
THE GARDEN
OF HATS

"'I kin make better 'n naturaler-lookin' hats fer nothin', here at home, than they keep in N' York,' she says after looking out the back window a piece. 'And who'll help yer?' says I, 'and where'll yer git the posies and what all?' "'I bought some bolts o' ribbon to-day,' says she, smilin'; 'and fer the rest, the garden, you, and I will manage it together, if you'll lend me a shelf all to meself in the cold closet whenever I need it!' Sure fer a moment I wuz oneasy, fer I thought a wild streak run branchin' through all the boss's family!" (At the words Garden, You, and I, there flashed through me the thought of some telepathic influence at work.) "'The garden's full o' growin' posies that outshames the flower-makers; watch out and see, Anastasia!' "Well and I did!! This mornin' early she picks a lot o' them sticky pink flowers by the stoop, the colour o' chiny shells, wid spokes in them like umbrellas, and the thick green leaves, and after leavin' 'em in water a spell, puts 'em in me cold closet, a small bit o' wet moss tied to each stem end wid green sewin' silk! A piece after dinner out she comes wid the hat that's covered with strong white lace, and she cocks it this way and pinches it that and sews the flowers to it quick wid a big thread and a great splashin' bow on behind, and into the cold box agin! "'That's fer this afternoon,' says she, and before she wore it off (a hat that Eve, mother o' sin, and us all would envy), she'd another ready for the night! 'Will it spoil now and give yer away, I wonder?' says I, anxious like. "'Not fer two hours, at least; and it'll keep me from stayin' too long; if I do, it'll wither away and leave me all forlorn, like Cinderella and her pumpkin coach!' she said a-smilin' kind uv to herself in me kitchen mirror, when she put the hat on. 'But I'm not insultin' God's flowers tryin' to pass them off for French ones, Annie,' says she. 'I'm settin' a new garden fashion; let them follow who will!' and away wid her! That same other is in here now, and it's no sin to let yer peep, gin it's ye own posies and ye chest they're in." So, throwing open the door Anastasia revealed the slate shelf covered by a sheet of white paper, while resting on an empty pickle jar, for a support, was the second hat, of loosely woven black straw braid, an ornamental wire edging the brim that would allow it to take a dozen shapes at will. It was garlanded by a close-set wreath of crimson peonies grading down to blush, all in half bud except one full-blown beauty high in front and one under the brim set well against the hair, while covering the wire, caught firm and close, were glossy, fragrant leaves of the wild sweetbrier made into a vine. Ah, well, this is an unexpected development born of our experiment and a human sort of chronicle for The Garden, You, and I. One of the most puzzling things in this living out-of-doors on our own place is the reversal of our ordinary viewpoints. Never before did I realize how we look at the outdoor world from inside the house, where inanimate things force themselves into comparison. Now we are seeing from outside and looking in at ourselves, so to speak, very much like the robin, who has his third nest, lop-sided disaster having overtaken the other two, in the old white lilac tree over my window. Some of our doings, judged from the vantage point of the knoll, are very inconsistent. The spot occupied by the drying yard is the most suitable place for the new strawberry bed, and is in a direct line between the fence gap, where my fragrant things are to be, and the Rose Garden. Several of the walks that have been laid out according to the plan, when seen from this height, curve around nothing and reach nowhere. We shall presently satisfy their empty embraces with shrubs and locate various other conspicuous objects at the terminals. Also, the house is kept too much shut up; it looks inhospitable, seen through the trees, with branches always tossing wide to the breeze and sun. Even if a room is unoccupied by people, it is no reason why the sun should be barred out, and at best we ourselves surely spend too much time in our houses in the season when every tree is a roof.

We have decided not to move indoors again this summer, but to lodge here in the time between vacations and to annex the Infant. Oh, dear! there is one thing in which The Man from Everywhere reckoned without his host! Stopping the clocks when we went in camp did not dislodge Time from the premises; rather did it open the door to his entrance hours earlier than usual, when one of the chiefest luxuries we promised ourselves was late sleeping. Stretched on our wire-springed, downy cots (there is positively no virtue in sleeping on hard beds, and Bart considers it an absolute vice), there is a delicious period before sleep comes. Bats flit about the rafters, and an occasional swallow twitters and shifts among the beams as the particular nest it guarded grew high and difficult to mount from the growth of the lusty brood within. The scuffle of little feet over the rough floor brings indolent, half-indifferent guessing as to which of the lesser four-foots they belonged. The whippoorwills down in the river woods call until they drop off, one by one, and the timid ditty of a singing mouse that lives under the floor by my cot is the last message the sandman sends to close our eyes before sleep. And such sleep! That first steel-blue starlit night in the open we said that we meant to sleep and sleep it out, even if we lost a whole day by it. It seemed but a moment after sleep had claimed us, when, struggling through the heavy darkness, came far-away light strands groping for our eyes, and soft, half-uttered music questioning the ear. Returning I opened my eyes, and there was the sun struggling slowly through the screen of white birches in Opie's wood lot, and scattering the night mists that bound down the Opal Farm with heavy strands; the air was tense with flitting wings, bird music rose, fell, and drifted with the mist, and it was only half-past four! You cannot kill time, you see, by stopping clocks—with nature day Is, beyond all dispute. In two days, by obeying instead of opposing natural sun time, we had swung half round the clock, only now and then imitating the habits of our four-footed brothers that steal abroad in the security of twilight. The Screen of White Birches. Amos Opie, the carpenter, owner of Opal Farm, is now keeping widower's hall in the summer kitchen thereof. A thin thread of smoke comes idly from the chimney of the lean-to in the early morning, and at evening the old man sits in the well-house porch reading his paper so long as the light lasts, a hound of the ancient blue-spotted variety, with heavy black and tan markings, keeping him company. These two figures give the finishing touch to the picture that lies beyond us as we look from the sheltered corner of the camp, and strangely enough, though old Opie is not of the direct line and has never lived in this part of New England before, he goes about with a sort of half-reminiscent air, as if picking up a clew long lost, while Dave, the hound, at once assumed proprietary rights and shows an uncanny wisdom about the well-nigh fenceless boundaries. After his master has gone to bed, Dave will often come over to visit us, after the calm fashion of a neighbour who esteems it a duty. At least that was his attitude at first; but after a while, when I had told him what a fine, melancholy face he had, that it was a mistake not to have christened him Hamlet, and that altogether he was a good fellow, following up the conversation with a comforting plate of meat scraps (Opie being evidently a vegetarian), Dave began to develop a more youthful disposition. A week ago Bart's long-promised, red setter pup arrived, a spirit of mischief on four clumsy legs. Hardly had I taken him from his box (I wished to be the one to "first foot" him from captivity into the family, for that is a courtesy a dog never forgets) when we saw that Dave was sitting just outside the doorless threshold watching solemnly. The puppy, with a gleeful bark, licked the veteran on the nose, whereat the expression of his face changed from one of uncertainty to a smile of indulgent if mature pleasure, and now he takes his young friend on a daily ramble down the pasture through the bit of marshy ground to the river, always bringing him back within a reasonable length of time, with an air of pride. Evidently the hound was lonely.

The Man from Everywhere, who prowls about even more than usual, using Bart's den for his own meanwhile, says that the setter will be ruined, for the hound will be sure to trail him on fox and rabbit, and that in consequence he will never after keep true to birds, but somehow we do not care, this dog-friendship between the stranger and the pup is so interesting. By the way, we have financially persuaded Opie to leave his straggling meadow, that carpets our vista to the river, for a wild garden this summer, instead of selling it as "standing grass," which the purchasers had usually mown carelessly and tossed into poor-grade hay, giving a pittance in exchange that went for taxes. So many flowers and vines have sprung up under shelter of the tumble-down fences that I was very anxious to see what pictures would paint themselves if the canvas, colour, and brushes were left free for the season through. Already we have had our money's worth, so that everything beyond will be an extra dividend. The bit of marshy ground has been for weeks a lake of iris, its curving brink foamed with meadow rue and Osmundas that have all the dignity of palms. Now all the pasture edge is set with wild roses and wax-white blueberry flowers. Sundrops are grouped here and there, with yellow thistles; the native sweetbrier arches over gray boulders that are tumbled together like the relic of some old dwelling; and the purple red calopogon of the orchid tribe adds a new colour to the tapestry, the cross-stitch filling being all of field daisies. Truly this old farm is a well-nigh perfect wild garden, the strawberries dyeing the undergrass red, and the hedges bound together with grape-vines. It does not need rescuing, but letting alone, to be the delight of every one who wishes to enjoy. On being approached as to his future plans, Amos Opie merely sets his lips, brings his finger-tips together, and says, "I'm open to offers, but I'm not bound to set a price or hurry my decisions." Meanwhile I am living in a double tremor, of delight at the present and fear lest some one may snap up the place and give us what the comic paper called a Queen Mary Anne cottage and a stiff lawn surrounded by a gas-pipe fence to gaze upon. O for a pair of neighbours who would join us in comfortable vagabondage, leave the white birches to frame the meadows and the wild flowers in the grass! We have been having some astonishing thunder-storms of nights lately, and I must say that upon one occasion I fled to the house. Two nights ago, however, the sun set in an even sky of lead, there was no wind, no grumblings of thunder. We had passed a very active day and finished placing the stakes on the knoll in the locations to be occupied by shrubs and trees, all numbered according to the tagged specimens over in the reservoir woods. The Man from Everywhere suggested this system, an adaptation, he says, from the usual one of numbering stones for a bit of masonry. It will prevent confusion, for the perspective will be different when the leaves have fallen, and as we lift the bushes, each one will go to its place, and we shall not lose a year's growth, or perhaps the shrub itself, by a second moving. Our one serious handicap is the lack of a pair of extra hands, in this work as in the making of the rose bed, for our transplanting has developed upon a wholesale plan. Barney does not approve of our passion for the wild; besides, between potatoes and corn to hoe, celery seedlings to have their first transplanting, vegetables to pick, turf grass to mow, and edges to keep trim, with a horse and cow to tend in addition, nothing more can be expected of him. I was half dozing, half listening, as usual, to the various little night sounds that constantly pique my curiosity, for no matter how long you may have lived in the country you are not wholly in touch with it until you have slept at least a few nights in the open,—when rain began to fall softly, an even, persevering, growing rain, entirely different from the lashing thunder-showers, and though making but half the fuss, was doubly penetrating. Thinking how good it was for the ferns, and venturing remarks to Bart about them, which, however, fell on sleep-deaf ears, I made sure that the pup was in his chosen place by my cot and drifted away to shadow land,

glad that something more substantial than boughs covered me! I do not know how long it was before I wakened, but the first sound that formulated itself was the baying of Dave, the hound, from the well-house porch, where he slept when his evening rambles kept him out until after Amos Opie had gone to bed. Having freed his mind, Dave presently stopped, but other nearer-by sounds made me again on the alert. The rain, that was falling with increasing power, held one key; the drip from the eaves and the irregular gush from a broken waterspout played separate tunes. I am well used to the night-time bravado of mice, who fight duels and sometimes pull shoes about, of the pranks of squirrels and other little wood beasts about the floor, but the noise that made me sit up in the cot and reach over until I could clutch Bart by the arm belonged to neither of these. There was a swishing sound, as of water being wrung from something and dropping on the floor, and then a human exclamation, blended of a sigh, a wheeze, and a cough, at which the pup wakened with a growl entirely out of proportion to his age and inexperience. "I wonder, now, is that a dog or only uts growl ter sind me back in the wet fer luv av the laugh at me?" chirped a voice as hoarse as a buttery brogue would allow it to be. My clutch had brought Bart to himself instantly, and at the words he turned the electric flashlight, that lodged under his pillow, full in the direction of the sound, where it developed a strange picture and printed it clearly on the opposite wall. In the middle of the circle of light was a little barefoot man, in trousers and shirt; a pair of sodden shoes lay at different angles where they had been kicked off, probably making the sound that had wakened me, and at the moment of the flash he was occupied in the wringing out of a coat that seemed strangely long for the short frame upon which it had hung. The face turned toward us was unmistakably Irish, comical even, entirely unalarming, and with the expression, blended of terror and doubt, that it now wore, he might have slipped from the pages of a volume of Lever that lay face down on the table. The nose turned up at the tip, as if asking questions of the eyes, that hid themselves between the half-shut lids in order to avoid answering. The skin was tanned, and yet you had a certain conviction that minus the tan the man would be very pale, while the iron-gray hair that topped the head crept down to form small mutton-chop whiskers and an Old Country throat thatch that was barely half an inch long. Bart touched me to caution silence, and I, seeing at once that there was nothing to fear, waited developments. As soon as he could keep his eyes open against the sudden glare, the little man tried to grasp the column of light in his fingers, then darted out of it, and I thought he had bolted from the barn; but no, he was instantly back again, and dilapidated as he was, he did not look like a professional tramp. "No, yez don't fool Larry McManus agin! Yez are a mane, cold light with all yer blinkin', and no fire beneath to give 'im the good uv a cup o' tay or put a warm heart in 'im! Two nights agone 'twas suspicion o' rats kep' me from shlapin', yesternight 'twas thought o' what wud become of poor Oireland (Mary rest her) had we schnakes there ter fill the drames o' nights loike they do here whin a man's a drap o'er full o' comfort. 'Tis a good roof above! Heth, thin, had I a whisp o' straw and a bite, wid this moonlight fer company, I'd not shog from out this the night to be King! "Saints! but there's a dog beyant the bark!" he cried a minute after, as the pup crept over to him and began to be friendly,—"I wonder is a mon sinsible to go to trustin' the loight o' any moon that shines full on a pitch-black noight whin 'tis rainin'? Och hone! but me stomach's that empty, gin I don't put on me shoes me lungs'll lake trou the soles o' me fate, and gin I do, me shoes they're that sopped, I'll cough them up—o-whurra-r-a! whurra-a! but will I iver see Old Oireland agin,—I don't know!" Bart shut off the light,

slipped on his shoes, and drawing a coat over his pajamas lighted the oil stable lantern, hung it with its back toward me, on a long hook that reached down from one of the rafters, and bore down upon Larry, whose face was instantly wreathed in puckered smiles at the sight of a fellow-human who, though big, evidently had no intention of being aggressive. "Well, Larry McManus," said Bart, cheerfully, "how came you in this barn so far away from Oireland a night like this?" "Seein' as yer another gintleman o' the road in the same ploice, what more loike than the misfortune's the same?" replied he, lengthening his lower lip and stretching his stubby chin, which he scratched cautiously. Then, as he raised his eyes to Bart's, he evidently read something in his general air, touselled and tanned as he was, that shifted his opinion at least one notch. "Maybe, sor, you're an actor mon, sor, that didn't suit the folks in the town beyant, sor, but I'd take it as praise, so I would, for shure they're but pigs there,— I couldn't stop wid thim meself! Thin agin, mayhap yer jest a plain gintleman, a bit belated, as it were,—a little belated on the way home, sor,—loike me, sor, that wus moinded to be in Kildare, sor, come May-day, and blessed Peter's day's nigh come about an' I'm here yit!" "You are getting on the right scent, Larry," said Bart, struggling with laughter, and yet, as he said after, not wishing possibly to huff this curious person. "I hope I'm a gentleman, but I'm not tramping about; this is my barn, in which my wife and I are sleeping, so if I were you, I wouldn't take off that shirt until I can find you a dry one!" The change that came over the man was comical. In a lightning flash he had fastened the few buttons in his blouse that it had taken his fumbling fingers several moments to unloose, and dropping one hand to his side, he held it there rigid as he saluted with two fingers at the brim of an imaginary hat; while his roving eye quickly took in the various motley articles of furniture of our camp, —a small kitchen table with oil-stove and tea outfit of plain white ware, some plates and bowls, a few saucepans, half a dozen chairs, no two alike, and the two cots huddled in the shadows,—his voice, that had been pitched in a confidential key, arose to a wail:— "The Saints luv yer honor, but do they be afther havin' bad landlords in Meriky too, that evicted yer honor from yer house, sor? I thought here nigh every poor body owned their own bit, ground and roof, sor, let alone a foine man loike yerself that shows the breedin' down to his tin toes, sor. Oi feel fer yer honor, fer there wuz I meself set out wid pig and cow both, sor (for thim bein' given Kathy by her aunt fer her fortin could not be took), six years ago Patrick's tide, sor, and hadn't she married Mulqueen that same week, sor (he bein' gardener a long time to his Riverence over in England, sor, and meetin' Kathy only at his mother's wakin'), I'd maybe been lodged in a barn meself, sor! Sure, hev ye the cow below ud let me down a drap o' milk?" Then did Bart laugh long and heartily, for this new point of view in regard to our doings amused him immensely. Of all the local motives attributed to our garden vacation, none had been quite so naïve and unexpected as this! "But we haven't been evicted," said Bart, unconsciously beginning to apologize to an unknown straggler. "I own this place and my home is yonder; we are camping here for our health and pleasure. Come, it's time you gave an account of yourself, as you are trespassing." That the situation suddenly began to annoy Bart was plain. Ignoring the tail of the speech, Larry saluted anew: "Sure, sor, I knew ye at first fer gintleman and leddy, which this same last proves; a rale gintleman and his leddy can cut about doin' the loikes of which poor folks ud be damned fer! I mind well how Lord Kilmartin's youngest—she wid the wild red hair an' eyes that wud shame a doe—used to go barefoot through the dew down to Biddie Macks's cabin to drink fresh buttermilk, whin they turned gallons o' it from their own dairy. Some said, underbreath, she was touched, and some wild loike, but none spoke loud but to wish her speed,

fer that's what it is to be a leddy! "Meself, is it? Och, it's soon told. Six years lived I there wid Kathy and Mulqueen, workin' in the garden, he keepin' before me, until one day his Riverence come face agin me thruble. Oh, yis, sor, that same, that bit sup that's too much for the stomick, sor, and so gets into the toes and tongue, sor! Four times a year the spell's put on me, sor, and gin I shlape it over, I'm a good man in between, sor, but that one time, sor, Mulqueen was sint to Lunnon, sor, and I missed me shlape fer mischief. "Well, thinks I, I'll go to Meriky and see me Johnny, me youngest; most loike they're more used to the shlapin' spells out there where all is free; but they wasn't! Johnny's a sheriff and got money wid his woman, and she's no place in her house fit fer the old man resting the drap off. So he gives me money to go home first class, and says he'll sind another bit along to Kathy fer me keepin'. "This was come Easter, and bad cess, one o' me shlapes was due, and so I've footed it to get a job to take me back to Kathy. If I could strike a port just right, Hiven might get me home between times in a cattle boat. "I'm that well risted now I could do good work if I had full feed, maybe till Michaelmas. Hiven rest ye, sor, but have ye ever a job o' garden work now on yer estate, sor, that would kape me until I got the bit to cross to Kathy?" As Bart hesitated, I burst forth, "Have you ever tended flowers, Larry?" "Flowers, me leddy?—that's what I did fer his Riverence, indoors and out, and dressed them fer the shows, mem, and not few's the prize money we took. His Riverence, he called a rose for Kathy, that is to say Kathleen; 'twas that big 'twould hide yer face. Flowers, is it? Well, I don't know!" Bart, meanwhile, had made a plan, telling Larry that he would draw a cup of tea and give him something to eat, while he thought the matter over. He soon had the poor fellow wrapped in an old blanket and snoring comfortably in the straw, while, as the rain had stopped and dawn began to show the outlines of Opal Farm, Bart suggested that I had best go indoors and finish my broken sleep, while he had a chance to scrutinize Larry by daylight before committing himself. When he rejoined me several hours later for an indoor breakfast, for it had turned to rain again and promised several days of the saturate weather that makes even a mountain camp utterly dreary, he brought me the news that Larry was to work for me especially, beginning on the rose bed,—that he would lodge with Amos Opie and take his meals with Anastasia, who thinks it likely that they are cousins on the mothers' side, as they are both of the same parish and name. The exact way of our meeting with him need not be dwelt upon domestically, for the sake of discipline, as he will have more self-respect among his fellows in the combination clothes we provided, "until his baggage arrives." He is to be paid no money, and allowed to "shlape" if a spell unhappily arrives. When the season is over, Bart agrees to see him on board ship with a prepaid passage straight to Kathy, and whatever else is his due sent to her! Meanwhile he promised to "fit the leddy with the tastiest garden off the old sod!" So here we are! This chronicle should have a penny-dreadful title, "Their Midnight Adventure, or How it Rained a Rose Gardener!" Tell me about the ferns next time; we have only moved the glossy Christmas and evergreen-crested wood ferns as yet, being sure of these. How about our fencing? Ask Evan. You remember that we have a picket-fence toward the road, but on three sides the boundary is only a tumble-down stone wall in which bird cherries have here and there found footing. We have a chance to sell the stones, and Bart is thinking of it, as it will be too costly to rebuild on a good foundation. The old wall was merely a rough-laid pile. For nearly a week we have been sauntering through this most entrancing hill country, practically a pedestrian trip, except that the feet that have taken the steps have been shod with steel instead of leather. Your last chronicle has followed me,

and was read in a region so pervaded by ferns that your questions concerning their transplanting would have answered themselves if you could have only perched on the rock beside me. There is a fern-lined ravine below, a fern-bordered road in front; and above a log cottage, set in a clearing in the hemlocks which has for its boundaries the tumble-down fence piled by the settlers a century or two ago, its crevices now filled by leaf-mould, has become at once a natural fernery and a barrier. Why do you not use your old wall in a like manner? Of course your stones may be too closely piled and lack the time-gathered leaf-mould, but a little discretion in removing or tipping a stone here and there, and a crowbar for making pockets, would work wonders. You might even exchange the surplus rocks for leaf-mould, load by load; at any rate large quantities of fern soil must be obtainable for the carting at the reservoir woods. Imagine the effect, if you please, of that irregular line of rocks swathed in vines and sheltering great clumps of ferns, while it will afford an endless shelter for every sort of wild thing that you may pick up in your rambles. Of course you need not plant it all at once, but having made the plan, develop it at leisure. You should never quite finish a country place unless you expect to leave it. The something more in garden life is the bale of hay before the horse's nose on the uphill road. Last year, for almost a week, we thought our garden quite as finished as the material and surroundings would allow,—it was a strange, dismal, hollow sort of feeling. However, it was soon displaced by the desire that I have to collect my best roses in one spot, add to them, and gradually form a rosary where the Garden Queen and all her family may have the best of air, food, and lodgings. You see I feared that the knoll, hardy beds, and rose garden were not sufficient food for your mind to ruminate, so I add the fern fence as a sort of dessert! An endless shelter for every sort of wild thing. "Where is the shade that ferns need?" I hear you ask, "for except under some old apple trees and where the bird cherries grow (and they, though beautiful at blooming time and leaf fall, attract tent caterpillars), the stone wall lies in the sun!" Yes, but in one of the woodland homes of this region I have seen a screen placed by such a rustic stone fence that it not only served the purpose of giving light shade, but was a thing of beauty in itself, dividing the vista into many landscapes, the frame being long or upright according to the planter's fancy. Do you remember the old saying "When away keep open thine eyes, and so pack thy trunk for the home-going?" On this drive of ours I've been cramming my trunk to overflowing, and yet the ideas are often the simplest possible, for the people of this region, with more inventive art than money, have the perfect gift of adapting that which lies nearest to hand. You spoke in your last chronicle of the screen of white birches through which you saw the sun rise over the meadows of Opal Farm. This birch springs up in waste lands almost everywhere. We have it in abundance in the wood lot on the side of our hill, and it is scattered through the wet woods below our wild walk, showing that all it needs is a foothold. Because it is common and the wood rather weak and soft, landscape gardening has rather passed it by, turning a cold shoulder, yet the slender tree is very beautiful. True, it has not the length of life, the girth and strength of limb, of the silver-barked canoe birch, but the white birch will grow in a climate that fevers its northern cousin. In spite of its delicate qualities, it is not a trivial tree, for I have seen it with a bole of more than forty feet in length, measuring eighteen inches through at the ground. When you set it, you are not planting for posterity, perhaps, but will gain a speedy result; and the fertility of the tree, when once established, will take care of the future. What is more charming after a summer shower than a natural cluster of these picturesque birches, as they often chance to group themselves in threes, like the Graces—the soft white of the trunks, with dark hieroglyphic shadows here and there disappearing in a drapery of glossy leaves,

green above and reflecting the bark colour underneath, all a-quiver and more like live things poised upon the russet twigs than delicate pointed leaves! Then, when the autumn comes, how they stand out in company with cedar bushes and sheep laurel on the hillsides to make beautiful the winter garden, and we stand in mute admiration when these white birches reach from a snowbank and pencil their frosty tracery against a wall of hemlocks. This is the simple material that has been used with such wonderful effect. In the gardens hereabout they have flanked their alleys with the birches, for even when fully grown their habit is more poplar-like than spreading, and many plants, like lilies, requiring partial shade flourish under them; while for fences and screens the trees are planted in small groups, with either stones and ferns, or shrubs set thick between, and the most beautiful winter fence that Evan says he has ever seen in all his wanderings amid costly beauty was when, last winter, in being here to measure for some plans, he came suddenly upon an informal boundary and screen combined, over fifty feet in length, made of white birches,—the groups of twos and threes set eight or ten feet apart, the gaps being filled by Japanese barberries laden with their scarlet fruit. Even now this same screen is beautiful enough with its shaded greens, while the barberries in their blooming time, and the crimson leaf glow of autumn, give it four distinct seasons. The branches of the white birch being small and thickly set, they may be trimmed at will, and windows thus opened here and there without the look of artifice or stiffness. Fences are always a moot question to the gardener, for if she has a pleasant neighbour, she does not like to raise an aggressive barrier or perhaps cut off the view, yet to a certain extent I like being walled in at least on two sides. A total lack of boundaries is too impersonal,—the eye travels on and on: there is nothing to rest it by comparison. Also, where there are no fences or hedges,—and what are hedges but living fences,—there is nothing to break the ground draught in winter and early springtime. The ocean is much more beautiful and full of meaning when brought in contact with a slender bit of coast. The moon has far more majesty when but distancing the tree-tops than when rolling apparently at random through an empty sky. A vast estate may well boast of wide sweeps and open places, but the same effect is not gained, present fashion to the contrary, by throwing down the barriers between a dozen homes occupying only half as many acres. Preferable is the cosey English walled villa of the middle class, even though it be a bit stuffy and suggestive of earwigs. The question should not be to fence or not to fence, but rather how to fence usefully and artistically, and any one who has an old stone wall, such as you have, moss grown and tumble-down, with the beginnings of wildness already achieved, has no excuse for failure. We have seen other fences here where bushes, wire, and vines all take part, but they cannot compete with an old wall. With ferns, a topic opens as long and broad and deep as the glen below us, and of almost as uncertain climbing, for it is not so much what ferns may be dug up and, as individual plants, continue to grow in new surroundings, but how much of their haunt may be transplanted with them, that the fern may keep its characteristics. Many people do not think of this, nor would they care if reminded. Water lilies, floating among their pads in the still margin of a stream, with jewelled dragon-flies darting over, soft clouds above and the odour of wild grapes or swamp azalea wafting from the banks, are no more to them than half a dozen such lilies grown in a sunken tub or whitewashed basin in a backyard; rather are they less desirable because less easily controlled and encompassed. Such people, and they are not a few, belong to the tribe of Peter Bell, who saw nothing more in the primrose by the river's brim than that it was a primrose, and consequently yellow. Doubtless it would have looked precisely the same to him, or even more yellow, if it had bloomed in a tin can! We do not treat our native ferns with sufficient respect. Homage is paid in literature to the palm, and it is an emblem of honour, but our New England ferns,

many of them equally majestic, are tossed into heaps for hay and mown down by the ruthless scythe of the farmer every autumn when he shows his greatest agricultural energy by stripping the waysides of their beauty prior to the coming of the roadmender with his awful "turn-piking" process. If, by the way, the automobilists succeed in stopping this piking practice, we will print a nice little prayer for them and send it to Saint Peter, so that, though it won't help them in this world,—that would be dangerous,—it will by and by! In the woods the farmer allows the ferns to stand, for are they not one of the usual attributes of a picnic? Stuck in the horses' bridle, they keep off flies; they serve to deck the tablecloth upon which the food is spread; gathered in armfuls, they somewhat ease the contact of the rheumatic with the rocks, upon which they must often sit on such occasions. They provide the young folks with a motive to seek something further in the woods, and give the acquisitive ladies who "press things" much loot to take home, and all without cost. This may not be respectful treatment, but it is not martyrdom; the fern is a generous plant, a thing of wiry root-stock and prehistoric tenacity; it has not forgotten that tree ferns are among its ancestors; when it is discouraged, it rests and grows again. But imagine the feelings of a mat of exquisite maidenhair rent from a shady slope with moss and partridge vine at its feet, and quivering elusive woodland shade above, on finding itself unceremoniously crowded into a bed, between cannas or red geraniums! Or fancy the despair of either of the widespreading Osmundas, lovers of stream borders opulent with leaf-mould, or wood hollows deep with moist richness, on finding themselves ranged in a row about the porch of a summer cottage, each one tied firmly to a stake like so many green parasols stuck in the dry loam point downward! It is not so much a question of how many species of native ferns can be domesticated, for given sufficient time and patience all things are possible, but how many varieties are either decorative, interesting, or useful away from their native haunts. For any one taking what may be called a botanical interest in ferns, a semi-artificial rockery, with one end in wet ground and the other reaching dry-wood conditions, is extremely interesting. In such a place, by obtaining some of the earth with each specimen and tagging it carefully, an outof-door herbarium may be formed and something added to it every time an excursion is made into a new region. Otherwise the ferns that are worth the trouble of transplanting and supplying with soil akin to that from which they came, are comparatively few. Of decorative species the Osmundas easily lead; being natives of swampy or at least moist ground, they should have a like situation, and yet so strong are their roots and crown of leaves that they will flourish for years after the moisture that has fed them has been drained and the shading overgrowth cut away, even though dwarfed in growth and coarsened in texture. Thus people seeing them growing under these conditions in open fields and roadside banks mistake their necessities. The Royal fern (Osmunda regalis) positively demands moisture; it will waive the matter of shade in a great degree, but water it must have. The Cinnamon fern, that encloses the spongelike, brown, fertile fronds in the circle of green ones, gains its greatest size of five feet in roadside runnels or in springy places between boulders in the river woods; yet so accommodating is it that you can use it at the base of your knoll if a convenient rock promises both reasonable dampness and shelter. The third of the family (Osmunda Claytonia) is known as the Interrupted fern, because in May the fertile black leaflets appear in the middle of the fronds and interrupt the even greenness. This fern will thrive in merely moist soil and is very charming early in the season, but like the other two, out of its haunts, cannot be relied upon after August. As a fern for deep soil, where walking room can be allowed it, the common brake, or bracken (Pteris aquilina) is unsurpassed. It will grow either in sandy woods or moist, and should have a certain amount of high shade, else its broad fronds, held high above the ground umbrella-wise, will curl, grow coarse, and lose the fernlike quality altogether. You can plant this safely in the bit of old orchard that you are giving over to wild asters,

black-eyed Susan, and sundrops, but mind you, be sure to take both Larry and Barney, together with a long posthole spade, when you go out to dig brakes,—they are not things of shallow superficial roots, I can assure you. A few years ago Evan, Timothy Saunders, and I went brake-hunting, I selecting the groups and the menkind digging great solid turfs a foot or more in depth, in order to be sure the things had native earth enough along to mother them into comfortable growth. Proudly we loaded the big box wagon, for we had taken so much black peat (as the soil happened to be) that not a root hung below and success was certain. When, on reaching home, in unloading, one turf fell from the cart and crumbled into fragments, to my dismay I found that the long, tough stalk ran quite through the clod and we had no roots at all, but that (if inanimate things can laugh) they were all laughing at us back in the meadow and probably another foot underground. Yet brakes are well worth the trouble of deep digging, for if once established, a waste bit, where little else will flourish, is given a graceful undergrowth that is able to stand erect even though the breeze plays with the little forest as it does with a field of grain. Then, too, the brake patch is a treasury to be drawn from when arranging tall flowers like foxgloves, larkspurs, hollyhocks, and others that have little foliage of their own. The fact that the brake does not mature its seeds that lie under the leaf margin until late summer also insures it a long season of sightliness, and when ripeness finally draws nigh, it comes in a series of beautiful mellow shades, varying from straw through deep gold to russet, such as the beech tree chooses for its autumn cloak. Another plant there is, a low-growing shrub, having long leaves with scalloped edges, giving a spicy odour when crushed or after rain, that I must beg you to plant with these brakes. It is called Sweet-fern, merely by courtesy, from its fernlike appearance, for it is of the bayberry family and first cousin to sweet gale and waxberry. The digging of this also is a process quite as elusive as mining for brakes; but when once it sets foot in your orchard, and it will enjoy the drier places, you will have a liberal annex to your bed of sweet odours, and it may worthily join lemon balm, mignonette, southernwood, and lavender in the house, though in the garden it would be rather too pushing a companion. Next, both decorative and useful, comes the Silvery Spleenwort, that is content with shade and good soil of any sort, so long as it is not rank with manure. It has a slender creeping root, but when it once takes hold, it flourishes mightily and after a year or so will wave silver-lined fronds three feet long proudly before you, a rival of Osmunda! A sister spleenwort is the beautiful Lady fern, whose lacelike fronds have partycoloured stems, varying from straw through pink and reddish to brown, giving an unusual touch of life and warmth to one of the cool green fern tribe. In autumn the entire leaf of this fern, in dying, oftentimes takes these same hues; it is decorative when growing and useful to blend with cut flowers. It naturally prefers woods, but will settle down comfortably in the angle of a house or under a fence, and will be a standby in your wall rockery. The ferns that seem really to prefer the open, one taking to dry and two to moist ground, are the hay-scented fern (Dicksonia punctilobula), the New York fern (Dryopteris Noveboracencis), and the Marsh Shield-fern. Dicksonia has a pretty leaf of fretwork, and will grow three feet in length, though it is usually much shorter. It is the fern universal here with us, it makes great swales running out from wood edges to pastures, and it rivals the bayberry in covering hillsides; it will grow in dense beds under tall laurels or rhododendrons, border your wild walk, or make a setting of cheerful light green to the stone wall; while if cut for house decoration, it keeps in condition for several days and almost rivals the Maidenhair as a combination with sweet peas or roses. The New York fern, when of low stature, is one of the many bits of growing carpet of rich cool woods. If it is grown in deep shade, the leaves become too long and spindling for beauty. When in moist ground,

quite in the open, or in reflected shade, the fresh young leaves of a foot and under add great variety to the grass and are a perfect setting for table decorations of small flowers. We have these ferns all through the dell. If they are mown down in June, July sees a fresh crop, and their spring green is held perpetual until frost. The Marsh Shield-fern of gentian meadows is the perfect small fern for a bit of wet ground, and is the green to be used with all wild flowers of like places. One day last autumn I had a bouquet of grass-of-Parnassus, ladies' tresses, and gentian massed thickly with these ferns, and the posey lived for days on the sunny window shelf of the den (for gentians close their eyes in shade),—a bit of the September marshland brought indoors. The two Beech-ferns, the long and the broad, you may grow on the knoll; give the long the dampest spots, and place the broad where it is quite dry. As the rootstocks of both these are somewhat frail, I would advise you to peg them down with hairpins and cover well with earth. By the way, I always use wire hairpins to hold down creeping rootstocks of every kind; it keeps them from springing up and drying before the rootlets have a chance to grasp the soil. The roots of Maidenhair should always be treated in this way, as they dry out very quickly. This most distinctive of our New England ferns will grow between the rocks of your knoll, as well as in deep nooks in the fence. It seems to love rich side-hill woods and craves a rock behind its back, and if you are only careful about the soil, you can have miniature forests of it with little trouble. As for maidenhair, all its uses are beauty! Give me a bouquet of perfect wild rosebuds within a deep fringe of maidenhair to set in a crystal jar where I may watch the deep pink petals unfold and show the golden stars within; let me breathe their first breath of perfume, and you may keep all the greenhouse orchids that are grown. Though you can have a variety of ferns in other locations, those that will thrive best on the knoll and keep it ever green and in touch with laurel and hemlock, are but five,—the Christmas fern, the Marginal Shield-fern, the common Rock Polypody, the Ebony Spleenwort, and the Spinulose Wood-fern. Of the first pair it is impossible to have too many. The Christmas fern, with its glistening leaves of holly green, has a stout, creeping rootstock, which must be firmly secured, a few stones being added temporarily to the hairpins to give weight. The Evergreen Wood-fern and Ebony Spleenwort, having short rootstocks, can be tucked into sufficiently deep holes between rocks or in the hollows left by small decayed stumps, while the transplanting of the Rock Polypody is an act where luck, recklessness, and a pinch of magic must all be combined. You will find vast mats of these leathery little Polypodys growing with rockselaginella on the great boulders of the river woods. As these are to be split up for masonry, the experiment of transferring the polypody is no sin, though it savours somewhat of the process of skin-grafting. Evan and I have tried the experiment successfully, so that it is no fable. We had a bit of shady bank at home that proved by the mosses that grew on it that it was moistened from beneath the year through. The protecting shade was of tall hickories, and a rock ledge some twenty feet high shielded it from the south and east. We scraped the moss from a circle of about six feet and loosened the surface of the earth only, and very carefully. Then we spread some moist leaf-mould on the rough but flat surface of a partly exposed rock. Going to a near-by bit of woods that was being despoiled, as in your valley, we chose two great mats of polypody and moss that had no piercing twigs to break the fabric, and carefully peeled them from the rocks, as you would bark from a tree, the matted rootstocks weaving all together. Moistening these thoroughly, we wrapped them in a horse blanket and hurried home. The earth and rock already prepared were sprinkled with water and the fern fabric applied and gently but firmly pressed down, that resting on the earth being held by the ever useful hairpin! The rock graft was more difficult, but after many failures by way of stones that rolled off,

a coarse network of cords was put across and fastened to whatever twigs or roots came in the way. Naturally a period of constant sprinkling followed, and for that season the rock graft seemed decidedly homesick, but the next spring resignation had set in, and two years later the polypodys had completely adopted the new location and were prepared to appropriate the whole of it. So you see that there are comparatively only a few ferns, after all, that are of great value to The Garden, You, and I, and likewise there are but a few rules for their transplanting, viz.:— Don't bother about the tops, for new ones will grow, but look to the roots, and do not let them be exposed to the air or become dry in travel. Examine the quality of soil from which you have taken the ferns, and if you have none like it nearer home, take some with you for a starter! Never dig up more on one day than you can plant during the next, and above all remember that if a fern is worth tramping the countryside for, it is worth careful planting, and that the moral remarks made about the care in setting out of roses apply with double force to the handling of delicate wild flowers and ferns. Good luck to your knoll, Mary Penrose, and to your fern fence, if that fancy pleases you. May the magic of fern seed fill your eyes and let you see visions, the goodly things of heart's desire, when, all being accomplished, you pause and look at the work of your hands. "And nimble fay and pranksome elf Flash vaguely past at every turn, Or, weird and wee, sits Puck himself, With legs akimbo, on a fern!" Since the month came in, vacation time has been suspended, insomuch that Bart goes to the office every day, Saturdays excepted; but we have not returned to our indoor bedroom. Once it seemed the definition of airy coolness, with its three wide windows, white matting, and muslin draperies, but now—I fully understand the relative feelings of a bird in a cage and a bird in the open. The air blows through the bars and the sun shines through them, but it is still a cage. In these warm, still nights we take down the slat screens that hang between the hand-hewn chestnut beams of the old barn, and with the open rafters of what was a hay-loft above us, we look out of the door-frame straight up at the stars and sometimes drag our cots out on the wide bank that tops the wall, overlooking the Opal Farm, and sleep wholly under the sky. These two weeks past we have had the Infant with us at night, clad in a light woollen monkey-suit nighty with feet, her crib being, however, under cover. Her open-eyed wonder has been a new phase of the vacation. Knowing no fear, she has begun to develop a feeling of kinship with all the small animals, not only of the barn but dwellers on Opal Farm as well, and when she discovered a nest of small mice in an old tool-box under the eaves and proposed to take them, in their improvised house, to her very own room at the opposite end, this "room" being a square marked around her bed by small flower-pots, set upside down, I protested, as a matter of course, saying that mice were not things to handle, and besides they would die without their mother. The Infant, still clutching the box, looked at me in round-eyed wonder: "I had Dinah and the kittens to play with in the nursery, didn't I, mother?" "Certainly!" "And when Ann-stasia brought them up in her ap'n, Dinah walked behind, didn't she?" "Yes, I think so!" "Ver-r-y well, the mouse mother will walk behind too, and I love mice better'n cats, for they have nicer hands; 'sides, mother, don't you know who mice really and truly are, and why they have to hide away? They are the horses that fairlies drive, and I'm going to have these for the fairlies in my village!" making a sweep of her arm toward the encampment of flower-pots; "if you want fairlies to stay close beside your bed, you must give them horses to drive, 'cause when it gets cold weather cobwebs gets too sharp for them to ride on and there isn't always fireflies 'n candle worms to show 'em the way,—'n it's true, 'cause Larry says so!" she added, probably seeing the look of incredulity on my face. "Larry knows fairlies and they're really trulies; if you're bad to them,

you'll see the road and it won't be there, and so you'll get into Hen'sy's bog! Larry did,— and if you make houses for them like mine (pointing to the flower-pots) and give 'em drinks of milk and flower wine, they'll bring you lots of childrens! They did to Larry, so I'm trying to please 'em wif my houses, so's to have some to play wif!" Larry's harmless folklore (for when he is quite himself, as he is in these days, he has a certain refinement and an endless fund of marvellous legends and stories), birds and little beasts for friends, dolls cut from paper with pansies fastened on for faces, morning-glories for cups in which to give the fairies drink, what could make a more blissful childhood for our little maid? That is the everlasting pity of a city childhood. Creature comforts may be had and human friends, but where is the vista that reaches under the trees and through the long meadow-grass where the red-gold lily bells tinkle, up the brook bed to the great flat mossy rock, beneath which is the door to fairyland, the spotted turtle being warder. Fairyland, the country of eternal youth and possibility! I wouldn't give up the fairies that I once knew and peopled the solemn woods with down in grandfather's Virginia home for a fortune, and even now, any day, I can put my ear to the earth, like Tommy-Anne, and hear the grass grow. It occurred to me yesterday that the Infant, in age, temperament, and heredity, is suited to be a companion for your Richard. Could you not bring him down with you before the summer is over? Though, as the unlike sometimes agree best, Ian and she might be more compatible, so bring them both and we will turn the trio loose in the meadows of Opal Farm with a mite of a Shetland pony that The Man from Everywhere has recently bestowed upon the Infant—crazy, extravagant man! What we shall do with it in winter I do not know, as we cannot yet run into the expense of keeping such live stock. But why bother? it is only midsummer now, grazing is plentiful and seems to suit the needs of this spunky little beast, and the Infant riding him "across country," as Bart calls her wanderings about Opal Farm, is a spectacle too pretty to be denied us. Yes, I know I'm silly, and that you have the twins to rhapsodize about, but girls are so much more picturesque in the clothes! What! thought she wore gingham bloomers! Yes, but not all the time, for Maria will frill her up and run her with ribbons of afternoons! Back to the house and garden! I'm wandering, but then I'm Lady Lazy this summer, as The Man from Everywhere calls me, and naturally a bit inconsequent! As I said, Bart is at the office daily, and will be for another week, but Lady Lazy has not returned to what Maria Maxwell calls "The Tyranny of the Three M's,"—the mending basket, the market book, and the money-box! I was willing, quite willing; in fact it is only fair that Maria should have her time of irresponsibility, for I know that she has half a dozen invitations to go to pleasant places and meet people, one being from Lavinia Cortright to visit her shore cottage. I'm always hoping that Maria may meet the "right man" some summer day, but that she surely will never do if she stays here. "I've everything systematized, and it's easier for me to go on than drop the needles for a fortnight or so and then find, on coming back, that you have been knitting a mitten when I had started the frame of a sock," Maria said, laughing; "make flower hay while the crop is to be had for the gathering, my lady! Another year you may not have such free hands!" Then my protests grew weaker and weaker, for the establishment had thriven marvellously well without my daily interference. The jam closet shows rows of everything that might be made of strawberries, cherries, currants, and raspberries, and it suddenly struck me that possibly if domestic machinery is set going on a consistent basis, whether it is not a mistake to do too much oiling and tightening of a screw here and there, unless distinct symptoms of a halt render it absolutely necessary. "Very well," I said, with a show of spunk, "give me one single task, that I may not feel as if I had no part in the homemaking. Something as ornamental and frivolous as you choose,

but that shall occupy me at least two hours a day!" Maria paused a moment; we were then standing in front of the fireplace, where a jar of bayberry filled the place of logs between the andirons. First, casting her eyes through the doors of dining room, living room, and den, she fixed them on me with rather a mischievous twinkle, as she said, "You shall gather and arrange the flowers for the house; and always have plenty of them, but never a withered or dropsical blossom among them all. You shall also invent new ways for arranging them, new combinations, new effects, the only restriction being that you shall not put vases where the water will drip on books, or make the house look like the show window of a wholesale florist. I will give you a fresh mop, and you can have the back porch and table for your workshop, and if I'm not mistaken, you will find two hours a day little enough for the work!" she added with very much the air of some one engaging a new housemaid and presenting her with a broom! It has never taken me two hours to gather and arrange the flowers, and though of course we are only beginning to have much of a garden, we've always had flowers in the house,—quantities of sweet peas and such things, besides wild flowers. I began to protest, an injured feeling rising in my throat, that she, Maria Maxwell, music teacher, city bound for ten years, should think to instruct me of recent outdoor experience. "Yes, you've always had flowers, but did you pick the sweet peas or did Barney? Did you cram them haphazard into the first thing that came handy (probably that awful bowl decorated in ten discordant colours and evidently a wedding present, for such atrocities never find any other medium of circulation)? Or did you separate them nicely, and arrange the pink and salmon peas with the lavender in that plain-coloured Sevres vase that is unusually accommodating in the matter of water, then putting the gay colours in the blue-and-white Delft bowl and the duller ones in cut glass to give them life? Having plenty, did you change them every other day, or the moment the water began to look milky, or did you leave them until the flowers clung together in the first stages of mould? Meanwhile, the ungathered flowers on the vines were seriously developing peas and shortening their stems to be better able to bear their weight. And, Mary Penrose,"—here Maria positively glared at me as if I had been a primary pupil in the most undesirable school of her route who was both stone deaf and afflicted with catarrh, "did you wash out your jars and vases with a mop every time you changed the flowers, and wipe them on a towel separate from the ones used for the pantry glass? No, you never did! You tipped the water out over there at the end of the piazza by the honeysuckles, because you couldn't quite bring yourself to pouring it down the pantry sink, refilled the vases, and that was all!" In spite of a certain sense of annoyance that I felt at the way in which Maria was giving me a lecture, and somehow when a person has taught for ten years she (particularly she) inevitably acquires a rather unpleasant way of imparting the truth that makes one wish to deny it, I stood convicted in my own eyes as well as in Maria's. It had so often happened that when either Barney had brought in the sweet peas and left them on the porch table, or Bart had gathered a particularly beautiful wild bouquet in one of his tramps, I had lingered over a book or some bit of work upstairs until almost the time for the next meal, and then, seeing the half-withered look of reproach that flowers wear when they have been long out of water, I have jammed them helter-skelter into the first receptacle at hand. Sometimes a little rough verbal handling stirs up the blood under a toocomplacent cuticle. Maria's preachment did me good, the more probably because the time was ripe for it, and therefore the past two weeks have been filled with new pleasures, for another thing that the month spent in the open has shown me is the wonderful setting the natural environment and foliage gives to a flower. At first the completeness appeals insensibly, and unless one is of the temperament that seeks the cause behind the effect, it might never be realized. The Japanese have long since arrived at a method of arranging flowers which is quality and intrinsic value as opposed to miscellaneous quantity.