
Whispers
of
Spring
A SYMPHONY OF NATURE'S AWAKENING

The cuckoo has been calling for days past among the trees beyond the orchard, and the song birds seem to be awake half through the night. The foliage of the large forest-trees is particularly fine this year. The Horse Chestnuts were the first in leaf, and each branch is now holding up its light of waxen blossom. The Elms came next, the Limes, the Beeches, and then the Oaks. Yet still "the tender Ash delays To clothe herself when all the woods are green," and is all bare as in mid-winter. This, however, if the adage about the Oak and the Ash be true, should be prophetic of a fine hot summer. I wonder if any effect of bedding out is finer than that which my mixed borders have now to show. They are at their very best, for it is the reign of the Pæony and the Iris. Great clumps of each, the one bowed down with the weight of its huge crimson globes, the other springing up erect with its purpleheaded shafts, appear at intervals along the borders, and each lends a fresh grace to the form and colour of the other. Among other flowers in rare beauty just now are (as once in the garden of "the Sensitive Plant,") "Narcissi, the fairest among them all, Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess Till they die of their own dear loveliness." Was it, I wonder, owing to this story of Narcissus, and as an emblem of selfseeking, that the Greeks twined the white stars of this flower among the tangled locks of the Eumenides? The Snowflakes have been flowering abundantly, but they are now passing. The Greek name for the Snowflake is the Leucoion—literally the white Violet—and I think it possible that in a passage of Ovid, where he speaks of the Violet, the Poppy, and the Lily being broken by a storm, he is really thinking of the Snowflake. I am satisfied, as I have already said, that the Iris is never (as Lord Stanhope asserted) called the Violet. My Auriculas are not as good as they should be in a Lancashire garden, for of all flowers it is the old Lancashire favourite. It is still known as the Basier (a corruption, no doubt, of Bear's Ear), and a pretty Lancashire ballad ends every verse with the refrain, "For the Basiers are sweet in the morning of May." The old-fashioned Columbine is in full bloom, as is also the Aquilegia glandulosa. I have planted the Aquilegia cœrulea, but both the plant and some seeds which I have sown have failed me, and I half fear I may never be successful with this finest of the Columbines. Before I leave the Columbine, let me mention a mistake in one of Jean Ingelow's very prettiest poems, which her literary critics seem never to have detected. She says— "O Columbine, open your folded wrapper, Where two twin turtle-doves dwell." But she is confusing the Columbine with the Monk's Hood. The doves of the Columbine cluster round the centre like the doves of Pliny's vase. The doves of the Monk's Hood are only seen as you remove the "wrapper," and then the old idea was that they are drawing a "Venus' chariot." The accidental grouping of plants on a mixed border is often very happy. A week or two back I found growing out of a tuft of Forget-me-not a plant of the Black Fritillary. The blue eyes of the Forget-me-not seemed to be looking up into the hanging bells of the Fritillary, and were a pleasant contrast to the red-brown of its petals.

Gerarde's name for the Fritillary was the "Turkie or Ginnie-hen Flower," and the name of the Fritillary was itself derived from the fritillus or dice-box, which the common Fritillary was supposed to resemble in its markings. In the middle of each group of beds, which the grass walk divides, is a circular bed full of American shrubs. Among these shrubs are several rather fine Kalmias. Very often they do not flower at all, or at best bear a bloom only here and there. This year they are laden with blossom, which is now just ready to burst, and I shall have a show of Kalmia flowers such as I have not seen, since two-and-twenty years ago, I wandered among the Kalmia brakes in the forests of Virginia; and the flower is so beautiful—pink outside, and, as Ruskin says, inside "like the beating out of bosses in hollow silver, beaten out apparently in each petal by the stamens instead of a hammer." Another bed, which will be very effective in a day or two, is a bed of the double Persian Brier, pegged and trained. The festoons of yellow buds are all but out, and will be one mass of sweet and lovely little Roses. The Nemophila bed has done very well, but we did not plant it as thickly as we should have done, and there are bare places here and there. I have still to mention the great bushes, or rather trees, of Hawthorn, of which some stand in front of the dining-room windows, while others fling their perfume across the hedge that divides the garden and the croft. There is another Lancashire May song, from which I cannot but quote a few lines, as it is but little known. The Mayers come to the door and sing (or sang, rather, for the custom no longer holds with us):— "We have been rambling all this night, And almost all this day; And now, returned back again, We've brought you a branch of May. A branch 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 Summer Garden—The Buddleia—Ghent Azaleas—The Mixed Borders— Roses—The Green Rose. There is a longer interval than usual since my last notes; but I have been away among the Soldanellas and the Gentians of Switzerland, and I have had to leave my garden to the gardener's care. Now that I have returned, I find how much has gone on, and how much I must have missed. The Nemophila bed, I hear, gradually filled up and became a perfect sheet of brilliant blue. The Anemone bed was very good, and that of Ranunculus very fair; but best of all, as I knew it would be, was the bed of Brier Roses, with their trained branches laden with sweet little yellow blossoms. The Kalmias too are over, and the alpine Rhododendrons (Roses des Alpes) are also nearly at an end; but I have just found them wild upon the Wengern Alp, and that must be my consolation. There is nothing I am more sorry to have missed than the great shrub—almost tree—of Buddleia globosa, which grows in the centre of one of the herbaceous borders. It has been, as it always is, covered with its golden balls, smelling of honey, and recalling an old garden in Somersetshire which I knew years ago. It is certainly true that nothing calls up associations of the past as does the sense of smell.

A whiff of perfume stealing through the air, or entering into an open window, and one is reminded of some far-off place on some long-past day when the same perfume floated along, and for one single moment the past will seem more real than the present. The Buddleia, the Magnolia, and one or two other flowers always have this power over me. I have still one Azalea, and only one, in blossom; it has a small and very fragrant white flower. I have been lately reading several articles about the fly-catching flowers. Is it generally known that no fly-catcher is more cruel and more greedy than the common Ghent Azalea, especially, I think, the large sweet yellow one? On one single blossom, which I gathered just before leaving home, at the end of May, I found no less than six flies; four of them were quite dead, and of one or two nothing remained but a shred of wing. Two others were still alive, but the Azalea had already nearly drained their life away, and held them so tightly with its viscid hairs that I could hardly release them from its grasp. On the other blossoms in the truss were other flies, three, four, or five; so that the entire Azalea shrub had probably caught some hundreds. The mixed borders are almost past their best,—at least the hairy red Poppy, the day Lily, and the early purple Gladiolus are over, and, of course, the Irises and Pæonies. At present various Canterbury Bells, Valerian (which I saw bedded out the other day at Liége), and the white and orange Lily, are the gayest things we have. There is a Mullein, too, which is well worth a corner in any garden. Not long since I saw, in some book of rambles through our southern counties, the spire of a cathedral with its pinnacles and crockets compared to a spike of Mullein flower. It is certainly the Mullein (the distinctive name of which I do not know) which is now in bloom with me; and, indeed, the resemblance had occurred to me before I had read the book. But I hardly care to linger over other flowers, when the Rose-beds are in their fullest splendour. The summer Roses must have been better a fortnight back, but the perpetuals are as good as can be, and many of the summer Roses yet remain. I sometimes fear that the passion for large, well-formed blossoms, and the desire of novelty, will make some of the dear old Roses of our childhood pass into entire neglect; yet, when we think of a Rose, of which any poet has written, it will not be La France, or Sénateur Vaisse, or Alfred Colomb—beautiful as they are. When Herrick warns us— "Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may," or when Hood tells us— "It was the month of Roses, We plucked them as we passed," —their Roses were other than the favourite Roses of to-day. Perhaps they were the old Cabbage Rose, a great bush of which grows next to a bed of Lavender, and pleasantly scents the garden as you enter it. Perhaps they were the Portland Rose, of which I have some three beds, and than which no Rose is better for the making of Pot Pourri, as the young ladies in picture may learn to their advantage. Perhaps they were the Moss Rose, with its mossed buds and fragrant blossoms, of which I have another bed entirely for itself. Perhaps they were the Maiden Blush, or the York and Lancaster,

or the sweet old China, with its pink shell petals, which comes so soon and lingers on so late—the last Rose, not of summer but of autumn. Then there are other old Roses which should not be neglected. The Rose Unique, which is a white Cabbage Rose, is one; the Rose Celeste, the thin delicate buds of which are so beautiful, is another. Then there is the little Rose de Meaux, and the old Damask, which indeed seems to have nearly disappeared. It must have been one of these Roses, be sure, and not a Tea or a perpetual, which Lady Corisande finds in her garden for Lothair. Not of course that we are not grateful for the new Roses, with their brilliant colouring and their perfect form, but we are unwilling that the old should be forgotten. The Gloire de Dijon and Général Jaqueminot seem to me the most vigorous and most useful, if not the finest; but I have two old standards which are at the moment more effective than anything I have. One is Boule de Nantes, the other an old summer Rose, the name of which I do not know, but which, when fully out, much resembles the Comtesse de Jaucourt. They are not trained in any way, and I find, measuring round their heads, that one has a circumference of, and the other of. In the South of England it is no doubt different, but for us these are large dimensions; and certainly nothing I now get from the nursery gardens seems inclined to attain to half the size. There is one Rose in my garden which flourishes abundantly, but which is the only Rose, of which I should decline to give a cutting. It is so ugly that it is worth nothing, except as a curiosity; and if it ceased to be a curiosity it would be quite valueless. It is a green Rose. I got a small plant from Baltimore, in America, some years ago, and I find it perfectly hardy. It flowers very freely, and all through the summer; the bud is a perfect Rose bud in appearance, but the open flower shows that the Rose is of monstrous and not natural growth; the petals are, it seems to me, no real petals at all, but an expansion of the green heart, which often appears in Roses, and which has here been so cultivated as to take the place of the natural Rose. These petals are coarse and irregular, and have serrated edges, with a very faint scent. [6] How the Rose twines itself around all history and all literature! There are the Rose gardens of Persia, and the loves of the Rose and nightingale; there are those famous Roses once plucked in the Temple Garden, of which "the pale and bloody petals" (to use a fine expression of Hawthorne's) were strewed over many an English battle-field; there is the golden Rose which the Pope gives as the best of gifts to the foremost among Catholic monarchs—emblem at once of a fading earthly life, and of the unfading life in heaven. Of English poets is there one, who does not celebrate the Rose, and of all is there one, who draws from it a more tender morality than Waller in "Go, lovely Rose"? But no nation ever loved the Rose as did the Greeks, and it was their legend that told us how the Rose sprang to birth. Bion's "Lament for Adonis" has been translated by, and I know no translation equal to it in general fidelity and vigour of expression.

It appears to me, on the whole, perhaps the very best translation in the language. Here are the lines which tell this part of the story:— "Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead; She wept tear after tear with the blood which was shed, And both turned into flowers for the earth's garden close,— Her tears to the Windflower, his blood to the Rose." Another still more famous Greek poem about the Rose is one by Sappho, which has also most beautifully translated—a fit task, which unites the names of the two great poetesses of Greece and England. The poem begins:— "If Zeus chose us a king of the flowers in his mirth, He would call to the Rose and would royally crown it: For the Rose, ho! the Rose, is the grace of the earth; Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it." No wonder the Greeks wove their wreaths of the Rose, or that "under the Rose" they passed many a gay and happy hour, to be kept in memory, if untold in words. My bedding-out is of course finished, but of this I must speak on the next occasion. The weather has been hot, and rain will now be welcome. The Fruit Crop—Hautbois Strawberries—Lilium Auratum—Sweet Williams— Carnations—The Bedding-out. It is, I find, a dangerous thing to leave a garden masterless for even a month. The best of gardens will probably fall short in some respect, and I certainly discover several matters which would have been otherwise had I remained at home. My readers will hardly be interested by the details of my grievances; it is pleasanter to tell where we have been successful. The wall fruit, however, I must mention. The ants and the aphis, and possibly some frost, have destroyed the Peach crop utterly. There is not a single Peach, and the Nectarines, which are certainly a hardier fruit with us, only number thirty in all! The Apricots have done fairly, and were so early that we gathered three or four in the last days of July—a full month before their usual time. The Moorpark Apricot, which we owe to Sir William Temple, is still the best. By the way, he tells us that the Roman name for Apricots is Mala epirotica. Is this the root of the word Apricot, or may we still look upon it as from "apricus," the "sunny fruit,"—the fruit that loves the sun and has caught its own bright colour? Of the smaller fruit Cherries have been a failure, with the exception indeed of the Morellos. Gooseberries have done well, though I fear I cannot compete with the giant Gooseberries of a Lancashire Gooseberry show. The Currants, whether against the wall or on bushes, have been capital, and the black Currants would take a prize at any show. We now net up some Currant bushes for the later autumn. The Raspberries, which we train in arches, have done tolerably, and we should have a second crop of the white ones in October. The Strawberries have been an average crop, and the little Alpines have been capital—so large, so highly flavoured, and so redolent of Switzerland! I am trying, too, for the first time, to grow Hautbois Strawberries, which are almost unknown with us. We are as yet not very successful, and I well know how capricious a fruit it is as regards setting. A year or two ago I was breakfasting with a well-known and most courtly physician in London, who is since dead. A dish of beautiful Hautbois was on the table.

We were all admiring. "Yes," said our host, "they are now getting very rare. Sometimes a patient says to me, 'May I not have a little fruit?' 'Certainly not!' is my answer. 'Surely a few Strawberries?' Then, that I may not seem a great curmudgeon, I say, 'Well, a few Strawberries, but be sure they are Hautbois;' and I know they can't get them!" To ordinary Strawberries a Hautbois is what a Tea Rose is to ordinary Roses; it has an aroma all its own, and unlike all others. In the flower garden the finest bed is one which I have now had for the last three years. It is a bed of Lilium auratum, with the dark Heliotrope growing in between. I take up the Lily bulbs for the winter, bring them on in heat, and then plant them out. They are really beautiful, and each year they seem more vigorous. Some have four blossoms, some have six or eight, and one has as many as ten. The strong perfume lies heavy on that end of the garden, and I think this Lily should never be brought inside the house. It is curious how the blossoms vary; in some the golden stripes are so much deeper, in some the dark claret spots are so much more numerous. Another bed is of Lilium speciosum, planted to take the place of a bed of Sweet William, which was quite a glow of colour in the earlier part of the summer. This dear old Sweet William, which was the favourite in the old cottage gardens, and which, with the Lad's-love and the Pink, was the chosen flower for the buttonhole of the country boy, is now far too much neglected. Its rich velvet clusters of twenty different shades make a bed of exquisite beauty. It is over too soon, but it can be supplanted (may I say?) by something else. In a second bed of Sweet Williams I placed Gladiolus bulbs, and now they are coming into flower from out the green cushion, from which we have cut the withered blossoms. A bed of the sweet little pink Pinks has of course been over some time, and though the bed is now quite bare of bloom—for I cannot disturb the roots—it is well worth sacrificing some colour in autumn for the three summer weeks of delicious perfume. Clusters of white Pinks have been no less sweet on the herbaceous borders, and now the Clove Carnations take their place. It is curious that so familiar a flower as the Pink should be scarcely mentioned by the great poets. Shakspeare only just names it, and I do not think Marvell does. Milton, in his Lycidas, barely alludes to "the white Pink," and Cowley has no separate poem in its praise. Indeed, one may say generally that, with the exception of the Rose, the flowers in which the poets have rejoiced, and which they have immortalised, are the flowers of spring. Cowley, who wrote as a horticulturist, is the almost solitary exception. There is, however, a rather pretty and fanciful little song of Herrick's "To Carnations:"— "Stay while ye will, or goe; And leave no scent behind ye: Yet trust me, I shall know The place where I may find ye: Within my Lucia's cheek, Whose livery ye weare, Play ye at hide or seek, I'm sure to find ye there." For the ordinary bedding-out of ordinary gardens I have a real contempt. It is at once gaudy and monotonous. A garden is left bare for eight months in the year,

that for the four hottest months there shall be a blaze of the hottest colour. The same combinations of the same flowers appear wherever you go. Calceolarias, Verbenas, and Zonal Pelargoniums, with a border of Pyrethrum or Cerastium— and that is about all. There is no thought and no imagination. The "beddingstuff" is got together and planted out, and each year of planting is a repetition of the year before; and thus, as Forbes Watson says so truly, "Gardeners are teaching us to think too little about the plants individually, and to look at them chiefly as an assemblage of beautiful colours. It is difficult in those blooming masses to separate one from another; all produce so much the same sort of impression. The consequence is, people see the flowers on our beds without caring to know anything about them, or even to ask their names." Any interest in the separate plants is impossible, and then they are, almost without exception, scentless plants, to which no association attaches, and which are cared for merely because they give a line or patch of red or yellow to the garden. "The lust of the eye and the pride of life,"—there is little purer pleasure to be drawn from "bedding stuff" than those words convey. However, there is already a reaction setting in, and the use of Echeverias and the like gives evidence at least of a more refined taste in colour, though in themselves nothing can be less interesting. Meanwhile, as some bedded-out beds will always be necessary, we may try to diversify them as much as possible. The following are among my most successful:—A bed of Agapanthus, with its beautiful foliage and sky-blue umbels, is surrounded with bright yellow Peacock Gazania; a bed of scarlet Lobelia cardinalis (is this the "Cardinal Flower" that American writers speak of?) is edged with the white Ribbon-grass, and that again with the blue Lobelia speciosa; and a second bed of the same Lobelia cardinalis, the bronze foliage of which harmonises so well with the spikes of glowing red, has the Lobelia speciosa next to it, and the Golden Pyrethrum as a border. Another bed is of Humea elegans, edged with the white variegated-leaved Miss Kingsbury Pelargonium, and that again with the blue Lobelia. Into other beds I have introduced the variegated Aloe and the Aralia, as centres for the more dwarf and brightly-coloured Verbenas. Of the variegated Pelargoniums I find the Beauty of Calderdale the most effective and most vigorous, and though I am told "Mrs. Pollock has a most excellent constitution," she does less well with me. One other bed, which is now over, has been too pretty for me not to mention; it was a bed of Antirrhinums of all colours, and I shall certainly repeat it another year. Lastly, I have a large bed of Clematis Jackmanii in full glory. Last year it did fairly well, but the plants were comparatively weak, and the flowers trailed upon the ground. This year the plants have grown vigorously, and I have trained Withies all across the bed, so that the purple blossoms twine and cling around them, and are now a perfect mass of blossom. On the house a Clematis lanuginosa, with its large discs of lilac-grey, is also very handsome, and seems to be doing as well as possible. In the outer garden a great cluster of yellow Broom has made the border near the front door aglow with golden light; and in the vinery a beautiful Clethra arborea —The Lily of the Valley Tree—has been laden with bunches of its delicate and delicately-scented flowers.

The weather has broken completely during the last fortnight, and it is now too much, and not too little rain, of which we are complaining. Weeds—Tomatos—Tritomas—Night-scented Flowers—Tuberoses—Magnolia —Asters—Indian Corn.—"The rain it raineth every day." It finds its way through the old timbers of my first vinery, and the Grapes have to be cut out by dozens. It drenches the Pelargoniums and Verbenas, till their blossoms are half washed away. It soaks the petals of the great Lilies, and turns them into a sickly brown. The slugs, I suppose, like it, for they crawl out from the thick Box hedges and do all the harm they can. Weeds, too, of every kind flourish luxuriantly, and we find it no easy work to keep ahead of them. The author of My Summer in a Garden— the most humorous little book about gardening ever written—never had such trouble with "pusley" (what is "pusley"?) as I have with Groundsel. I have enough to feed all the canary birds in the parish. Then, besides the more ordinary and vulgar weeds, I have two varieties of Willow-herb, which have seeded themselves all over the borders, and are for ever appearing where I had fondly imagined they had been utterly uprooted. A yellow Oxalis, too, has turned into a nuisance, and spreads where it was never wanted. Meanwhile the summer fruits are over. The few Nectarines we had have been gathered, and most of the Figs. The Apple-room begins to fill with Keswick Codlings for cooking purposes, and Franklin's Golden Pippin for dessert. As yet none of our Pears are ripe. The Mulberry tree in the orchard drops its fruit before it is mature, but it is rather too much shaded with the orchard trees, and, were it otherwise, there has been but little sun to get to it. We use the Mulberries, however, for tarts and for Mulberry ice, which I can thoroughly recommend. The Tomatos are reddening in numbers along the garden walls. We grow two sorts, Keye's Prolific and the Orangefield Dwarf, and I hardly know which is best. Formerly the Tomato was known as the Pomum amoris, or Love-apple, and was apparently grown only as a garden ornament, and not for use. Cowley mentions it in his "Flora," with the Foxglove and the Canna. Gerarde says of it, "In Spaine and those hot regions they use to eate the Apples prepared and boiled with pepper, salt, and oil; but they yeelde very little nourishment to the bodie, and the same naught and corrupt." Nor does Batty Langley, writing in, mention Tomatos, though he gives long lists of "raw sallets," which include Nasturtium blossoms, Tarragon, Borage flowers, and Sorrel. The handsomest of our beds at present (except always the beds of Jackman's Clematis and scarlet Lobelia) is a permanent bed of Tritomas, which hold up their orange and crimson maces thickly as possible. These Tritomas would, however, show to most advantage if planted with the Arundo conspicua, the white plumes of which form the happiest contrast to their glowing spikes. The Pampas-grass would be better still, but I have not been able to make them blossom together. A patch of Tritomas on the corner of the lawn has been a failure, owing to the carelessness of a gardener, who cut them down with the grass in mowing. One other bed, also a permanent one, I have still to mention. It is a mass of Anemone japonica alba with Statice latifolia round it. This Anemone, with its white blossoms surrounding a yellow centre,

and looking just like some very perfect white wild Rose, is a beautiful flower, and the grey branched sprays of the Statice harmonise wonderfully with it. All along the vinery border has been a long row of Stocks, Asters, and Mignonette, and the scent has been delicious, especially towards evening, or after a warm shower of rain. In hot weather the garden is almost too hot when the sun is full upon it, and I have always taken care to grow the night-scented Stock and other flowers of the kind, so that the garden, as evening comes on, may be as sweet as can be; but this year these annuals, with several others, have done no good. On the other hand, the large tall Œnothera opens hundreds of yellow stars each night; and, better still, the beautiful Œnothera taraxacifolia, on the herbaceous borders, unfolds a number of its large white blossoms, which gleam out among the rich green foliage close upon the ground. Next year I think I will have an entire bed of this white Œnothera; it will be worth the space. The Dahlias have been good with me this year, but I have done badly in Hollyhocks. The Tobacco-plants, which I generally grow, and which were last year so handsome, have also failed me; and so have the Ice-Plants, the Eggplants, and the Amaranthus salicifolius, nor do I see any sufficient reason for it. The Tuberose, the flower which, even in the perfect garden of the "Sensitive Plant," was said to be "The sweetest flower for scent that grows," has been very sweet with us. But we dare not leave it in our garden; we bring the pots, with their tall green wands tipped with delicious tufts of bloom, into the centre hall, and the warm perfume rises up the staircase, and floats along the open gallery above.—I have just gathered from the wall between the vineries the finest blossom I ever happen to have seen of what I maintain is the finest flower in the world—the Magnolia grandiflora—so large and round is it, of such a rich cream colour, and with such a rich strong scent. The Tuberose even seems a plebeian flower by the side of the Magnolia. Once only have I seen this Magnolia growing upon a lawn as a standard, and I never saw any flowering tree so grand, as its dark green leaves lifted up the large white chalices to catch the freshest dews from heaven. But what must it be where this beautiful tree grows wild, as on the "Hills with high Magnolia overgrown," where Gertrude of Wyoming was used to wander? And, as I gather this Magnolia, the feeling comes across me that now the year is over as regards the garden. We may have another month of flowers, but they are the flowers that linger on, not the flowers that open out new pleasures for us; the Michaelmas Daisy alone remains,—for "the Michaelmas Daisy blows lonely and late,"—before we reach the Chrysanthemums and winter. We have now had all that summer and autumn had to give us, and it seems as though Nature had exhausted all her energies, and were ready for a long rest. The Fuchsias, that come up year by year, are still in great beauty. The Jasmine, with variegated leaves, that clings round an old brick pedestal in the middle of a Kalmia bed, still opens its white blossoms. The Escallonia, that grows up the house, will hang its red flowers in front of the library windows for a fortnight still to come.

But the year is virtually at an end, and we talk only of the bulbs for the spring, or of the moving of shrubs in the early winter. Yet I find two things, of which I have still to speak. The Asters have been good. I had planted them in among the standard Rose beds, and very gay they are. Many years have passed since I found the wild Aster of America growing on the hillside at Concord behind Hawthorne's house, and was reminded of Emerson's lines — "Chide me not, laborious band, For the idle flowers I brought; Every Aster in my hand Goes home loaded with a thought." Then, by the side of the vinery, is growing a little row of Indian Corn. The plants stand each from high, and each bears its flowering plume above, and its tasselled ears below. There are two varieties, one yellow and one red. I brought them on in heat, and planted them out when they were about a foot in height. This year, as for three years past, they have ripened with me, and on one plant, strangely enough, a piece of the flower has itself fructified! I am not botanist enough to understand how this has happened. St. Luke's Summer—The Orchard—The Barberry—White Haricot Beans— Transplanting—The Rockery. This is St. Luke's summer, or the "Indian summer" as it is called in America. The air is soft and warm and still. The yellow leaves fall from the Beeches in countless numbers, but slowly and noiselessly, and as if reluctant to let go their hold. The rooks come back to us again across the fields, and clamour among the empty nests, which were their homes in spring. The "remontant" Roses are putting out their latest blooms, and the Antirrhinums, Mulleins, and some few other flowers, show themselves "remontant" also. There is an aromatic fragrance everywhere from the withering leaves and from the lingering flowers. But there is sadness with it all. We cannot deceive ourselves, but we know that all is now over, and that at any moment the frost may come, and leave us nothing but decay and death. There are some lines in Morris's Earthly Paradise—the very best lines, I think, in the whole poem—which speak of some old men's last peaceful days, as "—like those days of later autumn-tide, When he who in some town may chance to bide Opens the window for the balmy air, And, seeing the golden hazy sky so fair, And from some city garden hearing still The wheeling rooks the air with music fill— Sweet, hopeful music—thinketh, Is this spring? Surely the year can scarce be perishing. But then he leaves the clamour of the town, And sees the withered scanty leaves fall down; The half-ploughed field, the flowerless garden plot; The full dark stream, by summer long forgot; The tangled hedges where, relaxed and dead, The twining plants their withered berries shed, And feels therewith the treachery of the sun, And knows the pleasant time is well-nigh done." Was picture ever more truly painted?—and any day it may be true for us. Our Apple harvest has been over for nearly a fortnight; but how pleasant the orchard was while it lasted, and how pleasant the seat in the corner by the Limes, whence we see the distant spire on the green wooded slopes. The grey, gnarled old Apple-trees have, for the most part, done well. The Ribston Pippins are especially fine, and so is an apple, which we believe to be the King of the Pippins.

On the other hand, we have some poor and worthless sorts—probably local varieties,—which no pomologist, however able and obliging, would undertake to name. One of the prettiest of Apples—and one of the best, too—is the Delaware. It has an orange-red colour, and reminds one almost of an Orange as it hangs upon the tree. It has a crisp, delicious flavour, but requires to be eaten as soon as it is ripe, for otherwise it soon gets mealy. Indeed all eating apples, with but few exceptions, are best when freshly gathered, or, better still, when, on some clear soft day, they have just fallen on the grass, and lie there, warmed by the rays of the autumn sun. Of my Pears I have not much to say: the new trees I have planted have hardly come into bearing, and the old ones are of inferior quality. In another year or two, however, I shall hope to be supplied through all the winter months up to the middle of the spring. Plums have done but little, and Damsons, which are supposed to succeed so well in Lancashire, are an absolute failure. I must not forget the Red Siberian Crab, which has been laden with fruit, and one tree of which should find its corner in every garden. Last of all, I have to speak of the Barberry. There is a great bush which stands by the grass walk in the walled garden. In the summer it was a mass of scented yellow blossoms, round which bees were always buzzing. Then, as the year grew older, bunches of bright coral hung over it from top to bottom. We consider our Barberries as not the least important of our fruit crop. We preserve them, some in bunches, some picked like Currants. We crystallize them in sugar, and they become delicious bonbons. We steep them in salt and water, and they keep as a gay garnish for cold meat or game. Our Barberry-tree is not looking its best at present; a big branch has withered, and I must cut it in.—Since I wrote we have had a great gale, which has swept over us, and torn down an Elm in the wood and a fine Chestnut in the croft. I could ill spare either of them, and it is but poor comfort to think that our piled-up logs will outlast the winter. It was the "wild west wind," of which Shelley sings, which has done the mischief; and smaller branches, lying scattered all over the lawn and walks, show us where it passed. We are now preparing our Mushroom bed, for we shall need it as the green vegetables fail us. I have said but little about the kitchen garden, for I do not suppose it differs much from that of other people. Our Peas have, however, served us particularly well, and we had our last dish on —later than I ever before have known them here. One excellent vegetable I have generally grown, and I would thoroughly recommend it to any one who has space to spare: it is the French White Haricot. It is not often seen with us though it is so very common in France. It is a species of French Bean, of which you eat the white bean itself instead of slicing up the pod. I suspect that, taking England through, there are very few gardens where the White Haricot is found. We are now busy with our planting. Some Rhododendrons and Aucubas in the borders near the front gate have been pining away—starved by the Elm-tree roots around them.

We are trenching up the ground, cutting away what smaller roots we can, and putting in manure and some new shrubs. We are planting a row of Hollies to screen a wall towards the lane. We are moving a Salisburia adiantifolia, with its strange foliage like a gigantic Maidenhair Fern, from a corner into a more prominent place. We shall then set to work to re-arrange the rockery. This, I think, I have never mentioned. In the middle of the little wood was once a pond, but I found the stagnant water and the soaking leaves, which fell and rotted there, no advantage to the place; I therefore drained away the water and planted beds of Azaleas and Rhododendrons along the slopes, with Primroses, Violets, and Blue Bells, and in the middle of all I have lately placed a tuft of Pampas-grass. On one slope I have managed a rockery with a stone tank in the centre, where for three summers past has flowered an Aponogeton distachyon. I have means of turning on fresh water into the tank, and I am well repaid for any trouble, as the little white boat-blossoms, laden with delicious spicy scent, rise up to the surface of their tiny lake. The rockery is, however, too much under the shade and drip of trees, and I cannot hope that delicate alpine flowers should grow there. Sedums and Saxifragas, Aquilegias, Aubrietias, the white Arabis, and the yellow Moneywort, besides Ferns of various kinds, all do well. In another part of the wood is a loggery, which I have entirely covered with the large white Bindweed, which rambles about at its own will, and opens its blossoms, sometimes a dozen at a time, all through the summer months. Past that, there is a little patch of Bluebells, then more beds of Rhododendrons, and then a short walk, which takes us by a private path to the village church, and then by another branch returns again towards the house. In this part of the grounds there is still room for planting, and I shall probably try some Tree Rhododendrons. A standard Honeysuckle, which I have endeavoured to grow, has done no good as yet; its shoots get nipped by the north-east winds, but I do not yet despair. The most useful undergrowth I find is the Elder; it thrives wonderfully, and is covered with blossom and with berry. One variety, the Parsley-leaved Elder, is here equally hardy with the common Elder, and much more graceful in its growth. We have now to take in our tender and half-hardy plants, for fear of a sudden frost. The large Myrtles, which have stood out in their boxes, must be placed in safety, and the Lobelia cardinalis and other bedding-plants, which we may need next year, must be removed. The Wood and the Withered Leaves—Statues—Sun-dials—The Snow—Plans for the Spring—Conclusion.—The soft autumn weather still spares what flowers the rains have left us, and here and there are signs as if of another spring. Violets along the grass walks, Strawberries in flower, and to-day a little yellow Brier Rose blossoming on an almost leafless spray, remind us of the early months of the year that is no more. But here, too, are some of the flowers of November. The Arbutus has again opened its bunches of waxen pink, and the Chrysanthemums are again blooming on the shrubbery beds. The year has all but completed its circle since first I wrote these notes, and I speak to-day of the flowers, the same, yet not the same,

as those of which I wrote eleven months ago. The trees have lost nearly every leaf, and our little wood is bare as the wood wherein poor Millevoye, so soon to die, once strolled when "De la dépouille de nos bois L'automne avait jonché la terre; Le bocage était sans mystère Le rossignol était sans voix." "The autumn's leafy spoil lay strewn The forest paths along; The wood had lost its haunted shade, The nightingale his song." Had there been in happier days a "mystère" beyond the charm of waving branches and whispering leaves? Another French poem on a withered leaf is better known, for it was Macaulay who translated Arnault's verses, and rendered the last three lines so perfectly:— "Je vais où va toute chose, Où va la feuille de Rose, Et la feuille de Laurier." "Thither go I, whither goes Glory's laurel, Beauty's rose." Among my ideas—I cannot call it plan, for my mind is not quite made up about it—I half fancy putting up a statue of some sort in a nook in the little wood, where the Beeches grow the tallest and the Elders are the thickest. Such things were once common, and then they got so common, and often so out of place, that they became absurd. Every villa garden had its statue and its rockery. Batty Langley has an amusing chapter about statues. He says—"Nothing adds so much to the beauty and grandeur of gardens as fine statues, and nothing is more disagreeable than when they are wrongly placed; as Neptune on a terrace walk, mound, &c.; or Pan, the god of sheep, in a large basin, canal, or fountain;" and then, "to prevent such absurdities," he gives the most elaborate directions. Mars and Jupiter, Fame and Venus, Muses and Fates, Atlas, Hercules, and many more, are for open centres or lawns. Sylvanus, Actæon, and Echo, are among those recommended for woods. Neptune, Oceanus, and the Naiades, will do for canals and fish-ponds. Pomona and the Hesperides for orchards, Flora and Runcina ("the goddess of weeding") for flower-gardens, Bacchus for vineyards, Æolus for high terrace walks, and "the goddess Vallonta" for valleys. He gives the right deities for paddocks, for wheat-fields, for "ambuscados," and for beehives. In short there is no place for which he does not think a statue ornamental and appropriate. I hope he would approve of my own very humble idea, which is a statue of Hyacinthus,—for, where I thought of placing it, the wild Hyacinths or Bluebells will come clustering up, and make the grass all blue. The poetry of gardens is so entirely neglected in these days of "bedding stuff," that it is well to do anything that can properly be done, without extravagance of taste or method, to revive it. In the inner garden I think also of placing a sun-dial, which would be in good keeping with the rather formal character of the beds. beautiful book on sun-dials should help me to a motto. They are of two sorts—the mottoes that warn, and the mottoes that console. "The night cometh," or "Pereunt et imputantur," are good examples of the one; "Horas non numero nisi serenas," or "Post tenebras lucem spero," are the best instances of the other. But there is a verse by, which (if I may so adapt it by a slight alteration in the second line) would make a finer inscription still— "See, the shadow on the dial, In the lot of every one, Marks the passing of the trial, Proves the presence of the sun."

—We wake to find snow all thick upon the ground, over lawn and flower-bed, and the children are out betimes rolling up huge snowballs on the grass. This snow is the best thing possible for the garden, for we have already had a night or two of sharp frost, which killed all it could reach of our herbaceous plants. "Autumn's last delights were nipped by early cold," as in the garden of Lord Houghton's "Old Manorial Hall," and the Dahlias and the Fuchsias were all shrivelled into brown unsightly tufts. We have covered up the Fig-trees on the wall. We have trenched up the shrubbery borders. We have done our last planting—a Catalpa in one place, a Paulownia in another—and some more fruit-trees in the orchard. We have planted our bulbs and sowed our autumn annuals for spring gardening. I was so pleased with the Nemophila bed of last May that I am repeating the experiment on a larger scale. I shall have one bed of Nemophila, and another of Virginian Stock. I shall have a bed of pink Saponaria edged with white. Along the Vine border I shall stretch a ribbon of white Saponaria, blue Myosotis, pink Silene, and many-coloured Sweet Peas. Then again, at the end of the grass walk, where it runs up against the hedge of the croft, I am fixing an arched trelliswork of wire, with a wire seat inside, and over it I shall train and trail the broad leaves of the Aristolochia and the scarlet blossoms of the Tropæolum speciosum. The vineries are of course at rest; but in them are Roman Hyacinths, now ready for the house, and pots of Polyanthus Narcissus will be also ready within a week. The porch of the house is filled on either side with stages of Chrysanthemums, and the fine glossy foliage of an Aralia looks well in the inside vestibule. And now I bring these notes to an end. My aim has been to show how much interest and pleasure may be gathered out of a garden of moderate pretensions, and with no great appliances in the way of glass, nor any advantage in the way of climate. I have endeavoured, too, to reclaim for our English gardens those old flowers, which Shakespeare and Milton and Marvell and Cowley loved. They have been far too long neglected for flowers, whose only charm is charm of colour and a certain evenness of growth. The ordinary bedded garden of to-day is as inferior to the Elizabethan gardens of old, as all gardens anywhere must be to the delights, which fancy conjures up in the enchanted gardens of Armida, or the bowered pleasance of Boccaccio. Meanwhile we can only do what best we can, and when all else fails we can say, like Candide, "Il faut cultiver notre jardin." And so I bid a hearty farewell to those readers, who for months past have followed the fortunes, and shared with me the hopes, of a year in a Lancashire garden. Flowering Shrubs—Yuccas—Memorial Trees—Ranunculus—Pansies—Canna Indica—Summer Flowers—Bluets—Fruit-blossoms and Bees—Strawberry Leaves—Garden Sounds—Mowing—Birds—The Swallow—Pleasures of a Garden. Almost more interesting than herbaceous plants are the flowering shrubs. Most beautiful of all, if, indeed, it may be called a shrub, is the Buddleia Globosa, in the inner garden, which I have already mentioned. When June draws to its close, it is laden with thousands of blossoms like little golden oranges, and fills the air with honied scent. It is the largest Buddleia I ever happen to have seen,

for it stands sixteen feet high, and stretches its branches over a round bed of blue Iris to a circumference of seventy feet. And just about the time when the Buddleia is in bloom, masses of the sweet homely English Elder, screening off the little wood, will perfume all the approach to the house. Common enough it is, but delightful in its dark foliage, its rich creamy blossoms, its clusters of purple berries. We do not make the use of it we should, and Elderberry water and Elderberry Wine are known to me by name alone, but the berries are excellent for tarts and puddings. One shrub which I planted a year or two ago has answered far better than I had any right to hope. It is the Desfontainea Spinosa. It is so like a holly that it puzzles everybody who sees, for the first time, the scarlet and yellow tubes of blossom which stand out among the prickly leaves. The year before last it flowered twice with me, but the cruel winter we have just had has cut it sadly, and it will be long before it will recover. I have spoken of trying whether by the planting of a second Arbutus I could make my beautiful old shrub fruit. The result has been quite successful, and I have had for two years past bright red berries hanging down among the pale waxen blossoms and the dark-green leaves. The Magnolia between the vineries has become prodigal of flowers as it has grown older, and last year I had no less than ten blossoms from it, and it is still young. The Magnolia (also a Grandiflora) on the house has also begun to flower, but I had nearly lost it altogether, and the story is rather a curious one. I had noticed that both it and other creepers were looking unhappy, and I could not guess the reason. The Escallonia showed bare branches in many places, the Ceanothus seemed shrunken and brown, and a Gloire de Dijon Rose did no good. At last it occurred to my gardener that the galvanised wire, which I had put up to avoid driving nails into the stone work of the windows, was to blame. I pulled it all down, coated it thickly over with paint, and, when it was again put up, all the creepers seemed to start into fresh life, and grew strong and vigorous. On a patch of green grass near the house stands a Yucca Gloriosa, which I am always hoping will flower, but it has never done so yet. Not long ago I was at a stately place in Shropshire, and at the end of a broad walk, where a circle of Yuccas had been planted, there were no less than five in full flower, throwing up pale jets of blossom, like fountains, towards the sky. I never saw anything more perfect in its way. But it is said that the right time to see a Yucca is by moonlight. There is a very striking passage in one of the letters of the most remarkable of American women, Margaret Fuller (afterwards Countess D'Ossoli), in which she says:— "This flower" (it was the Yucca Filamentosa) "was made for the moon as the Heliotrope is for the sun, and refuses other influences, or to display her beauty in any other light. Many white flowers are far more beautiful by day. The lily, for instance, with its firm thick leaf, needs the broadest light to manifest its purity, but these transparent leaves of greenish white,