumps, all growing fast round a white pillar. These will take three or four months to grow before they are ready for you.

At last the time comes when you can have your holidays, and set off to the woods and lanes, seeking Blackberries, or, as the Yorkshire children call them, *Blags*, or *Blegs*, using a very old word which means *Blacks*, or Blackberries.

The beautiful bushes are changed now; many of the leaves have a lovely purple tinge, and some have turned quite crimson; all the lovely satin frills

have fallen away; the green stars have folded back their leaves upon the stalks, their work all done, but loth to go till they have seen the beautiful fruit ripen; and there, hanging down in a most tempting way, are the rich black clusters.

Each little green lump turned first red, and then black, growing all the time fuller and fuller of sugar and sweet juice; and all the lumps together, in growing, crushed down the white pillar round which they were fastened into a flat plate, on which they now rest, the beautiful berry you seek. In each of these tiny berries, which make up the large one, there is one seed.

People have always liked Blackberries; and the ancient Greeks used to say that if rich gentlemen would eat plenty of them they would never be troubled with gout.

The raspberry is very much like the Blackberry, but its sweet pink berries do not crush down the white pillars round which they grow; but when they are ripe they loose their hold of it, so that you can draw them easily away. Wild raspberries are not so common in England as Blackberries, and so they are cultivated in gardens; but people do not trouble to cultivate Blackberries, as they grow so plentifully in nearly every hedge.

There is another berry something like the Black-

berry, called the cloudberry, because it grows on mountains among the clouds. The people in Norway gather these from the mountain-tops, and pack them in wooden boxes to send to Sweden there to be used for dessert; and the Lapps, or people of Lapland, bury them in the snow, to keep them for food during the winter.

The oldest parable in the Bible is about a bramble being chosen by the other trees to be their king, though it was the very lowest of them all.

When you hear people speak of the *bramble*, you think of the straggling stems, the prickles, and the rough leaves; but when you hear of *Blackberry bush*, you think of the bonny flowers and the rich fruits. That shows you how very important it is always to call things by their best names. But, now that you have looked it well over, you will love it, whether it be called bramble or Blackberry bush.

"Be the bramble in the berry,
Or be it in the flower,
Or be it bare of leaf and bud,
Waved by the winter shower,
That creeping bush that lowly is,
As lowly well can be,
It hath a charm, a history,
A tale that pleases me."

You may go to different lanes, and you will scarcely ever find two Blackberry bushes alike.

God has clothed them all a little differently; some grow eight or nine feet high, and some spread over the ground; some have hard prickles, some only hairs, and some are quite smooth; some of the leaves are cut into five leaflets, and some into three; some are green, and some are purple and crimson.

Sometimes you will see children going out to the hedges, not to eat the sweet berries for their own holiday pleasure, but to fill large baskets with them, that they may sell them to ladies to make into sweet jelly and jam.

Sometimes too you will see men cutting down branches and old bushes; and if you follow them you will see them lay them on the sides of the footpaths through the fields, as a little hint to tell you to keep on the walks. You may follow one or two of the men to the churchyard, and watch them kneel down by some new graves to bind down the fresh sods with the bramble branches, that the winter rains and frosts may not break them up and prevent the grass from growing. Perhaps you see there a very little grave; it is that of a child who looked forward to the Blackberry season, as you did; but God took him home to Himself, and now he is very happy because he is with his heavenly Father.

The Wild Rose.

WHICH flower do you like best? A quiet, pale child whispers, "The sweet violet." A merry little sprite cries eagerly, "The dear little daisy;" but all the others shout at once, "Oh! the Rose, the Rose, the beautiful Rose." You all should love it very much; for not only is it the beautiful queen of flowers, but it is also the flower of England. When the Romans first came to Britain, they sent word to their friends in Rome that it was a land of white Roses; and now the Rose decorates the crown of our Queen, and nestles in her coat of arms, touching lovingly the sharp thistle of Scotland and the delicate Irish shamrock.

Which kind of Rose do you like best? One tells of glorious crimson or yellow garden beauties; another of the shy Moss Rose; but most cry, "The lovely Wild Rose of the hedgerows." See how she covers the hedge with beautiful sprays, and how her smiling, blushing face peeps out from her lovely dark leaves.

Which kind of Wild Rose do you like best? There is no answer this time. Perhaps many of you do not know that there are several kinds of Wild Roses. There is the Burnet Rose, a lovely little creamy white one that grows near the sea-shore, with black hips and very small leaves, and so many long thorns that it is almost impossible to gather it. Then there are the Sweetbriar Rose, the Rose with prickly red hips and soft downy leaves; the trailing Field Rose; and the common Dog Rose.

Yes, that is the Rose you like best, the Dog Rose. Why is it called the Dog Rose? If you take your little dog down the lane, he passes by and takes no notice whatever of the sweet smiling faces in the hedgerows. But if you take him in the late summer, when the scarlet hips peep out, perhaps he will stay and have a little feast, if you have not given him too much dinner at home. The little dog's bark is too rough and hard to sing

love-songs to the flowers; but in some parts, when the night is clear and still, the nightingale comes out and sits by the Rose bush, and sings to her all night through, telling her of the wonderful things he has seen in his wanderings, but how he has seen nothing he loves so well as the sweet blushes of Queen Rose.

She seems to know that she is queen, by the way she raises herself above the flowers on the banks, and appears to look down even on the sweet woodbine which climbs near.

There is a poetical story which tells us that at first the Rose was a white flower only, and without any scent; but one day, when Eve was walking in the garden of Eden, she was so delighted with its beauty that she kissed it, and immediately the little flower became as sweet as her breath, and blushed to the colour of the lips which had touched it. Since then it has been called the *Rose*, which means the *red flower*, although there are still many white ones.

What little flower have you seen in the hedge-rows that seems like a small copy of the Rose? Is it the blackberry flower? Yes, the blackberry is first cousin to the Rose. Look at them both together, and see how much they are alike. Both have their leaves cut up into several leaflets, and

with a pair of tiny attendant leaves growing fast to the bottom of their stalks. Both have their stems covered with those small hard hairs which prick your fingers so badly when you try to pluck them. Both have their little pink buds tightly folded up in long narrow pointed green leaves till the frosts are over; and then spreading out into lovely blushing flowers, with a crowd of bright yellow heads standing merrily up in the middle, trying which can get nearest the sunshine.

But where in the Rose is that nice little bunch of green lumps, which nestles so contentedly in the centre of the blackberry blossom? It is nowhere to be seen; but instead of the hard pyramid there is a little hole, the door of a big chamber, and through it are peeping a great many little sticky hairs. Where can that chamber be? If you turn the flower over and look underneath, you will see just under the green star a round, hard, green ball. There is no ball like that in the blackberry flower. Let us make a slit in it with a knife from the stalk to the hole in the top, so that we may open it and see what it is. That hard green ball seems to be the body of the flower, which, instead of closing itself up tightly at the top, spreads out into a star of five graceful rays; and inside each one of these rays a lovely white or pink leaf is fastened, and on

the front of that a great many shining little *stamens*, and that is how the beautiful flower-dress is made.

Inside the green body you can see a great many tiny seeds, on which grow those hairs which you saw peeping through the door of the chamber.

The leaves of the Dog Rose are also somewhat like those of the blackberry. They are cut up into five or even seven small leaflets; and these are generally quite smooth, though sometimes they are soft and downy underneath. The little thorns on the stalks are always beautifully curved, and so small that they will not prick you much. You do not like these thorns, and perhaps they are rather troublesome; but see how much prettier the stalk looks with them on than when you have pulled them off.

The summer passes by, and you must say farewell to the blushing smiles of the queen, though there are still hundreds of other flowers calling you out into the lanes. But does Queen Rose let you forget her? No! she seems determined still to be queen, for she has decked herself out in glorious new ornaments, and brilliant scarlet berries glow triumphantly from her dark leaves, so that you almost wonder whether she is not more beautiful than ever.

And if her flowers reminded you of the black-

WILD ROSE, HONEYSUCKLE, AND HYACINTH.

berry, what does her fruit remind you of? It must be of the hawthorn. Hips and haws, which the little birds love. When the wise men of old saw the Rose bushes crowded with hips and the hawthorn trees covered with haws, they thought that the winter would be very cold and severe, because God was providing so much food on the trees for the birds.

What is our scarlet hip like? It is the green body of the flower, which has grown large, and full, and bright; it has closed its door and dropped its dress, though it still spreads out its green star on the top. Cut it open, and see how the seeds look now. The red skin is as thick and tough as leather; but it is beautifully lined with soft white silk; surely no little seeds had ever such a lovely bed or were so well wrapped up and cared for. They are themselves clothed in the same soft silky hairs, and each wears a little bunch of them as an ornament, like a small top-knot. Each seed is held fast to the bottom of the chamber by a little crumpled stalk, which is also clothed with the same beautiful hairs.

How wonderful it is to think that the great God who made the sun and the moon and the stars has also made all these tiny silk threads. It is the touch of His fingers which has made them so soft

and bright, and then wrapped them up so closely in that splendid scarlet cloak. Surely, when you see how carefully He looks after these little things which are quite out of sight, you will know how lovingly He looks after you and cares for you all the day long.

In the days of Queen Elizabeth, when ladies and gentlemen could not get so many kinds of fine fruit for dessert as they can now, their cooks used to prepare hips for them by scraping out all their seeds and silk hairs, and leaving only the thick covering. Very often also they made them into tarts and conserves.

In some places the flowers are preserved with sugar; and in China a dish of cooked Roses is generally provided at every great banquet. But though you do not, like the Chinese, eat Roses, you like to have delicious scent made from them, sweet Rose-water; and so in Essex and Kent many acres of Roses are grown, from which this pleasant perfume is made. The scent of the Dog Rose is not so strong as that of most of our splendid garden Roses, but still it is very sweet and delicate.

Have you ever heard of *blue* Roses? Why, if any one told you to come and look at a blue Rose, you would laugh; but some old books tell us that many centuries ago there used to be blue Roses

growing in gardens. However, the new books say that cannot be true.

The Rose is one of the flowers about which your books on History will tell you many stories. They will tell you of the dreadful wars called the Wars of the Roses, when one army carried a standard with a white Rose pictured on it, while the opposing army bore one which showed a splendid red Rose. It is sad to think of our Rose's delicate face looking down on those terrible battle-fields.

They will tell you also that when the Pope of Rome wished to honour a king who had done him good service, he presented him with a golden Rose; and that our English kings Henry VI. and Henry VIII. each received one of these marks of honour.

But the best story of all is one which tells how that good Martin Luther loved the Rose, and had one cut on his seal, that he might stamp all his letters and papers with it.

When in your holiday you are tired of your toys, and long for new ones, when you have played at the old games over and over again, and have read all your story-books till you know them almost by heart, then run out into the lanes and the fields, and try what new flowers you can find. You will see that there are more than you have ever dreamed of; and look well at the old favourites, for every

day they will have something new to show you. They are not always the same, like your toys and games, but are always changing, even the flowers you know best, the common little daisy and the beautiful Wild Rose will have constantly new tales for you. Whether you are rich or poor, whether you are boys and girls or only little children, the flowers will be always ready to interest and amuse you.

"They tell me that my father's poor—that is no grief to me,
When such a blue and brilliant sky my upturned eye can see;
They tell me too that richer girls can sport with toy and gem;
It may be so—and yet methinks I do not envy them.

When forth I go upon my way, a thousand toys are mine,
The clusters of dark violets, the wreaths of the wild vine,
My jewels are the primrose pale, the bindweed, and the rose;
And show me any courtly gem more beautiful than those."

WATERCRESS.

IF you live in a great city or town in the spring-time, you are probably often awakened from your sleep in the early morning by the shrill cries of "Watercress, fresh Watercress!" The men and girls are earlier at their work than you are. While you have been sleeping soundly in your little bed, they have been to the market for your breakfast; and the people in the market have been up still earlier, out in the country, gathering the fresh Cresses even before the sun rose. How pleasant it must be for you to go down to the comfortable breakfast-table, and find all waiting for you there.

That "fine spring water-grass, fit for lad or lass!" seems to give you an appetite just to look at it.

Have you ever wondered, as you sat at breakfast and enjoyed the pleasant, biting Cress, what sort of flowers belonged to those dark round leaves? While you are dancing about in the hay field in summer-time, forgetting all about the fresh Water-cresses you enjoyed in the spring, then the little flowers rise above the dark leaves, and look down at their pretty faces, reflected in the looking-glass of clear water below. They do not try to remind you of themselves, they like to hide in the quiet places where no little eyes look except the very curious ones.

You love to play at hide-and-seek; and scarcely ever is your laughter so merry or your shout so joyful as when, after peeping into every corner in search of your little friends, you at last find them hidden behind the bush or hay-cock. But sometimes you are alone, and have no little friends to play with. Did you ever think then of making playmates of the flowers, and having a game at hide-and-seek with them? That makes a splendid game, for they are hidden everywhere, in all kinds of pretty places; and they cannot run away and hide somewhere else when they see you coming to their hiding-place. Try this game with Water-

cress, in the bright summer months of June and July. Look for a little running stream of clear water, perhaps by the side of a field and under a hedge, or perhaps at the bottom of a wood. When you have found such a stream, you will be sure before very long to recognise your old friends, the thick dark shining leaves, not tied together in a nice little bunch, but growing on a long stem, and floating about on the top of the water, as happy as the sunbeams which dance on the hill-sides, only very much quieter about it.

Sometimes you will find so many of them together that the water is quite covered; but sometimes you will only find one or two, and occasionally they will not be in the water at all, but creeping about the mud near the edge, or even scrambling up the bank and growing above half a yard high. If you taste the leaves now, you will find that they are not so pleasant as they were in the spring, they have grown strong and tough.

But now you can see what the Watercress flowers are like. There they are at the end of the stem; not floating about in the water like the leaves, but holding their heads above the surface, that their delicate white crowns may not be stained; for they are white and pure and clean, though very small.

They seem to like company, for there are many of them together on one stem, though each has also a little stalk of its own. Look at the pretty little flower, it is a pure white cross, resting in a cup of four tiny green leaves; and though it is so small that if you were not looking for it you would pass along the bank and never see it, yet it is very sweet and pretty. Some say that it is because it looks so like a little *cross* that it is called *Cress;* but others say that *Cress* is an old word for *creep*, and so it is called *Cress* because it is a *creeping* plant; and others that it is named after the Latin word to grow, because it grows so quickly.

If you like you may go on with your game of hide-and-seek with the flowers, and see if you can find any others that look like crosses. Why, there in the turnip field, where the turnips are running to seed, are rich yellow crosses: yes, the turnips are cousins of the Watercress. Then, in the garden, the mustard and cress you have for tea, and the cabbages you have for dinner, all bear these small white crosses. Then, if you look in the spring-time, you will find the sweet-scented wallflower has large brown crosses, and the pretty cuckoo-flower of the May has lilac ones. All these plants with the cross-shaped flowers—the cresses, the cabbages, the wallflowers, and the cuckoo-flowers, and many

more which you may find—are near relatives, they all belong to one great family called the *Cruciferæ*, or Cross family. It is a very large family indeed, one of the largest flower-families in England. There are almost as many little plants called Cross as there are little children called Smith; and whenever you see one of these Crosses you may be quite sure that it is good to eat. How nice it would be if whenever we hear that a little child is called Smith we might know that he is good and useful.

But we have not finished looking at our little white Watercress yet; we have still to see what is inside those four small white leaves. Do you see the *stamens?* there are six of them standing in the middle, round what appears like a short green stem. Though four of these stamens are long and strong, two are very short, and look as if they had stopped growing too soon. But what is that little green stem in the middle? It is no stem at all, for it holds inside it a row of tiny seeds.

If you look a little way down the stem, below the white crosses, you will see that there the pretty white leaves have fallen off; and what seemed like a bit of green stem has grown into a beautiful pod about one inch long, and gracefully curved into the shape of the new moon. Lower down still, where the seeds are larger and riper, you can see the

shape of them through the pod as they press against its sides. But what is the matter with those lowest of all? Is that a stiff white thread where the pod was, and are those little flags of white skin hanging from the upper end of it? Ah! the seeds grew so ripe that the pod could not hold them any longer, and was obliged to burst. The sides came apart, and became those white skin flags; and then the seeds dropped off that beautiful stiff thread, on each side of which they were fastened.

Now look at the leaf; you can tell so much better what it is like as you see it growing, than when it is on your plate. See how each leaf is made of five or even seven small perfect leaves, so thick and dark and smooth, of which the odd one at the end of the stalk is larger than any of the others.

Gather some of that Watercress creeping in the mud on the bank. Why, you have to pull it up; has the little plant fingers with which it holds itself to the mud? What long white fingers they are, hanging in little bunches here and there from the stem, at the same points from which the leaves grow. If you pull up the root you will see that these fingers are just like the white threads that run down from the root; so this wonderful stem

sometimes puts out new roots from some of its joints, to help it to hold fast to the ground.

If you go to look for the Watercress in the spring-time, you will find another little plant that looks very much like it. This is called the Fool's-cress: for foolish, careless people sometimes gather it instead; and it does not belong to the good Cross family, but is very poisonous. There are several differences between the leaves of the Watercress and those of the Fool's-cress, but one will be sufficient to help you to distinguish them. The leaf of each is divided into several small ones; of these the odd one at the end is always the largest in the Watercress, and always the smallest in the Fool's-cress.

This little Watercress has another name, and a very curious one. It is called *Nasturtium*. But, you say, Nasturtiums are bright gay flowers which grow in our garden beds, not at all like the Watercress. That is true; but your bright gay flowers were called after the simple little Watercress, because their leaves had a little of the same biting taste. Now, Nasturtium sounds a very grand name, but perhaps you will not think it so grand when you know that it means "Wry nose;" and do you ask why the little Watercress is called Wry nose? That name was given to it a very long time ago,

because sometimes when it is very strong it bites like mustard, and causes those who eat it to pull very wry faces; so it is the plant which causes wry faces, the little *wry nose.*

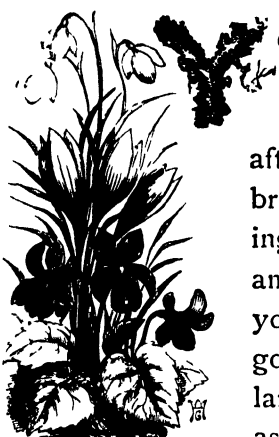
The Watercress is a little plant which grows everywhere, both in cold countries and hot countries, wherever it can find a clear stream that is not very deep. You can always get plenty of it in the spring-time; for those who sell it in the markets do not go and play hide-and-seek with it, like you do: they cultivate great beds of it, so that they have nothing to do but gather and sell it. In Hertfordshire, there is a stream on which a gardener has cultivated four acres of it.

Always eat plenty of Watercress, for it is very good for you; eat it if your cheeks are white and pale, for it is said to make the roses grow there; and eat it if you wish to be sharp and bright, for the old Greeks used to say, "Eat Cress to learn more wit."

Here is a quaint old grace you may think of, when you have Watercress to breakfast or tea:

"Lord, I confess too, when I dine,
The pulse is Thine,
And all those other bits that be,
There placed by Thee,
The worts, the purslane, and the mess
Of Water-cress."

VIOLET AND HEART'S-EASE.



YOU have persuaded father or mother to take you out into the country for a long happy afternoon, when the sky is bright and the trees are pushing out their fresh green leaves, and only the cold winds tell you that winter is not quite gone. You dance about the lanes in glee, and are as happy as the birds and the little lambs. But what makes you stop so suddenly? A faint sweet scent is stealing down the lane to meet you; ah! there it is, hidden low in the grass under that hedge, the first Violet, with its little nodding face.

"A lovely flower, in secret bower,
Invisible I dwell,
For blessing made, without parade,
Known only by the smell."

Or you are walking down the street in the town where you live, perhaps trotting off to school, when the same sweet odour greets you. Where has it come from this time? there is no pleasant hedge near, no protecting grass. A little girl, carrying a basket, has just passed you; and in the basket lie tiny purple bunches neatly tied, looking so shy and so sweet, and now the cry rings through the streets, "Violets! sweet Violets!" Every one is eager to possess some of the first Violets, so that she will quickly have her basket emptied, and a pocketful of pence to take home to her mother; and soon there will be just as many sweet-scented rooms as there were bunches in the basket.

You are very glad to buy those little bunches, when you cannot go into the lanes; but if you can, how much pleasanter it is to search among the grass and pluck them for yourselves. Each little dark Violet looks its best as it peeps up from its own cluster of leaves, which spread round it on their long stalks. Each leaf is almost the shape of a heart, and scalloped beautifully round the edge, and it is covered with short fine hairs.

Some little children delight in making Violet-shrubs as much as in stringing daisy-garlands and cherry-earrings. If you have never made one of these, you would perhaps like to know how to do so. You must first look in the hawthorn hedge for a nice branch which has all its spines strong and unbroken; and when you see one that you think will do, cut it off, if you can manage without pricking and scratching your hands too much. Then you must pluck off the stalks from some purple and white Violets, and prick the heads on the spines of your bough, putting first a purple and then a white one. When you have thus trimmed each spine, you must get a little flower-pot, fill it with moss, and plant in it your branch; and then you will have a very bonny little shrub, and a very sweet one. Perhaps you will not be able to find any white Violets; but you will be best pleased if you can, for besides making your shrub prettier, they are even sweeter than the purple ones.

Wonderful medicines are made out of these little flowers, which the wise people of Athens used to say would give them sleep when they were restless, cure their headaches, make them sweet-tempered, and even comfort them when they were in sorrow and trouble. Perhaps you know where there is a nice little bottle, filled with rich purple syrup, that

you almost wish to be poorly to taste, for it is as sweet as the Violets from which it is made.

You have often asked your little friends which flower they like best; but did you ever think of asking the flowers what kind of child they liked best? Ask this sweet little Violet that seems to be so quaintly peeping up at you from its hiding-place in the grass. Can you hear its reply?

"I'd rather meet with downcast eyes,
Sweet voices, low and faint,
For gentleness and modesty
Become a little saint."

Ah! it seems that just as little children love the sweet, modest Violets, so little Violets love the sweet, modest children.

By the time April is gone, with its sunshine and showers, there are no more *sweet* Violets to be found in our lanes. But are there then no Violets at all? Why, there seem to be more than ever, and the new Violets do not hide in the grass, but allow us to look at their beautiful faces, which are larger and paler than those of our last friends. See how modestly they droop, and bend their stem, as if they would fain hide themselves with their sweet sisters. But no! they have no delicate scent by which to tell their friends the insects where to

find them, so they must continue to show their faces. These are called the Dogs' Violets. They are even more beautiful than the sweet ones; but you do not often gather them, for they fade so soon in your hot fingers.

By the end of May these bonny flowers fade away, as the sweet ones did in April; but all their little plants are still working away, making another kind of flower, which you have perhaps never noticed, for it has neither bright-coloured crown nor sweet smell, though in every other respect it is exactly like those you know. Most of the sweet flowers of the early Violets and the beautiful ones of the Dogs' Violets seem to have used all their strength in producing the scent or the colour, and so they withered away without being able to ripen their seed. Thus the little plants have to set to work again, to make other flowers without sweetness or brightness, in which the seeds may grow ripe.

But though the sweet Violets and the Dogs' Violets are over, there are still the most beautiful ones to come in the summer-time.

"There is a little flower that's found
In almost every garden-ground,
'Tis lowly, but 'tis sweet.
And if its name express its power,
A more invaluable flower
You'll never, never meet."

And what is the name of this beautiful summer Violet? Why, it is like the princes and princesses among children, it has a great many names. It was christened by some *Heart's-ease*, because they thought that a medicine made from it was able to comfort them in sorrow. Certainly you would all want to have it growing in your gardens if it would wipe away all your tears and make your heart always glad. Others looked at it, and noticed that the gay little flower was hanging its head, as if thinking deeply, and they said, "Let us call it *Pansy*, for it seems to be full of thoughts;" and pansy means thought. It is also called *Love-in-idleness*, *Kit-run-the-street*, and *Trinity herb;* and, funnier still, *Jack-look-up-and-kiss-me!*

This is the Violet that you know best. If you go into the clover-field you will be sure to find numbers of these little Pansies, all turning their quaint faces towards the sun, and watching him all day long, as if it were he about whom they are always thinking so deeply. Some of them are yellow; but the finest and most handsome are of three colours. Gather one of these, and see what it is like. This flower has not a stem all to itself, like the early Violets have, but shares it with the leaves, which branch out all round, though they have also little stalks of their own. The leaves too

are not so broad as those of the others; and at the base of their stalks they have two leaves attending on them, which are cut up into three leaflets, and rival the chief leaf in beauty. Of these leaflets the middle one is large and beautifully scalloped, like its master, but the other two are very small.

Now look at the flower; it rests in a very curious little cup of five tiny green leaves, with five broad laps hanging down from them round the stalk, which is curved like a shepherd's crook, so that the flower seems to grow out of the side of it, instead of at the end. The bright round leaves are not arranged in a simple ring, as those of most other flowers are. There is a pair of rich purple ones at the top; just below these, and slightly resting on them, a pair of a much lighter shade of purple; and lowest of all, a single one, much larger than the others, yellow, with a violet edge and shading to rich orange near the centre of the flower. The three lowest of these leaves are decorated by dark purple lines, all running to the centre of the flower, lines so delicate and fine that you would think the brush that painted them must have been a very small one.

The children who live on the Continent would tell you a strange little fancy they have about these five bright-colcured leaves. They say the large

yellow one is the stepmother, sitting in her arm-chair; the two pale ones next to her are her own two daughters, each in a chair of her own; and the two rich purple ones, farthest from her, are her two step-daughters, joining at one chair.

If you pull them all away, you will see the little green chairs. As you take off the middle pair of light purple leaves, you will notice at the bottom of each a lovely little tuft of delicate white hairs like a little beard. But what is that hanging down from the large yellow leaf? is it a tail? If you pull the leaf away very carefully, you will see that there are two small tails inside this one, of a very curious shape, and hanging from the centre of the flower. When all the bright leaves have gone, the part of the flower that is left has a very strange appearance. There is a little green bag fastened to the stem; and on this the flower-fairies seem to have erected a little yellow tent with their spear-heads, on the top of which tent is a tiny green button. There are five of these spear-heads; they are quite flat, pale yellow and broad at the bottom, but with deep orange-coloured points. How carefully and skilfully the fairy fingers have laid them together. Are you not anxious to see what they have hidden inside? Pull the tent away, and look. Ah, now you will find that those curious little tails hang

from two of these spear-heads. Inside the tent is a little stalk growing from the green bag, and bearing on the end of it the sticky button which you saw peeping out at the top. What can all these strange things be?

Perhaps you see a tiny insect creeping about somewhere; that insect, which is called a *thrips*, can tell you a wonderful story of its day's work. It started early in the morning in search of honey; and seeing the bright colours of this Pansy some distance off, it crept here as quickly as possible. As soon as it arrived it looked for one of the fine purple lines, to show it the way to the middle of the flower; and when it had found one, it kept close to it till it reached the centre. There its way seemed to be blocked up by the little tent of spear-heads, which it would tell you are the *stamens* of the flower; but looking about, it saw in front of it a small hole just big enough for it to squeeze through. So it crept through the hole; and in doing so shook some of the yellow dust out of the orange points upon its back. When safely through, it saw a black line running down the small stalk inside. This was another pathway, which led it to two more little holes, the entrances of two tunnels, which were the inside of those two curious tails you saw hanging from the tent. It crept carefully

down one of these tunnels, and found at the end a small chamber full of delicious honey. There it rested, dined, and filled its bag, and set off with its load to return home the same way it had come. At the end of the black pathway up the stalk it rubbed its back against the green button, and left the dust which had fallen upon it from the stamens sticking there. So now it is going home, having done a good day's work. It has filled its own bag with honey, and carried the dust of the stamens to the sticky button, from which it will go down inside the little stalk to the green bag below, and cause the seeds with which the bag is filled to ripen.

Is not the story of this little thrips a very wonderful one? God has made them so carefully and so skilfully that the little insect helps the flower, and the flower helps the insect.

Do you wonder how those little seeds get out of their green bag to the ground when they are ripe? They do it in a very curious way. All the bright leaves fall off, the stem no longer bends like a crook, but stands straight up. Then the sun dries the bag, and cracks it in three places; and you may see all the smooth shining seeds fastened inside in three bunches. As the three parts of the bag go on shrivelling up, they press on the bunches of seeds, and shoot them out to a long distance.

A young lady was so fond of the little quaint faces of these wild Pansies, that she asked her gardener to plant a great many of them in her garden-beds, and take care of them. He cared for them so well that he made them produce many beautiful new kinds. Many other gardeners followed his example; so that all the rich large Pansies of our gardens are the great-grandchildren of this little wild Heart's-ease.

There is a very pretty story which you may think of whenever you see a Pansy. It tells us that when Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, this flower was quite white; but after they disobeyed God, an angel came and painted it blue, the colour of the sky, to teach mankind that just as the sky is always blue, so we should always serve and love God; and then he painted in the deep yellow, to tell us of the golden crowns which will be given to those who thus love and serve Him.

THE POPPY.

SURELY no flowers ever looked so bright and saucy as these red Poppies waving about among the corn. They must be wild with delight, like little children who are going to have some treat, and can do nothing but dance and jump up and down in their glee. See how they are nodding their gay little heads to you: they must be as glad to see you as you are to see them. Listen to what they are saying:—

"We little red-caps are among the corn,
Merrily dancing at early morn;
We know that the farmers hate to see
Our saucy red faces; but here are we!

We pay no price for our summer coats,
Like those slavish creatures, Barley and Oats ;
We don't choose to be ground and eat,
Like our heavy-headed neighbour, Gaffer Wheat !"

Certainly they are as saucy as they look. But what did they say about the farmers? Can they really mean that farmers do not admire their bright beauty? Farmers and little children do not seem to have at all the same tastes; they like the thorns in the hedges, which you call "Those tiresome thorns," and you like the flowers in the cornfields, which they call "Those tiresome Poppies." They are thinking about their corn, and what a great deal of trouble they will have at harvest-time picking out all those Poppies, and how particular they will have to be lest any should be left among the wheat, and be ground into flour, or among the oats for the cattle, for they would give the wheat and oats a very bad taste, and perhaps make them poisonous. So you can understand why the farmers do not like Poppies among their corn.

The people of olden times used to be glad to see them, thinking their corn was not good unless it was well sprinkled with Poppies ; and when they went to thank their gods for the harvest, they decorated their images with ears of corn, and offered them wheat and Poppy-seeds. Thus, as

they thought, the Poppies made their corn good; they did not mind the trouble of picking them out at harvest-time. Farmers now know better, and so they only think of the trouble.

As you gather some of the Poppies at the edge of the field, a thick white juice drops from the broken stem on your hand. It looks just like milk; but you do not even want to taste it because it smells so disagreeably; and if it has once touched your fingers, you will be some time before you can cleanse them from the bad odour. If you were to take much of this juice, it would make you very dull and sleepy, and perhaps kill you. It was because of this that the Poppy used to be called "Headache."

There is another kind of Poppy called the Sleep-Poppy, which you may have seen in gardens. It has smooth leaves and large lilac flowers, with dark spots on them. When the stem of this Poppy is broken a great deal of milk flows out, which is very much stronger than that of the corn-field Poppy. In India and China this Sleep-Poppy is sown and cultivated in large fields; and when it is ripe the heads are cut, the milk runs out, and the sun dries it. It is then made into little cakes called opium-cakes, which are sold to be eaten or smoked. The Chinese and the Turks also are very fond of these

little cakes. At first they eat or smoke a little, and it gives them a slight sleepy feeling ; they forget all their troubles, and forget also that they have work to do, and sit still and dream. Then they take more and more till they become quite intoxicated, and are unable to do anything. When a man first begins to use opium, he dare only take a little, lest he should never wake again ; but when he gets used to it, he can take more.

You may have seen little bottles of medicine, marked Laudanum, poison. This medicine is made from the milk of this Sleep-Poppy, and it is used for people who have to suffer great pain. One or two drops soothe them, and send them to sleep ; but if they were to take too much, they would die.

The ancients believed there was a god whose whole work it was to see that every one slept properly ; and they made pictures of him lying asleep with a wreath of Poppies round his head.

The Indians who live in Mexico wear crowns of Poppies as they come home from market, to show that their work is done, and they are able to amuse themselves, and forget the toil and labour they have had.

If you have gathered some of those gay little Poppies which nodded their heads so saucily, you will see that they have very rough hairy stems,

and a few hairy leaves, which make you think of buttercup leaves, they are cut up into so many parts. But your little fingers are sure to be in a hurry to get to that bud, in order to pull apart those two rough hairy leaves, and then to stroke out the bright red flower. How crushed it has been in its little case; and it is so crumpled, you think it must have been put in hurriedly and then shut up, just in the same way that you sometimes stuff things into your drawers at home. Stroke out tenderly the four round red leaves. How shiny and glossy they are; and what a fine dark eye there is in the middle, looking wisely up at you. But, however carefully you stroke them, you cannot make the red leaves as smooth as those of this open flower close by: the creases will not come out. If you had left it a little while longer, it would have pushed off those two green leaves as if they were only a cap, which it had put on for a time, or they would have fallen off by themselves, and then the red leaves would have spread out as smoothly as possible. Perhaps if you leave them to themselves now, they will smooth out their own creases better than you can do it for them; for they were really folded up in the case very carefully, not crushed in anyhow, and so the creases will come out.

Look at this bright open flower, it does not seem to like touching, for if the wind moves it much, or if you shake it, all the bright leaves fall off; it is not so brave and daring as it looked when it nodded to you. It is rather sticky to touch, for the flower also is filled with juice, of such a deep red colour that it makes a beautiful dye, and it is also soothing, like the milk of the stem. But it is not so strong; and so it is made into syrup for little children, to ease them when they are in pain.

Sometimes you may see a strange, beautiful red light playing round the red Poppy flower, so that you almost think it is sending out flames; but you can only see this occasionally when the air is in a special condition.

But your eyes are anxiously looking for something else. Hundreds of Poppy-buds have been opened by little fingers like yours; but there is something else they seek even more gleefully. There is one! A fine Poppy-head. The red leaves have flown away, and left this head growing at the top of the stem. It is a hard green knob, just like a boy's whip-top in shape; and on the top of it is a beautiful cap, like a star-fish, with ten or twelve rays. What a beautiful star, and how fast it clings to the top of the head. If the Poppy-

head is ripe, you will find a ring of holes just underneath the star-lid, one hole for every ray of the star; and if you shake the head, quite a shower of little seeds tumble out, as if it were a tiny pepper-box. When you have pulled off the lid, you see that the inside is almost divided into as many little rooms as there are rays on the lid and holes in the ring; but the walls are partly broken away, and so all the little rooms are open to the middle. And there are all the little brown seeds which you delight in when you are playing at shop, the Poppy-head with its little seeds makes such a fine canister of currants. How many seeds do you think there are in each head—not less than eight thousand! and in some Poppy-heads there are even thirty-two thousand! No wonder that Poppies spread so rapidly; for as the wind shakes the little pepper-boxes, they scatter their seeds in every direction; and they are so light that they are often blown to a great distance.

These seeds have a kind of sweet oil in them, which is used in making cakes for cattle, and sometimes for mixing with paint and soap, or even instead of olive-oil.

Sometimes you have biscuits and cakes with sugar on the top, or with little hard sweets sprinkled over to make them look pretty. In

Eastern countries when the bakers have made their sweet cakes, they sprinkle them over with Poppy-seeds; and these speckled cakes were eaten long before any of those wonderful lollipops of which you are so fond were ever thought of. There is a story in the Bible of a King of Israel called Jeroboam, whose little son was so sick that the king feared he would die. Being anxious to know whether his child would live or not, he sent his servant to ask the prophet Ahijah about it; and at the same time he sent the prophet a present of these sweet cakes sprinkled over with Poppy-seeds.

Little children are just like Poppy-heads, scattering their seeds far and wide all the day long. Every word you speak is a little seed. If it be a loving little word, it will cause a little flower of love to spring up in some one's heart; but if it be an angry word, it will cause anger and sorrow in the hearts of all those who hear it. The Poppy cannot choose what kind of seeds it will spread, but a little child can; so always be careful to choose the seeds which will make the love-flowers grow.

PLANTAINS.

ALL little children love the pleasant hay time, when they can run in the fields, and bury one another in hay, and lie on the cocks and ride on the carts. But why does the hay time come? It is because the farmers have good cows to keep, and they must look forward to the winter, to the cold days when the cows cannot go out to the fields, but will want sweet hay to eat.

After the hay time comes the harvest, when again the farmers are all out in the fields preparing for the winter; but this time they are gathering in the corn to make bread for us, instead of hay for the cows.

Are the farmers the only ones who have harvest

seasons? No! the boys and girls who keep and tend little birds have also their harvest time, when they trot out with small wheelbarrows and big scissors to cut off and bring home the long Plantain stalks, which are so crowded with delicious birds' food, and then store them in boxes for the winter use of their pets.

This harvest is not in pleasant fields, but along the dusty roadside, and the bare places near the footpaths; for this strange little plant seems to be fond of men: it likes to grow where it can see them pass, and even feel their feet treading upon it. It does not wish to be smothered by the grass, or shaded by showy bright flowers, and so it is often called Way-bread, or *Waybred*, because it is brought up by the wayside.

When you walk far on the dusty road, you grow weary of it, and long for the green fields; so you will wonder at this little plant's strange taste: for wherever you go, you will be almost sure to see it lying by the path.

When Englishmen go away to live in foreign countries, and plant villages there, this little Plantain generally goes too; so that the natives of some of those countries call it "the Englishman's foot." You have often been told pretty stories of little flowers springing up in the places where

angels tread, but here is a little plant which seems to grow in the Englishman's footsteps.

When gathering the seeds for your birds, did you ever think that each long stalk was covered with pretty little starlike flowers? Sit down now by the hedge, or on the wall, and look at it quietly. The long thick stem is very hard and stiff, and has thick ribs running down it; so that it looks as if several small stems had grown fast to the main one to prop it up and make it strong. The flowers are all clustering round the stem, for three, or six, or nine, or even twelve inches of its length; and they are all so busy growing bird-seeds, that they have not time to paint their faces in bright colours. They are so close together that they seem quite crowded, and have no room to grow large; but near the bottom of the long head, or *spike*, as it is called, they grow a little farther apart. Pull off one of these little flowers, and you will see that it is made of two tiny stars, one inside the other. The outer star has four leaves, each one being like a little green rib, with two wings which you can almost see through, they are so thin and light. The inner star has also four leaves: but they are white, and almost like bits of dry skin or chaff. And there in the centre of the stars is the shining green bead, which the little bird's beak would so

soon peck at and open, to find two little rooms inside, each of them filled with a store of delicious seeds.

But what are those four pretty purple heads hanging round the seeds, and hanging on such slender hairs? You see the flower has been busy painting a little, after all; but how can these fine hairs hold such heavy heads? God made these pretty *stamens*, and He made the stalks just strong enough to hold the heads; but not too strong to prevent the wind waving them about and blowing away their dust to feed the seeds of other flowers. You can see that the heads which are hanging down from the lowest flowers are quite brown, because the wind has taken away their beautiful purple dust.

The flowers at the end of the spike are so crowded together, that they will not open till the stem grows still longer and gives them more room; but see how gracefully the end of the spike bends and nods to you, as if telling you it is only stiff because it needs to be hard and strong, not because it is proud.

Now look at those large handsome leaves lying in the dust, several inches long, and almost as broad; feel how nice and soft they are, and notice their beautiful wavy edges. But look underneath,

see those seven great ribs: is this large leaf made of eight narrow pieces seamed together? But no little child could have seamed like that, there is not a stitch to be seen; only God's fingers could have seamed this leaf together. The seven thick seams draw close together at the bottom of the leaf, and are continued all down the leaf-stalk, so that also seems to be made of eight pieces; and when the leaf-stalk joins the stem, the seams are again continued down it. There were never such wonderful seams as these; surely no little girl will fret and hurry over her long seams, when she thinks how carefully and beautifully God's fingers work even in the common Waybred. It is because of these seams that Plantains are often called Rib-worts—the herbs with the great ribs.

When one of your little fingers has been cut or stung by an insect, if you rub one of these leaves and bind it round the painful place, it will soothe the smart, and make the poor little hand better.

But there is another Plantain, even commoner than the one which you gather for your birds. It grows from early spring to late autumn; it grows in every neglected grass plot, in every pasture-field and waste place.

This is the Plantain which the boys call Soldiers, or Conquerors, delighting to gather the long stems,

and strike them across one another, so that the stronger one cuts the other in two, and beheads it. It has very long narrow leaves, all growing up in a circle round it, not lying flat on the ground like those of the Waybred. How many seams can you count behind these long leaves? Here are only five; and see, there are little tufts of white hairs like small beards here and there about the bottom of the leaf.

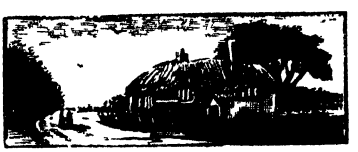
Now see if the flowers are like those you have seen before in the great Plantain. They are still more crowded together, packed as closely as possible, so that instead of a long stiff stick we have a saucy shaking oval head. The flowers are a little larger, so that you can see them better; and the shining green beads have only two seeds in them, so that they do not please the birds quite so well as those of the great Plantain. Then look at the *stamens;* instead of rich purple heads, they have large white ones, with very long stalks, holding them out a long way from the flowers. The lowest flowers open first, and spread their white stamens in a ring round the head. After the wind has blown away their dust, they wither, turn brown, and hang down. Then another ring of white stamens appears above, and so on, till all have opened: so that this little head has always a white

ring round it, and looks very much like certain other little heads we sometimes see, when a ring of white curl papers surrounds them. If you gather one of these heads after heavy rain, you will see all the stamens drooping and hanging down in wet brown hairs, making the head look like a shaggy dog after its plunge in the pond.

But hark! the little Plantain is singing a song for you:

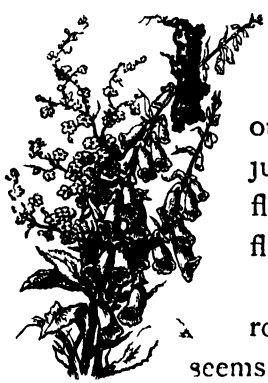
"Although a mean, unheeded flower,
My daily wants are all supplied,
And He who brought me to this hour
Will still provide.

The light and dew, the sun and rain,
Are hourly sent to foster me,
And fearest thou God will not deign
To think on thee?"



THE FOXGLOVE.

"Now, now ye come, my little ones all,
As the young doves come at their mother's call,
One run to yon tall Foxglove, and see
At his breakfast of balm the golden bee."



IT is holiday again—a long summer holiday—and you are out in the woods, skipping and jumping, running after butterflies, and filling your hands with flowers.

What a beautiful breakfast-room the bee has got; and he seems to be enjoying his sweet breakfast, for listen how pleasantly he is humming to himself, just as your pussy lies purring on the hearthrug when she is happy and comfortable.

You wish to join the bee, and enjoy the Foxglove too, not by sucking the honey, but by pulling off the rich bells, and having your own little games with them. First, you delight in trying who can make the loudest "blob." You close up the mouth of the flower, then blow into the small end; and when it is filled with air, like a little purple bladder, you give it a knock, and are delighted to hear it burst its beautiful sides and go off like a little pop-gun.

Then you try carefully to draw the beautiful bells over your fingers without tearing them, to make pretty thimbles, though they would not prove very serviceable ones, if you had your long seams out here.

Little children for hundreds of years must have played with these pretty thimbles, for all the tall plant's names say something about fingers. The French children call it "Our Lady's Gloves," or "The Virgin's Fingers," because they are taught by their priests to love the Virgin Mary so much that they like to give her name to beautiful things. Then botanists give it a grand Latin name, *Digitalis*, which also means something belonging to the fingers, a glove or a thimble. But what does our English name mean? Surely no one ever imagined that this lovely glove could belong

to the paw of a fox! Not at all, the fancy is a much prettier one than that, for Foxglove means *folksglove*, the glove of the fairies, who once dwelt in the woods of old England, and were called *folk*.

What does the Foxglove bell look like when you let it hang down? It is no longer like a glove; is it like a skirt, do you think, the narrow end being where it is drawn in for the waist? The children in Cheshire think so, and call it a "fairy's petticoat," instead of a "fairy's glove" or foxglove.

Now, if you have had all your little games, sit down quietly and pull the Foxglove to pieces to see what it is like. It is a very stately plant, and sometimes grows very tall; often you can find one taller than you are, and able to look over the hedge or wall by which it grows. We are even told of some that are very much taller than the tallest man you have seen—nearly eight feet high. You may think what a great number of flowers there must be on these,—on one of them seven hundred and eleven were counted. That must have been a most wonderful Foxglove; but now sit down close to one of these small ones. First, touch the stiff round stem; how beautifully soft it feels; it is quite covered with very short white hairs,

which cause it both to feel and look as if wrapped in white velvet.

You will expect such a fine stately plant to have a very handsome dress of leaves; and if you look at the leaves at the bottom of the stem, near the root, you will see that they are as fine as you expect. They are the shape of an egg, with scalloped edges; and some of them are six inches long, with very long stalks. The upper side of each leaf is rich and glossy and dark, and the veins are not delicate lines, such as you often see in leaves, but they are strong and large, as they need to be when they have to supply such a great leaf with food.

If you turn the leaf over, you will see that it is lined with soft white velvet, like that which covers the stem. The leaves which grow higher up on the stem are much smaller, and they have only very short stalks, or even sometimes none at all.

The leaves of the Foxglove are not good to eat, like those of the watercress and other cross plants, for they are filled with strong poison, so you must be careful never to put them to your mouth or taste them. In some places a kind of tea is made from them; but it is very intoxicating, and does much harm to those who drink it.

At the top of the stem, towering high above the

leaves, is the long row of glorious flowers, growing thickly together and hanging one above another. The lowest ones have fallen away, and have left their fruit hanging on the stem for the sun to ripen; above these are the full-blown flowers, and above again are the buds, which are smaller and smaller the nearer they are to the end, for the stem is constantly growing and making new buds.

Each flower hangs from a little stalk, which is clothed with white velvet, just as the great stem is, and sheltered by a pretty narrow green leaf. The beautiful little buds are very curiously folded. Perhaps you have noticed your mother's needle-paper; and you know how one part of the paper is cut, and folds into the other part, and this Foxglove bud seems to be folded in something the same way.

The top of the bell is beautifully scalloped, and one scallop, which is much larger than the others, is folded over and bent down inside them, making a sort of lid to keep the rain and cold or hot rays out of the inside, until it has grown strong and wants the warm sunshine.

And what is the beautiful flower like when the lid is lifted? It no longer stands straight up, but hangs down, so that the water cannot fill its bell.

From the tiny velvet stalk hangs a little green cup, cut into five small broad points, and one narrow one, and in that cup is the purple thimble. Hold it up and peep in, it is like looking into a little cavern, for it is sometimes an inch and a half long.

It is very narrow at the end where it is fastened in the green cup, and it seems to have a very slight hold, for you can draw it away very easily; but that is because it is almost ready to drop off, for it has nearly done its work, and must leave the fruit to ripen.

It is cut at the edge into four scallops: one is the large one which made the lid for the bud, and the other three are so small that you can only just find them out.

Now tear open the purple bell, and you will see that it is even more beautiful inside than out; it is sprinkled all over with long white hairs, and speckled with white and dark purple spots, which you do not see from the outside, unless you hold it up to the light and look through it. God always seems to make the inside of His flowers and plants as beautiful as the outside, and sometimes even more so. Is that how you do your work? do you do the work that no one may see, and that does not make any show, as well as that which you know will be seen and admired?

But see, what are those thick white heads spotted with purple, growing half way down the shorter side of the bell, two on long stalks, and two on short ones? Those are the beautiful *stamens;* each head is divided into two chambers, which are filled with white dust like flour; you can see them opening and letting out this white flour, that the bees may carry it away to ripen the seeds of another flower.

When you pulled away the bell, you left something remaining fast to the stalk; look back, and see what it is. It is a beautiful long green bag, as velvety as the stalk, growing out of the green cup, and full of tiny seeds. Standing upon it is a pink and white stalk, divided at the end into two sticky knobs, which are waiting for a bee to come and leave on them some of the white flour for the seeds.

You will perhaps be astonished to hear that each of these tall Foxgloves bears in all its bags together about ten thousand seeds, which will drop into the ground when ready. If each one of those seeds were to grow up into a new Foxglove next year, the land would be covered; and yet there are no more Foxgloves this year than there were last, and we do not expect to find any more next year than there are this. Then what do you

think will become of all these seeds? A great many will never grow ripe, some will be eaten by the birds, and some will be trodden into the ground, and perhaps only one out of the whole ten thousand will spring up into a new Foxglove next year.

That is how God cares for the Foxglove. He does not wish His beautiful flower to die out; and so He makes so many seeds, that, however many accidents come, some are sure to live.

HONEYSUCKLE.

A PRETTY country-house, in the midst of green fields and flowery lanes, near waving woods and trickling streams, with ivy creeping over the walls, and covering even the chimneys with green, with roses peeping in at the windows, and Honeysuckle climbing over the porch! Perhaps you live in a house like that; if not, you must have pictured it often and often, and longed for it to be yours, lingering with special delight on the thought of the roses and the Honeysuckle.

Sweet, sweet Honeysuckle, how gracefully it

climbs over the hedges in the lanes, and round the trees in the woods, clothing them with its dark leaves and sweet pale blossoms.

Boys are very fond of climbing trees for their play and for amusement; but the Honeysuckle climbs them much more easily, for that is the work which it has to do, day after day; and so it is called the *Woodbine*, the plant that binds the wood. Do you wonder how it manages to climb so cleverly? Its stem is a smooth slender cord, so long and so weak that it cannot hold itself straight up, like those little girls who grow too fast and lose their strength. Not being able to stand up by itself, it feels about for something strong which will help it, and is much pleased if it can find a nice round tree-trunk. Then it grows on and on, twisting round and round the tree from left to right, not like the convolvulus, which always twists from right to left as it climbs; for each little plant has a distinct way of its own for growing and climbing, and making leaves and flowers; and it never varies, whatever it sees other plants doing, for God has taught it how to do everything.

So the Woodbine climbs the tree, twining from left to right, throwing out branches and leaves, and twisting as tightly as it can to keep from falling. Sometimes it draws itself so tightly round, that it

makes a mark upon the tree in the shape of a corkscrew. If you take a piece of string, and wind it tightly round and round your arm, from elbow to wrist, even if you take it off instantly, it will leave a mark all the way down; so you cannot be astonished that when the Honeysuckle winds very tightly round a young tree it sometimes leaves its mark.

When the stem gets to the top of the tree, or the branches in the hedge round which it is climbing, it seems quite satisfied that it is tall enough, and droops down, hanging its graceful branches in garlands all round the trunk, and decorating it with flowers. Perhaps you decorate your school-room sometimes; if you wish to learn how to do it beautifully, you must study how the flowers decorate the hedges and the woods, just as the great men who first designed our cathedrals studied the beautiful arched avenues made in the forests by the threading and interlacing of the branches.

The leaves of the Honeysuckle grow in pairs; wherever you see one, there is another opposite to it. These are twins, they grow from the stem exactly at the same time, and are almost exactly alike. They are large and oval; and when you feel them you will be sure to say they are just like leather; but if you turn one over, you will see that

the under side is lighter-coloured than the upper, and soft and downy, with very short hairs.

Perhaps you see a little green and red bud nestling comfortably in the corner between the leaf and the stem. Is it going to be a flower? Oh no, perhaps a new stem will grow out of it some day, and twine round another branch of the hedge.

How the sweet scent of the blossom seems to draw us to it; are you not quite impatient to look at it? There are many flowers growing close together on a little mound at the end of the stalk. This little mound is made of several green lumps; and if you cut one of these open, you will see that there are little seeds inside; so these are the seed-bags growing outside the flower, instead of inside; and each little seed-bag has a round green leaf with a red point making a background for it.

Only a few of the seed-bags have flowers growing upon them; the others have all dropped off. Yes, you know how soon those beautiful flowers fall: you have often plucked them in the lanes, and tried to carry them home; but, however careful you were, first one dropped off and then another; and if you succeeded in getting a few of them home, and putting them in water, before very long there was quite a ring of yellow flowers lying on the table, and only the green mound left in the

vase. They seem as if they could not stick fast to their seed-bag at all. That is because very soon after the flowers are open their work is done; and so they let go their hold and drop off, that the seed-bags may be left alone to ripen the seeds.

Some of the seed-bags have only buds yet hanging from them; and what beautiful buds they are, like long narrow yellow bags one inch and a half long. They do not readily fall, but keep firm hold of their seed-bags; and they will open in due time, just when those flowers you see open are ready to drop off.

Now look at this open flower. Round the top of the seed-bag is a long yellow tube flushed with pink. The end of this tube seems like a mouth, of which the two lips have opened quite wide to let us look what is inside. One lip is very narrow, but the other is broad, and cut into four round scallops. As you look at them you might fancy that some one had cut the edge of the tube into five equal pieces, and then taken hold of one and torn it down for half an inch or more. The long reddish tube is not quite smooth, as flower-tubes generally are; there are very short hairs on it, so that its bloom looks more like that of a peach than that of the smooth-skinned apple.

But what is there for us to see in that wide

open mouth? A long slender thread hangs out, which is the flower's tongue. It has a green tip, to which some dust will be brought from another flower; and this dust will be carried down by the tongue to ripen the seeds in the seed-bag below. All round it hang five graceful *stamens*, long white threads with slender dark heads. These heads are the shape of the new moon; and as their threads are fastened in the middle of them, they look just like beautiful anchors, waiting to settle somewhere; but really they are waiting for their dark dust to be carried off, perhaps to the tongue of one of the other flowers.

Pull this yellow tube gently open, quite down to the bottom; now you see the tongue is about three inches long, and goes quite down to the seed-bag. This long flower-tube keeps it from breaking; but directly it has given the seeds the dust they wanted, there is no longer any use either for the yellow crown or the long tongue, and so they fall off. But look at the inside of the tube: the stamens also seem as if they had grown from the bottom; but they are not loose like the tongue, they have grown fast to the tube as far as the opening, perhaps helping to make it strong.

But that long tube does something else beside keeping the tongue from breaking: it is a bottle

which holds the honey that smells so sweet, and draws both us and the bees to the lovely flower. No wonder our sweet little plant is called Honeysuckle when every flower is a bottle of honey.

But how do you think the bee can get the honey from the bottom of that long narrow bottle, for he is much too big to go down? He sits lightly on the top of the flower, puts his head to the opening, and sends down the tube a part of his mouth called the *proboscis*. This is something like a long thread covered with small hairs. The bee rolls it about, gathers the honey, and then tucks it up again in a little case that is made for it, until he has further use for it.

Sometimes the bee's proboscis is not quite long enough to reach to the bottom of the bottle, and suck up all the honey; so he has to fly away to another bottle which is a little shorter. But the honey that he leaves is not often wasted; for after a time a little insect will probably come, and, delighted to find something left for it, will bore a hole in the bottom of the tube and suck out the honey.

But have you seen the hedges when all the flowers have dropped off, and those little mounds of seed-bags have become ripe?

Wherever there was a cluster of sweet flowers

there is now a bunch of pretty red berries, each one the size of a pea. And then comes the turn for the birds. The bees dined from the flowers, and the birds dine off the fruit. Though the birds like these red berries, they are not good for you to eat, they would make you very sick.

What do you think this beautiful Woodbine is like? It reminds us of little children. Because it is so sweet? Yes, because it is so sweet; but also because it is so weak that it cannot stand up by itself, and has to climb round some stronger plant. Little children are weak, and must cling to their fathers and mothers; but they too are weak, and are obliged to cling to One stronger than they. We are all like the Honeysuckle, and cannot stand by ourselves—we must hold fast to our Father in heaven.

The Stinging Nettle.

UGLY and ill-natured weed! Is that what you call it?

Why is it ugly? Is it because it has no beautiful blushing face, like Queen Rose; or because it has no sweet scent, like the violet; or is it because its dress is so coarse and rough-looking?

Why is it ill-natured? Is it because it will not let you touch it without covering your hands with little white tingling spots. Or is it because it grows and spreads so fast, that you think it must be one of those "ill weeds" that "grow apace?"

Are you quite sure it is ugly? Perhaps you have never taken any trouble to find out its beauty. Instead of running off to the field to-day to gather daisies, to run races and play at ball, sit down by this clump of Nettles, look at them, and see if God has really made anything ugly. But you will not be able to pull them to pieces, you say, and that is what you like to do when you are looking at flowers. You may do so if you put on some gloves, or you can sit still and watch them growing; and that is almost better.

Look how stately each Nettle is, and how straight the stem shoots up, only bending its head gracefully. There is no crooked back there, no stooping form, —this "ugly" Nettle is as erect as possible. Next look at its stem: it is not perfectly round, but has channels hollowed out in it from top to bottom; it is like some of those pillars you have sometimes seen in large buildings, which are called *fluted.*

Notice its pairs of handsome leaves—one pair above another, just at a nice distance to keep them from being crowded; not standing up stiffly, nor hanging down soft and limp, but spreading out and drooping gracefully. Yes, they are handsome leaves, though they are so coarse and rough. See what a fine shape they are; broad at the bottom, and tapering gradually to a slender point. Then

STINGING-NETTLE, HAWTHORN, BLACKBERRY, FORGET-ME-NOT, AND SWEET MEADOW GRASS

look at their edges; how smart you would feel if you had such beautiful deep points round the bottom of your dress.

But where are the flowers? There is no coloured face peeping out anywhere, all is dark green from top to bottom. But do you see hanging all round the top of the stem, and some distance from one another, rings of long slender green tails? Why, the tops of those stems are like the heads of those little girls who wear long curls. We all think a little girl's curls are beautiful, but they do not hang more gracefully than do the green tails of the Nettle.

Each one of these graceful tails is covered all over with tiny green knots, with whity-green centres. Now, what do you think those knots are? Why, each one is a flower. There are more flowers than you could count on every Nettle; and there is one thing about them which will astonish you very much. If you look at roses and daisies, and other bright flowers, you will find that they have all their flowers made alike; but if you look at Nettle flowers, you will see that there are two kinds, and they grow on different plants. These have the same channelled stems, the same handsome pairs of leaves, and the same graceful tails with the tiny green knobs. But in these knobs

or flowers there is a difference. In some plants you will find the flower is nothing but four tiny green leaves, with four wee *stamens* standing inside it. What a strange little flower! You would scarcely know it to be a flower unless you were told. But those on some of the Nettle plants are stranger still: each one is only two tiny green leaves clasping tightly a small nut, which is the seed-bag. It seems as if the stamens and the seed-bags could not find room together in one of those green flowers, and so they grow on separate plants.

Try to find one of the little flowers which has only stamens in it, and look at them well; for though they are so small, they have wonderful little springs in them. Those fine threads which hold up the yellow heads are made of something like elastic. When first the bud forms, all the heads turn towards one another in the middle; but when the flower has opened, and the heads are so full of yellow dust that they are ready to burst, those little elastic threads give a spring back, and jerk the heads so that they spirt out their dust.

Now that you have looked at the Nettle all over, surely you will not call it "ugly weed" any more. Why do you call your friends pretty? they are not all alike, and yet you would not be pleased for any one of them to be called "ugly." Some have fair

faces, some have dark handsome ones; some are pretty because their colour is so bright, some because their features are so regular; some because they have so much love in their faces, and some, whose faces are plain, because they have such graceful figures. The Nettle is like one of the last,—it has a plain face, but a very graceful figure.

So the Nettle is not ugly, but very graceful. Then is it "ill-natured?" That must be, you think, as it stings so sharply. Perhaps the Nettle thought you were ill-natured when you were touching it and breaking it, and therefore it stung you to defend itself. But how has this little plant contrived to hurt you so much? Do you see that it is covered all over with hairs; some of them would not hurt you, but the others are little poisoned spears. Each of them is a hair divided into two little chambers, of which the lower one is a round bag filled with biting juice, and the upper one is curved, and has a very sharp point at the end like a little needle. That is why this plant is called the *Nettle*, or *needle-plant*. When you touch it, this sharp point bores a little hole in your skin; then breaks off, and the biting juice runs out of the lower chamber into the hole, and stings you, making you draw your hand quickly away from the offending plant. If you grasp the Nettle firmly,

you press on the sides of those hairs, instead of on their points, and so they are not able to prick and sting you.

Though you think you are badly hurt, it is not for very long; if you were to touch the great Roman Nettle, which grows near the sea-shore, you would receive a much worse sting.

This Roman Nettle is said to have been brought over to England by the soldiers of Julius Cæsar, and for a very strange purpose, you will think. When Julius Cæsar came from Rome, to conquer the island with the white cliffs and the strange wild people, his soldiers heard dreadful tales of the coldness of the country to which they were going; they were told they would be frozen to death unless they were constantly rubbing themselves. So they brought with them some of their Nettle-seed, and sowed it in the marshes of Romney, where they landed, that when the plants grew they might rub themselves with the leaves, to keep up their bodily warmth.

In the East Indies there are Nettles with far sharper stings than even those of this Roman one. People who have been stung by these Nettles say that the pain is like a red-hot iron touching them for a whole day, and they feel it even for a week afterwards.

Though the Nettle is only a plain green plant, and though it has such poisonous stings, yet it is like many plain people, very good and useful.

You know some of its uses. When the spring-time comes, and the weather begins to grow warmer, you hear little whispers of cooling medicines. Sometimes you do not like some of these medicines, but you always like to hear that some Nettle-beer is being made for you to drink, and perhaps some of you like Nettle-porridge. These are made from the young tops of the Nettle when they are just beginning to shoot up, long before the flower comes. Then perhaps you have had young Nettles boiled for dinner, instead of spinach and greens; for after they are boiled they are not able to sting.

And what else are Nettles good for? Pigs are fond of them, their skins seem too tough to feel the stings; and poultry like them. The seeds are said to be very good for chickens; and they are also sometimes given to horses about to be sold, to make them lively. Then several kinds of medicines are made from Nettles; and in the stems are some coarse threads, which are made into yarn and cloth, and even into paper. The stem also gives a juice which makes a beautiful green dye for woollen goods, and the root makes a yellow dye.

Anything else, do you say? Yes, something

else, lovely butterflies love Nettles, and feed on them.

So that you may breakfast off Nettles; you may have them both to eat and drink at dinner; you may have your table-cloth made of them; you may have your clothes dyed by them; you may feed your pigs and your hens with them; and you may have medicine from them when you are sick.

Surely a plant that does so much good cannot be called "ill-natured."

When you passed by those Nettles, and called them "ugly and ill-natured," you did not know what wonderful plants they were. No! little child, God makes everything with some kind of beauty, of some kind of use; so, whenever you see people whom you do not like very much, sit down and try to find out something good about them, as you have done about the Nettle.

DOCKS.

WHAT a delightful business shop-keeping is! You set out your little scales on a big stone on the top of a wall, and then ramble over the garden or field seeking your goods. You gather little soft stones of different colours, and crush them into dust, to do duty for soft sugar, coffee, flour, etc.; you collect elderberries, hips, haws, blackberries, poppy-seeds, sweet-william seeds, whatever you think will prove useful, but best of all is the Dock. You can make its seeds into raisins; its stems answer for rhubarb, or you can chop them into sweets; its leaves you can cut into little cakes, or use them

as trays to hold your goods, or roll them up into little parcel-bags.

The Dock is very useful for your little shops; but you have also found it good in another way. When the great nettle, afraid you were going to hurt it, stung your little hand, what was it you looked for but a big Dock-leaf to rub on the white spots and draw out the tingling? But you did not think the Dock could do its work without some help; you had to chant over it three times a certain line:

"Dock go in, and nettle come out."

You never despised the good Dock after it had given you relief from your pain; you have looked kindly on it ever since, for it was "a friend in need;" and you know that is always "a friend indeed."

There are many kinds of Dock, though perhaps, as you walked along the roadsides, you thought they were all alike, and took no trouble to notice them particularly. The one you must get to cure your stings is the Broad Dock, or Dairymaid's Dock. It has very large leaves, sometimes eight or nine inches long, and three or four wide, though they are not always so large. It is a beautiful soft leaf, very smooth and glossy, and with its edge gently waved. It does not grow to a point,

as most leaves do, but it has a broad round end; and those leaves near the root are also beautifully rounded at the bottom, where they grow out of the stem. You will always know the good leaf when you see it. There is generally some of it growing near the nettle-bed, as if it were waiting there to cure those whom the nettle wounds.

Flowers and plants seem to be very much like people and children. The nettles are like those children who go about saying little sharp stinging things to their friends, hurting them very much; and the Docks are like those children who go about saying loving, tender little words to everybody, and healing the wounds the others have made.

If you look at one of these Docks you will see that its strong red stem is beautifully trimmed. At every place where it throws out a leaf, it wears fastened round it a narrow band of transparent yellow ribbon, so thin that it is often torn and jagged along the edge. This delicate little band is a sort of badge which all the Docks and all their cousins wear; just as each clan in the Highlands wore a special kind of plaid by which it was always known,—so that whenever you see a plant which has these bands you may know that it is one of the Dock family.

If little boys think they are very strong, let

them try and pull up one of these Docks, and they will find that it is even stronger than they. They may tug and tug with all their might; and even when they think they have succeeded, they will find they have only broken the root, and not drawn it up. The farmer mourns very much when he sees the great red heads decorating his fields; they have such long roots, and run down so far into the ground, and hold so fast that they will not be disturbed. The farmers have a saying—

"Stick a Dock in May,
It will bleed away."

In the month of May the Dock puts all its strength into the leaves and tops, which are just beginning to grow, and its roots are only weak; so the farmers then go round their fields with an instrument called a Dock-fork, with which they draw up as much of the root as they can, and what remains in the ground is so weak that it dies away.

The stem of the Dock does not, like the nettle, bear its leaves in pairs; but now throws out a leaf on one side and now on the other. The taller it grows, the smaller it makes them; so that the leaves at the top are only like short narrow green ribbons.

Each of these small leaves has a long string of

flowers fastened at the same point of the stem, and hanging down by the side of it. When first these long strings grow, they are green ; but they gradually turn into red ; and late in the autumn the whole of the Dock—stem, flowers, and whatever leaves are left—is of rich beautiful crimson.

Look at the little flowers when first they come out. Each has two little cups of three green leaves, the inner one a little larger than the outer ; and inside these you see six long yellow heads hanging down like a pretty tassel. These are the *stamens.* At first you can scarcely see what there is in the middle of these, for it is very small, only a three-sided nut,—a tiny copy of one of those great Egyptian pyramids of which you have so often seen pictures,—and on the top of this wee pyramid are three little feathers almost too small to see. But wait a little while till the plant grows bigger, and you can see the red colour beginning to come. Then look at the little flower. The yellow tassel has gone, the little nut has grown larger, and the inside cup has also grown very much, and drawn up tightly round the fruit to protect it. If you look at the three leaves of this cup you will think you have not seen a more beautiful flower. Each one is cut at the end into a long point, and at the lower part on each side into long fine teeth. But

its greatest ornament is something which you have seen on no other flower; it is a brilliant scarlet lump almost in the centre, oval in shape, and lengthened out at the upper end into a slender scarlet line.

Then what are the other kinds of Dock like? They are all very much alike, till you come to look at them closely. It would be a nice little amusement for you some pleasant holiday afternoon, when you are tired of all the old games, and want a new one, or when you have no little playmates to frolic with, to see how many different kinds of Docks you can find.

Some have different patterns of leaves; but you must notice most particularly the flower, when the stamens have fallen away, and the cup is growing larger and clinging round the fruit. The leaves of this cup are of different shapes in different kinds of Dock; and you will be delighted to find what strange shapes some of them are. Their spots also are different; some have only one leaf decorated with a spot, some all three, and some none at all; some have very large spots, and some very small ones. You will find it very interesting to notice all these differences.

There is a very common Dock, with its large leaves all crumpled and curled at the edge into

beautiful frills. This is called the Curly or Crispy Dock; the flower-leaves of its inside cup are very broad, and have no fine teeth, though they bear little scarlet lumps like those of the Dairymaid's Dock.

Then there is the Fiddle Dock; is not that a strange name for a Dock? It is not so called because it is able to give out music, but because its leaves are nearly the shape of a violin or fiddle. This is also called the Beautiful Dock; it has a pale green stem with red stripes, and the flowers are very much like those of the Dairymaid's Dock; but the long strings do not grow so close together, nor cover the stem so thickly.

In Edinburgh there is a beautiful monument erected to the memory of Sir Walter Scott, and the man who designed this gained his ideas for it from a common Dock.

Do you know a kind of Dock which grows in your kitchen-gardens? It has monster leaves, which you delight to hold over your heads, pretending they are umbrellas, and thick red juicy stalks, which your mother has cut up and made into jam and pies. Why, that must be Rhubarb, you say; is that a Dock? Yes, Rhubarb is one of the Dock family.

Then there is another little plant of the Dock

family which you know very well, though not by that name. You hunt for its smooth green leaves in every field; and when you come to a nice little bed, you all sit down and have a feast. Can you tell what that is? Oh yes, you know that, it is "greensauce," or Sorrel; and its leaves have such a pleasant acid flavour that you enjoy them almost as well as the acid-drops you buy from the sweet-shops.

Look at those leaves which you know so well. They are shaped like spears, tapering to a point, but broad at the bottom, and ending in two points, one on each side of the stalk. Then at the bottom of the leaf-stalk, round the stem, you will find the narrow band of ribbon, the badge of the family.

The Sorrel, like the nettle, has two kinds of flowers, one with stamens in it, and one with seeds; these seem as if they cannot grow together, but must have whole plants to themselves. The flowers and fruit are like those of the Dock; but you will not find any bright scarlet lumps on the flower-leaves, they are scarlet all over, and grow from the stem on long stiff red branches.

The oftener you look at flowers, the more astonished you will be at their beauty and variety, —they are all different. Even this common Dock

has a special beauty of its own possessed by no other plant:

> "All the flowers seem to say,
> Remember the great God each day."

Does not your little heart fill with joy to see how God is everywhere, taking care of each little thing, and making all things beautiful? God's flowers are always lovely; but it is sad to think that sometimes His children will not let Him make them beautiful, but interrupt and spoil His work by bad tempers and naughty ways.

HEATHER.

DAY on the Moors! How that promise makes children dance, and even the hearts of grown-up people throb and beat with eagerness, as they hope for a sunshiny morrow. The woods are pleasant, the hay-fields are delightful, but the glorious moors are above all. You are off now, almost wild with glee; you are there; you are rambling about, crushing the Heather under every step, but feeling it spring even while you are on it, and send you on, so that you may ramble for hours without tiring; you are opening your mouth wide to draw in the fresh strong air. But what is that? You have startled the grouse or the moor-fowl; they were down among the Heather,

close by you, taking their morning meal; but you have frightened them, and they are off with speed, flapping their wings in terror. You look after them till they are out of sight, and then off again; you creep and tumble up and down the hill-side, peering under the branches of bilberry, or whortleberry, or cranberry bushes, seeking the rich fruit; you roll stones down the precipices; you fill your hands and trim your hats with purple Heather-bells; you pull the rushes in the bogs, and make houses and whips of them; till, too happy to do anything more, you just lie in the dry springy Heather, shut your eyes, and listen to the murmur of the purple bells.

"Where the wild bee comes with a murmuring song,
Pilfering sweets as he roams along,
I uprear my purple bell.
Listing the free-born eagle's cry,
Marking the heath-cock's glancing eye,
On the mountain-side I dwell."

Or you look up into the sky, and out on the solitary moors; while your little heart throbs, and fancies there is no one but God and yourself in all the world.

What a day that was! Some of you have spent days like that at Hampstead, or on Blackheath; some of you on the Cornish or Devonshire heaths,

some on the wide lonely moorlands of Yorkshire and Lancashire; some on the solitary mountains of Wales, Cumberland, or Scotland; but wherever it was, even when you grow old, you will never forget them. It may be there are some of you who have never had days like those, who have never breathed the air of the heath-lands, and felt the spring of the Heather under your feet; but perhaps you will do some day, and then you will know how glorious it is.

You cannot go on the moors every day; but often in your walks, if you come to a dry barren piece of ground, where nothing else will grow, you will find a little patch of Heather.

You know it directly you see it; you think you know what it is like; but pull a piece now, and look closely at it, for when you have noticed all its beauties you will love it still more.

Its stem is not of a delicate green, but tough, brown, and woody, for it has lived many years; and that is why, when you have trodden on it, instead of lying crushed and broken, it springs back again. If you look at the leaves and flowers, you will see that, like the stem, they do not seem to have any moisture in them at all; they are quite dry, so that if you gather them they will not wither and hang down like other flowers, whose moisture

is quickly dried up by your hot hand. You can take them home and keep them many weeks; and even then the leaves will be fresh, though the flowers will be turning brown.

What strange little leaves the Heather has,—leaves that are always, always green, all the year round; and such tiny ones, almost the tiniest you have seen on any plant. If you pull one off, you will see that it is so thick because the edges are turned in underneath.

These tiny leaves are packed together as closely as possible in four rows, running up the stem, covering it up and quite hiding it from view.

Branches run out here and there from each side of the stem, and short branches again break out from these. All these branches, like the first stem, are covered with the tiny leaves; so that it would be impossible to count all the leaves which grow on one small sprig of Heather.

But do the leaves cover every part of every stem? No! look, they leave some stems for the purple flowers; and these grow there almost as thickly as the leaves on the other stems. Even here the leaves try to get in wherever they can find room. See, there is a ring of four little ones at the end of each flower-stalk, lovingly nursing the purple gem.

And what is the flower like? What are those four broad crimson leaves joined together at the bottom; in some places spreading out like a star; in others, standing up and turning in their points to cover up and keep you from seeing all that is inside? That is the outside cup, which protects the flower, and a beautiful one it is; but pull it away, and then you see inside the tiny crimson bell, cut so deeply into four points that you would hardly know it to be a bell. From inside it there peeps out a tiny red knob at the end of a white thread, which grows from the green seed-bag; and all round this eight little *stamens* rear their purple heads.

How fond this little plant seems to be of the number *four*. The leaves make the stem *four*-sided, *four* little leaves nurse the flower, the large purple cup has *four* leaves, the little purple bell has *four* points, the stamens are twice *four;* and then, though you cannot see them yet, the seed-bag has *four* little cells in it.

Do you see all those bees buzzing about that clump of Heather? They love it even more than you do, because every flower is full of honey; and as the flowers are so close together that there are twenty times as many of them in one place as there are on any other kind of plant, the bees can

get in their honey-harvest very quickly. Bee-keepers who live near the moors or mountains take their hives on the heaths in August, when the Heather is in bloom, so that the bees can be near their work; then the hive is soon full of honey, which is very rich, though rather dark-coloured.

The grand mountains of Scotland are clothed with Heather, and the Highlanders claim it as their own special flower.

"It is welcomed wherever its red blossoms grow,
As the bonnie brown Heather of Scotland, O!
The Heather, the Heather,
The bonnie brown Heather,
The Heather, the Heather
Of Scotland, O!"

Besides wearing different patterns of plaid, the clans used to carry in their bonnets different kinds of Heather as badges. They know, too, how to make use of it; they pull it, and make it into beds, laying its sprigs close together, slightly sloping with the tips upwards; so that they can have a nice spring-mattress made at any time. When you have your little parties, and have some friends to stay all night with you, how pleasant it would be to make up a comfortable bed as readily as that.

Besides using it for beds, the clever Highlanders thatch their houses with Heather instead of with straw or slates; and if they are poor, they even sometimes build their cottages altogether of it. Then in some places they make ale from it, and besoms to clean their houses, and they also burn it when unable to get coal.

This common Heather is often called *ling*. It is fond of company; and so we generally find it in great quantities, covering miles of ground, and always in patches,—very rarely, if ever, will you find a little sprig by itself.

There are several other kinds of Heath, two of which you probably know well. The Crimson Heath is almost more beautiful than the common Ling; and you find them growing side by side on almost every moor and hill-side; but the Crimson Heath generally grows best on the slopes which look toward the sun. Look at its leaves, and you will see that they are arranged rather differently from those of the Ling. Here there is a ring of three leaves, with tiny young ones growing between them and the stem; then there is a space, and then another ring of three, and so on all the way up. Crowning all the leaves there is the bunch of red bells; each being like a little red bladder with a hole bored at the end, or like a red

globe in which you might expect to see a light burning.

The other kind of Heath which you know is not quite so common as this; its bells are of such a sweet flushed pink that it is called the Blushing Maiden Heath. Sometimes you can find a sprig of White Heather, to your great delight; for the old tale tells that to meet a sprig of White Heather is a sign that happiness is coming to you.

You never find Heather in the pleasant valleys, and the rich meadows, and the shady woods; but wherever the soil is too barren and the winds too cold for trees to grow, or other flowers to bloom, there God spreads the beautiful garment of Heather, green all the year round, and in August and September rich with purple bells. There is no place which He deserts or leaves uncared for. There are some mountains too high, too bleak for even Heather to grow on them, covered with snow and ice all the year round, where men rarely climb; and even to those desolate places He sends a beautiful little plant called "red snow," which sometimes covers all the real white snow, for miles and miles, as with a red garment. Even on the tops of the highest and most desolate mountains, God is there!

GRASS.

WE love the buttercups and daisies, the primroses and violets, and all the bright flowers. We should be very sad to have to part with them, but we should miss the green Grass even more.

"Silently creeping, creeping everywhere,
More welcome than the flowers,
In summer's pleasant hours,
The gentle cow is glad,
And the merry bird not sad,
To see me creeping, creeping everywhere."

How would you like to look out of your window and see nothing but sand and dust everywhere, with no bright green covering? How tired our eyes would get, and how weary our feet would

grow, without the soft green restful Grass. When you go for a walk, do you not ask always to be taken through some fields, instead of on the dreary road? and half the pleasure of summer seems to be that you can wander about on the soft dry Grass, and romp in the fields, and lie on the banks.

Good little Grass, there seems to be no place where it will not grow to cheer us, even on the walls and in the streets it appears.

"Here I come creeping, creeping everywhere,
By the dusty road-side,
On the sunny hill-side,
Close by the noisy brook
In every shady nook,
I come creeping, creeping everywhere.

Here I come creeping, creeping everywhere,
All around the open door,
Where sit the aged poor,
Here, where the children play
In the bright and merry May,
I come creeping, creeping everywhere.

Here I come creeping, creeping everywhere,
In the noisy city street
My pleasant face you'll meet,
Cheering the sick at heart,
Toiling his busy part,
Silently creeping, creeping everywhere."

And how is it that the little Grass can manage to grow among the stones of the street, and on the

walls, where nothing else lives? If you pull it up by the root, you will see what a very small one it has, nothing but a few little threads, which can cling to any place where there is even the barest soil; and you see too it is so dry that it does not want much moisture; so that it is content with a very little place in which to live. Sometimes, in some kinds of Grasses, the roots grow big and strong; but those of our commonest little friend are always small.

There is nothing so plentiful as Grass, and there is nothing so useful. What do you think our cows and sheep and horses would say if there were no Grass for them to crop? They would die; and where should we be without them? So we may be thankful that there is so much Grass, for that reason, as well as that it would be so dreary for our eyes and feet. Another reason which makes it precious to us is that we get our sugar from the stalks of some kinds of Grasses.

You know what a great many kinds of Grasses there are, for you have delighted sometimes, as you walked down the lanes, to gather as many pretty kinds as you could; but do you know what kind of flowers they have? Perhaps you are astonished to hear they have flowers at all. Yés, they have flowers, not gay and brilliant ones, but green and

quite different from all other kinds of flowers: you will see no cups in them. Take any Grass you can find that seems to be in full bloom, and look it over to see how it is made. You are very quick to see what kind of dresses your little friends wear; see if you can be as quick in finding out what kind of dress the grass wears.

First, what kind of stem do you see; how many things can you tell about it? It is green and round and hollow, and has very fine ridges running all the way down it. Do you wonder that the wind is not constantly breaking that slender hollow stem? It would be very likely to do so, only the stem is well protected by a hard coat of a substance called *flint*. When a haystack has been burnt down, bits of glass are often found on the ground where it stood; these were made by the hot fire melting the hard coats of the stems. Besides the coat of flint, do you see that here and there is a hard swelling like a knob? If you break the stem at one of these places, you will see that it is not hollow there; and so these knobs help to make it strong.

You know well what the green blades are like; but perhaps you do not know how they grow from the stem. Instead of having a long or short round stalk, as most leaves have, their stalk is broad

and thin, almost as broad as the blades themselves; and it is wrapped tightly round the stem, making quite a case for it. See how you can unwind this case, and how shiny it is inside. The blade springs from the top of this stalk, though at first sight it seemed to be growing straight out of the stem. The joining is covered by a pretty transparent border or edging, very often delicately fringed. The blade is long and narrow and thin and green, with a rib down the middle of it like a backbone, and fine small ribs running alongside of it.

But where are the flowers? What is that which grows above the leaves at the end of the stem? Ah, that depends which kind of Grass you have chosen; but whatever it is like, it is made of a vast number of little flowers. Each flower, instead of having pretty cups, is made of two or three pairs of tiny curved green leaves or scales, almost like little boats laid one inside the other; and there, hanging out of the boats, are three long *stamens*. But what very slender threads the heads of these stamens stand on, too slight to hold them up; and so they bend gracefully, and are blown about by the wind. What pretty heads they are! Each one is made up of two chambers, shaped like the new moon, and joined together in the middle where the long thread holds them.

In the middle of the boats, and just fitting inside them, is a seed with two little feathers on its head. When you pass through a field of wheat, you like to pluck the ears, and rub them in your hands to get out the seeds; and sometimes you know it is very hard to get off all these husky little boats. The seeds of all Grasses are wrapped up like the wheat-grains, and they are just as good to eat as those of wheat and barley and oats; they also would make good flour and meal. Then, do you ask, why we do not eat them? It is because they are so small that it would be a great deal of trouble to thrash and prepare them, as wheat is thrashed, to get the seeds out of the boats; so these Grasses are left to the cattle, who can eat the stems and leaves.

Which do you like best, wheat, or barley, or oats? You like to rub the ears of wheat, because the grains are so nice to eat; but you like best to see the beautiful barley-field, with its long graceful beards. What strange long green threads these are, beautiful to look at, but very unpleasant to touch, for they are edged with such fine teeth, that they feel like little saws. These long stiff hairs grow on the outside boats, and continue down the back of them still like saws. Many Grasses have these beautiful long bristles; and nearly all have

small ones, though they are often too small to be noticed.

Then there are many Grasses like oats, in which the flowers all hang on separate slender stalks, which rustle as they are blown about in the wind.

How many kinds of Grass do you know? You love to gather them, and fill the vases for the winter with the long, dry, graceful heads, which never need water, and are always lovely; and you love to wander about the hay-fields, and collect different kinds. Oh! that delicious hay-field, you sit under the cock, and pull out first one old friend and then another. There is the Tinker-Tailor Grass, from which you are never tired of asking your fortune, even though it tells you a different one every time you ask it; perhaps you will remember now that each Tinker and each Tailor is a separate flower. Then there is the beautiful pink soft Grass, which you shoot at your friends, showering on them multitudes of tiny flowers, or hay-seeds, as you call them. There is the long graceful Fox-tail, which you stroke playfully down one another's faces; there is the Grass which the boys love so much to strip of its flowers, and twine in the long locks of unconscious little girls; and there are the Grasses with the long pricking points, which again the mischievous boys delight in.

There are often twenty different kinds of Grass in the hay-field. But what makes the sweet scent of the new-mown hay, which greets us so pleasantly, and tells us directly where the hay-field lies? That scent is made by one Grass, the sweet-scented Vernal Grass.

But there are other Grasses you know besides those of the hay-fields. There is the beautiful Canary Grass, with its broat flat heads and striped green and white boats, which protect the Canary seeds you so often buy. There is the Quaking or Trembling Grass, with its tiny dark, flat trembling blossoms, which your mothers like best for their vases. Then by the water-side there is your favourite Ribbon Grass, with broad, beautiful, ribbon-like leaves, sister to the pale striped ones of the garden, out of which you love to pull the young shoots; and almost the greatest favourite of all is the Reed, which the boys specially delight to make into arrows. This Reed is used for thatching houses because it is stronger than straw; it used also to be made into pens.

You know many stories about the Reeds,—there is the one of the great storm, when the Reeds bent before the wind, and lived while the great trees which stood erect were broken down.

Then there is the story of the great king who

had asses' ears, and whose wife went and whispered the secret to the Reeds, which murmur to this day, "King Midas has asses' ears!"

There is another story too of a heathen god called Pan, who was the god of the shepherds; how he sat down by the river, and cut the Reeds into instruments, out of which he would bring beautiful music; and we know that the first musical instruments were made out of Reeds, or pipes, as they were called.

Whole books are filled with the stories of the Grasses; for there are about one hundred different kinds in Britain alone, besides all the wonderful ones that grow in other parts of the world.

How does the common way-side Grass end its song?

"Here I come creeping, creeping everywhere,
My humble song of praise
Most gratefully I raise
To Him at whose command
I beautify the land,
Silently creeping, creeping everywhere."

So the Grass tells us the same story as the bright flowers—the story of God's wonderful care. "If God so clothe the Grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you?"

HOLLY.

THE summer goes by, the days become shorter and shorter, the birds fly away to warmer homes, the flowers fade one by one, the leaves fall to the ground, the frost and the cold come, and you have to give up your walks in the fields, and your play with the flowers, and now to turn to the cosy fireside with your books, and the long evenings when you have "Blind Man's Buff" and "Hunt the Slipper," and other merry indoor games.

The merriest time of all the year now draws

near, Christmas time, the season of joy and gladness to all.

"And all the angels in heaven shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the angels in heaven shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the souls on earth shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the souls on earth shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning."

There are the merry family parties, the presents on the brilliant Christmas tree, the gifts of wonderful Santa Claus, the carols, and best of all the joyful thanksgiving services for the Child Jesus who came into the world for our sake.

But even now, in your happiest time, you need your old friends the plants, and so off you go once more to the lanes, and woods, and parks, with baskets and barrows, to find the evergreens, the firs, ivy, laurel, mistletoe, and Holly, for decorating your houses. If you cannot go to the lanes to find your own treasures, you go to the market and buy, for carts come in there from the country laden with spoil.

Holly, beautiful Holly, is the favourite decoration. Its very name tells the story of Christmas time, for Holly means *holy*, the *holy* tree, so called because

even centuries ago it was used for decorating the churches at this season. It was also often called the Scarlet Oak.

How sad all the little robins must be when they see their winter food taken away from the trees and hedges, for you will not leave a branch that has any berries upon it. Poor little robins! What must they do? Perhaps you will remember to give them some crumbs every day, as you have robbed them of their berries, and they will be sure to reward you by warbling out their joyous songs all the Christmas time.

In the olden times, as the children and others gathered the evergreens, they used to sing to them. This is part of the song they sang to the Holly:

"Here comes Holly that is so gent,
To please all men is his intent,
Allelujah!

Whosoever against Holly do sing,
He may weep and his hands wring,
Allelujah!"

See how the berries cluster round the tough black branch, hanging from their little stalks and looking almost like bright scarlet bracelets. They are beautiful to look at; but they are not good to eat, except for the birds.

Pluck off one of those berries. Do you see a little black cross on the top, and then round the stalk, clinging to the red berry, four tiny black leaves, making another little cross? If you open the berry you will find it is a tough skin-chamber with four little nuts inside; four little nuts that you could crack, and you would find within each a tiny kernel. These Holly berries are the pretty bags in which the robin finds his Christmas nuts. If they were neither eaten by the robins nor cut off for your decorations, they would drop to the ground, and in time the nuts would break away, and let the kernel or seed grow up into a new Holly tree.

But look at these dark glossy leaves! How tough and leathery they are! Surely, we think, no insect can eat these tough leaves; and yet they are the chief food of the caterpillar of one of our loveliest blue butterflies. There are two very wonderful things about these leaves. The first wonder is their edges, so much waved and crumpled, and so prickly. This is another of the trees that God has clothed in armour, to protect them from being hurt by the cattle; and it is also another sign of His special care, for every tree has its own kind of armour. The hawthorn has the tough hard thorns here and there on its branches, the

rose has the tiny sharp prickles covering almost every part of it, and the Holly has its leaves bristling with spears. Some of the leaves are not as prickly as others; and when the tree grows to its full height, it is often noticed that the leaves at the top have very few prickles, or only weak ones, or even none at all, as if no armour were needed where the cattle cannot reach.

Because of the prickly armour, Holly, like haw thorn, is often used for hedges. You have read how Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia, came to England to learn ship-building. He worked in a dockyard in London, and lived in the house of a gentleman called John Evelyn. At the suggestion of Peter the Great, John Evelyn planted a splendid Holly hedge in his garden, four hundred feet long, nine feet high, five feet wide.

Then what is the second wonderful thing about these leaves? It is that they are always green. Instead of turning crimson and brown and golden in the autumn, as the leaves of most other trees do, they get darker and darker green, and stay on the branches till the following spring, only dropping off when the new light green leaves have come. Thus the Holly tree is always clothed in its green garment.

A quaint old writer once said that the Holly was

like the Child Jesus, always green. What do you think he meant by that? It was that though Jesus was born and died so many hundred years ago, He is living still and is with us still, and has a little child's heart now just as He had then, and can understand, love, and help little children and all people now just as He could then, and even more. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

In old-fashioned gardens you often see the Holly trees cut into all kinds of curious shapes; yes, even dogs, and goats, and peacocks sometimes grow on the tops of Holly trees. But when the tree grows wild, it has a beautiful conical shape; that is, it is the shape of a huge sugar-loaf, well rounded, but becoming gradually smaller and smaller till it ends in a point at the top.

Like other trees and plants, as well as like boys and girls, the Holly has its own particular tastes and ways. It likes best to grow on a light, sandy soil, and where trees are all round it, sheltering it; not tall trees, for it likes to look out at the top, and not to be covered over. If it grows with tall trees, it only spreads in bushes, and does not become a beautiful tree.

The wood of the Holly is white and hard, and takes such a beautiful polish that it is used for

making all kinds of pretty boxes. Most of the fancy articles made at Tunbridge, and called Tunbridge ware, are of Holly wood.

But though you all know the beautiful scarlet berries, and glossy prickly leaves so well, do you know the Holly flower? When the spring-time comes, you are so busy looking for primroses and violets, that you forget your old Christmas friend; but if you look at the Holly tree in the month of May, you will find the flowers clustering round the branches, just as the berries do at Christmas-time. Each little flower is a beautiful star of four or five white leaves, which look as if they had been cut out of pure wax, and between these leaves are waxy white threads called the *stamens*. Then in the centre of the star is a little green ball, with a sticky green cross on the top. This green ball will be a bright red berry decorating your house next Christmas.

You have often read about the multitude who strewed palm branches before Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem, and how He rejoiced in the children's shouts of praise. He is just as pleased now when you decorate your rooms with Holly for Him at Christmas time, and most pleased if your heart is full of the children's song: "Hosanna, Lord!" "Save now, Lord!" for that is why He came into

the world on that Christmas day so many hundred years ago. The angel said to Joseph, "He shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." The best way to show your thankfulness is to give yourselves to Him, that He may save you from all sin, and make you loving and obedient children of your Heavenly Father.

LONDON KNIGHT, PRINTER, MIDDLE STREET, E C.