
THE RAVEN'S
WARNINGS

As well as what shall become of the house and Infant during our absence, have formed a daily dialogue for the past fortnight, or I should say triologue, for Anastasia has decided opinions, and has turned into a brooding raven, informing us constantly of the disasters that have overtaken various residents of the place who have taken vacations, the head of one family having acquired typhoid in the Catskills, a second injured his spine at the seaside by diving in shallow water, while the third was mistaken for a moose in Canada and shot. However, her interest is comforting from the fact that she evidently does not wish to part with us at present. "It must be considered that if we take a really comfortable trip of a couple of months' duration, and Bart's chief is willing to allow him a three months' absence, as it will be his first real vacation since we were married six years ago, it will devour the entire sum that we have saved for improving the farm and garden. "You live on the place where you were born, which has developed by degrees like yourselves, yet you probably know that rescuing, not an abandoned farm but the abode of ancient and decayed gentility, even though the house is oak-ribbed Colonial, and making it a tangible home for a commuter, is not a cheap bit of work. "As to the Infant—to take a human four-and-a-half-year-old travelling, for the best part of a summer, is an imposition upon herself, her parents, and the public at large. To leave her with Bart's mother, whose forte is Scotch crossed with Pennsylvania Dutch discipline, will probably be to find on her return that she has developed a quaking fear of the dark; while, if she goes to my mother, bless her! who has the beautiful and soothing Southern genius for doing the most comfortable thing for the moment, regardless of consequences, the Infant for months after will expect to be sung to sleep, my hand cuddled against her cheek, until I develop laryngitis from continued vocal struggles with 'Ole Uncle Ned,' 'Down in de Cane Brake,' and 'De Possum and de Coon.' "This mental and verbal struggle was brought to an end yesterday by The Man from Everywhere. Do you remember, that was the title that we gave Ross Blake, the engineer, two summers ago, when you and Evan visited us, because he was continually turning up and always from some new quarter? Just now he has been put in charge of the construction of the reservoir that is to do away with our beloved piece of wild-flower river woods in the valley below Three Brothers Hills. "As usual he turned up unexpectedly with Bartram Saturday afternoon and 'made camp,' as a matter of course. A most soothing sort of person is this same Man from Everywhere, and a special dispensation to any woman whose husband's best friend he chances to be, as in my case, for a man who is as well satisfied with crackers, cheese, and ale as with your very best company spread, praises the daintiness of your guest chamber, but sleeps equally sound in a hammock swung in the Infant's attic play-room, is not to be met every day in this age of finnickiness. Then again he has the gift of saying the right thing at difficult moments, and meaning it too, and though a born rover, has an almost feminine sympathy for the little dilemmas of housekeeping that are so vital to us and yet are of no moment to the masculine mind. Yes, I do admire him immensely, and only wish I saw an opportunity of marrying him either into the family or the immediate neighbourhood, for though he is nearly forty, he is neither a misanthrope nor a woman hater, but rather seems to have set himself a difficult ideal and had limited opportunities. Once, not long ago, I asked him why he did not marry. 'Because,' he answered, 'I can only marry a perfectly frank woman, and the few of that clan I have met, since there has been anything in my pocket to back my wish, have always been married!' "'I have noticed that too,' said Bart, whom I did not know was listening; 'then there is nothing for us to do but find you a widow!' "'No, that will not do, either; I want born, not acquired, frankness, for that is only another term for expediency,' he replied with emphasis. "So you see this Man is not only somewhat difficult, but he has observed! "Last night after dinner, when the men drew their chairs toward the fire,

—for we still have one, though the windows are open,—and the fragrance from the bed of double English violets, that you sent me, mingled with the wood smoke, we all began to croon comfortably. As soon as he had settled back in the big chair, with closed eyes and finger tips nicely matched, we propounded our conundrum of taking three from two and having four remain. "A brief summary of the five years we have lived here will make the needs of the place more clear. "The first year, settling ourselves in the house and the arrival of the Infant completely absorbed ourselves, income, and a good bit of savings. Repairing the home filled the second year. The outdoor time and money of the third year was eaten up by an expensive and obliterative process called 'grading,' a trap for newly fledged landowners. This meant taking all the kinks and little original attitudes out of the soil and reproving its occasional shoulder shrugs, so to speak, —Delsarte methods applied to the earth,—and you know that Evan actually laughed at us for doing it. "Even in the beginning we didn't care much for this grading, but it was in the plan that father Penrose had made for us by a landscape gardener, renowned about Philadelphia at the time he gave us the place as a 'start in life,' so we felt in some way mysteriously bound by it. And I may as well assert right here that, though it is well to have a clear idea of what you mean to do in making a garden, or ever so small pleasure grounds, that every bit of labour, however trivial, may go toward one end and not have to be undone, a conventional plan unsympathetically made and blindly followed often becomes a cross between Fetish and Juggernaut. It has taken me exactly four years of blundering to find that you must live your garden life, find out and study its peculiarities and necessities yourself, just as you do that of your indoor home, if success is to be the result! "As it was, the grading began behind the lilac bushes inside the front fence and proceeded in fairly graceful sweeps, dividing each side of the level bit where the old garden had been, the still remaining boxwood bushes and outlines of walks and beds, saving this from obliteration, and meeting again at the drying yard. "Here the proceeding stopped abruptly, as if it had received a shock, which it had, as at this point the family purse wholly collapsed with a shudder, for the next requirement of the plan was the turning of a long crest of rocky woodland, shaped like a three-humped camel, that bounded us on the northwest, into a series of terraces, to render the assent from a somewhat trim residential section to the pastures of the real farming country next door less abrupt. "In its original state this spur of woodland had undoubtedly been very beautiful, with hemlocks making a windbreak, and all manner of shrubs, wild herbs, and ferns filling in the leaf-mould pockets between the boulders. Now it is bare of everything except a few old hemlocks that sweep the pasture and the rocks, wandering cattle and excursionists from the village, during the 'abandoned' period of the place, having caused havoc among the shrubs and ferns. "Various estimates have been given, but seemed to be the average for carrying out the terrace plan even partially, as much blasting is involved, and is exactly one-fourth of the spendable part of Bart's yearly earnings! "The flower garden also cries for proper raiment, for though the original lines have been preserved and the soil put in a satisfactory shape, in lieu of the hardy plants and old-time favourites that belong to such a place, in emergency we were reduced, last summer, to the quick-growing but monotonous bedding plants for fillers. Can you imagine anything more jarring and inconsistent than cannas, castor-oil beans, coleus, and nasturtiums in a prim setting of box? "Then, too, last Christmas, Bart's parents sent us a dear old sundial, with a very good fluted column for a base. The motto reads 'Never consult me at night,' which Bart insists is an admonition for us to keep, chickenlike, early hours! Be this as it may, in order to live up to the dial, the beds that form its court must be consistently clothed—for cannas, coleus, and beans, read peonies, Madonna lilies, sweet-william, clove-pinks, and hollyhocks, which latter the seed bed I hope will duly furnish. "All these details, and more too, I poured into the ears of The Man from Everywhere,

while Bart kept rather silent, but I could tell by the way his pipe breathed, short and quick, that he was thinking hard. One has to be a little careful in talking over plans and wishes with Bart; his spirit is generous beyond his pocket-power and he is a bit sensitive. He wants to do so much for the Infant, the home, and me, that when desire outruns the purse, he seems to feel that the limit lies somewhere within the range of his own incapacity, and that bare, camelbacked knoll outlining the horizon, as seen from the dining-room window, showing the roof of the abandoned barn and hen yards, and the difficulty of wrestling with it, is an especially tender spot. "'If it was anything possible, I'd hump my back and do it, but it isn't!' he jerked, knocking his pipe against the chimney-side before it was half empty and then refilling it; 'it's either a vacation or the knoll—which shall it be? "'I don't hanker after leaving home, but that's what a complete change means, I suppose, though I confess I should enjoy a rest for a time from travelling to and fro, like a weaver's shuttle! Mary hates to leave home too; she's a regular sit-bythe-fire! Come, which shall it be? This indecision makes the cure worse than the disease!' and Bart fingered a penny prior to giving it the decisive flip—'head, a vacation; tail, an attack on the knoll!' The penny spun, and then taking a queer backward leap fell into the ashes, where it lay buried. "'That reads like neither!' said Bart, sitting up with a start. "'No, both!' replied The Man from Everywhere, opening his eyes and gazing first at Bart and then at me with a quizzical expression. "Instantly curiosity was piqued, for compared to this most domestic of travelled bachelors, the Lady from Philadelphia was without either foresight or resources. "'You said that your riddle was to take three from two and have four. My plan is very simple; just add three to two and you have not only four but five! Take a vacation from business, but stay at home; do your own garden improvements with your head and a horse and cart and a pair of strong hands with a pick and spade to help you out, for you can't, with impunity, turn an office man, all of a sudden, into a day labourer. As to hewing the knoll into terraces up and down again, tear up that confounded plan. Restore the ground on nature's lines, and you'll have a better windbreak for your house and garden in winter than the best engineer could construct, besides having a retreat for hot weather where you can sit in your bones without being observed by the neighbours!' "He spoke very slowly, letting the smoke wreaths float before his eyes, as if in them he sought the solution he was voicing. "'A terrace implies closely shorn turf and formal surroundings, out of keeping with this place; besides, young people with only a general maid and a useful man can't afford to be formal,—if they would, the game isn't worth the strain.' (Did I not tell you that he observes?) "'Let us take a look at the knoll to-morrow and see what has grown there and guess at what may be coaxed to grow, and then you can spend a couple of months during this summer and autumn searching the woods and byways for native plants for the restoration. This reservoir building is your opportunity; you can rob the river valley with impunity, for the clearing will begin in October, consequently anything you take will be in the line of a rescue. So there you are —living in the fresh air, improving your place, and saving money at both ends.' "'By George! It sounds well, as far as I'm concerned!' ejaculated Bart, 'but how will such a scheme give Mary a vacation from housekeeping and the everlasting three meals a day? She seldom growls, but the last month she too has confessed to feeling tired.' "'I think it's a perfectly fascinating idea, but how will it give Bart a "complete change, away from the sound of the beat of time," as the doctor puts it?' I asked with more eagerness than I realized, for I always dislike to be far away from home at night, and you see there has been whooping cough in the neighbourhood and there are also green apples to be reckoned with in season, even though the Infant has long ago passed safely through the mysteries of the second summer. "The Man from Everywhere did not answer Bart at all,

but, turning to me with the air of a paternal sage and pointing an authoritative forefinger, said, somewhat sarcastically, I thought, 'What greater change can an American have than leisure in which to enjoy his own home? For giving Time the slip, all you have to do is to stop the clocks and follow the sun and your own inclinations. As to living out of doors, the old open-sided hay barn on the pasture side of the knoll, that you have not decided whether to rebuild or tear down, will make an excellent camp. Aside from the roof, it is as open as a hawk's nest. Don't hurry your decision; incubate the idea over Sunday, Madam Penrose, and I'll warrant by Monday you will have hatched a really tangible plan, if not a brood of them.' "I looked at Bart, he nodded back approvingly, so I slipped out, first to see that the Infant was sleeping properly, head up, and not down under the clothes, as I had once found her, and then to walk to and fro under the budding stars for inspiration, leaving the pair to talk the men's talk that is so good and nourishing for a married man like Bart, no matter how much he cares for the Infant and me. "Jumbled up as the garden is, the spring twilight veils all deficiencies and releases persuasive odours from every corner, while the knoll, with its gnarled trees outlined against the sky, appealed to me as never before, a thing desirable and to be restored and preserved even at a cost rather than obliterated. "'Oh, Mrs. Evan, I wish I could tell you how The Man's plan touches me and seems made for me especially this spring. I seem fairly to have a passion for home and the bit of earth about and sky above it that is all our own. And unlike other times when I loved to have my friends come and visit me, and share and return the hospitality of neighbours, I want to be alone with myself and Bart, to spend long days under the sky and trees and have nothing come between our real selves and God, not even the ticking and dictation of a clock! There is so much that I want to tell my husband just now, that cannot be put in words, and that he may only read by intuition. When I was younger and first married, I did not feel this need so much, but now life seems to take on so much deeper a meaning! Do you understand? Ah, yes, I know you do! But I am wandering from the point, just as I yearn to wander from all the stringencies of life this summer. "Evidently seeing me, the Rural Delivery man whistled from his cart, instead of leaving the evening mail in its wren box, as usual. I went to the gate rather reluctantly, I was so absorbed in garden dreams, took the letters from the carrier, and, as the men were still sitting in the dark, carried them up to the lamp in my own sitting room, little realizing that even at that moment I was holding the key to the 'really tangible plan' in my hand. "The next morning. Two of the letters I received on Saturday night would have been of great importance if we were still planning to go away for a vacation, instead of hoping to stay at home for it. The first, from mother, told me that she and my brother expect to spend the summer in taking a journey, in which Alaska is to be the turning-point. She begs us to go with them and offers to give me her right-hand-reliable, Jane McElroy, who cared for me when a baby, to stay here with the Infant. The second letter was from Maria Maxwell, a distant cousin of Bart's. She has also heard of our intended vacation,—indeed the rapidity with which the news travels and the interest it causes are good proofs of our stay-athome tendencies and the general sobriety of our six years of matrimony! "Maria is a very bright, adaptable woman of about thirty-five, who teaches music in the New York public schools, is alone in the world, and manages to keep an attractive home in a mere scrap of a flat. When she comes to visit us, we like her as well the last day of her stay as the first, which fact speaks volumes for her character! Though forced by circumstances to live in town, she has a deep love for the country, and wishes, if we intend to leave the house open,

to come and care for it in our absence, even offering to cook for herself if we do not care to have the expense of a maid, saying, 'to cook a real meal, with a real fire instead of gas, will be a great and refreshing change for me, so you need feel under no obligation whatever!' "Thinking of the pity of wasting such tempting offers as these, I went to church with my body only, my mind staying outside under a horse-chestnut tree, and instead of listening as I should, I looked sidewise out of the window at my double in the shade and wondered if, after all, the stay-at-home vacation was not a wild scheme. There being a Puritan streak in me, via my father, I sometimes question the right of what I wish to do simply because I like to do it. "At dinner I was so grumpy, answering in monosyllables, that sensitive Bart looked anxious, and as if he thought I was disappointed at the possible turn of affairs, but The Man from Everywhere laughed, saying, 'Let her alone; she is not through incubating the plan, and you know the best of setting hens merely cluck and growl when disturbed.' "Immediately after dinner Bart and The Man went for a walk up the river valley, and I, going to the living room, seated myself by the window, where I could watch the Infant playing on the gravel outside, it being the afternoon out of both the general maid Anastasia and Barney the man, between whom I suspect matrimonial intentions. "The singing of the birds, the hum of bees in the opening lilacs, and the garden fragrance blending with the Infant's prattle, as she babbled to her dolls, floated through the open door and made me drowsy, and I turned from the light toward the now empty fireplace. "A snap! and the air seemed suddenly exhilarating! Was it an electric spark from the telephone? No, simply the clarifying of the thoughts that had been puzzling me. "Maria Maxwell shall come during our vacations,—at that moment I decided to separate the time into several periods,—she shall take entire charge of all within doors. "Bart and I will divide off a portion of the old hay-barn with screens, and camp out there (unless in case of very bad thunder or one of the cold July storms that we sometimes have). Anastasia shall serve us a very simple hot dinner at noon in the summer kitchen, and keep a supply of cooked food in the pantry, from which we can arrange our breakfasts and suppers in the opposite side of the barn from our sleeping place, and there we can have a table, chairs, and a little oil stove for making tea and coffee. "Maria, besides attending to domestic details, must also inspect the mail and only show us letters when absolutely necessary, as well as to say 'not at home,' with the impenetrable New York butler manner to every one who calls. "Thus Bart and I will be equally free without the rending of heart strings—free to love and enjoy home from without, for it is really strange when one comes to think of it, we learn of the outside world by looking out the windows, but we so seldom have time to stand in another view-point and look in. Thus it occurred to me, instead of taking one long vacation, we can break the time into three or four in order to follow the garden seasons and the work they suggest. A bit at the end of May for both planning and locating the spring wild flowers before they have wholly shed their petals, and so on through the season, ending in October by the transplanting of trees and shrubs that we have marked and in setting out the hardy roses, for which we shall have made a garden according to the plan that Aunt Lavinia says is to be among the early Garden, You, and I records. "Maria Maxwell has joyfully agreed to come the twenty-first, having obtained a substitute for her final week of teaching, as well as rented her 'parlor car,' as she calls her flat, to a couple of students who come from the South for change of air and to attend summer school at Columbia College. It seems that many people look upon New York as a summer watering place. Strange that a difference in climate can be merely a matter of point of view. "Now that we have decided to camp out at home, we are beginning to realize the positive economy of the arrangement,

for as we are not going among people,— neither are they coming to us,—we shall need no new clothes! "We, a pair of natural spendthrifts, are actually turning miserly for the garden's sake. "Last night Bart went to the attic with a lantern and dragged from obscurity two frightful misfit suits of the first bicycle cuff-on-the-pants period, that were ripening in the camphor chest for future missionary purposes, announcing that these, together with some flannel shirts, would be his summer outfit, while this morning I went into town and did battle at a sale of substantial, dollar shirtwaists, and turning my back upon all the fascinations of little girls' frills and furbelows, bought stout gingham for aprons and overalls, into which I shall presently pop the Infant, and thus save both stitches and laundry work. "Mother has sent a note expressing her pleasure in our plan and enclosing a cheque for $50, suggesting that it should be put into a birthday rose bed—my birthday is in two days—in miniature like the old garden at her home on the north Virginia border. I'm sending you the list of such roses as she remembered that were in it, but I'm sure many, like Gloire de Dijon, would be winter killed here. Will you revise the list for me? "Bart has arranged to shut off the back hall and stairs, so that when we wish, we can get to our indoor bedroom and bath at any hour without going through the house or disturbing its routine. "Anastasia has been heard to express doubts as to our entire sanity confidentially to Barney, on his return from the removal of two cots from the attic to the part of the barn enclosed by some old piazza screens, thereby publicly declaring our intention of sleeping out in all seasonable weather. " The Blakes, next door below, are going to Europe, and have offered us their comfortable family horse, the buggy, and a light-work wagon, if we will feed, shoe, pet, and otherwise care for him (his name, it seems, is Romeo). Could anything be more in keeping with both our desires and needs? "To-day, half as a joke, I've sent out. cards to all our formal friends in the county. Bart frowns, saying that they may be taken seriously and produce like results! " Maria has arrived, taken possession of the market-book, housekeeping box, and had a satisfactory conference with Anastasia. "Hurrah for Liberty and outdoors! It begins to-morrow. You may label it Their Garden Vacation, and admit it to the records of The Garden, You, and I, at your own risk and peril; but as you say that if you are to boil down the practical part of your garden-boke experiences for the benefit of Aunt Lavinia and me and I must send you my summer doings, I shall take this way of accomplishing it, at intervals, the only regular task, if gossiping to you can be so called, that I shall set myself this summer. "A new moon to-night. Will it prove a second honeymoon, think you, or end in a total eclipse of our venture? I'm poppy sleepy! "May. (A postal.) Starting on vacation; stopped bedroom clock and put away watches last night, and so overslept. It seems quite easy to get away from Time! Please tell me what annuals I can plant as late in the season as this, while we are locating the rose bed. "MARY PENROSE." A garden vacation! Fifty dollars to spend for roses! What annuals may be planted now to tide you easily over the summer? Really, Mary Penrose, the rush of your astonishing letter completely took away my breath, and while I was recovering it by pacing up and down the wild walk, and trying to decide whether I should answer your questions first, and if I did which one, or ask you others instead, Scotch fashion, about your unique summer plans, Evan came home a train earlier than usual, with a pair of horticultural problems for which he needed an immediate solution. Last evening, in the working out of these schemes, we found that we were really travelling on lines parallel with your needs, and so in due course you shall have Evan's prescription and design for A Simple Rose Garden (if it isn't simple enough, you can begin with half, as the proportions will be the same), while I now send you my plans for an inexpensive midsummer garden, which will be useful to you only as a part of the whole chain, but for which Evan has a separate need. Over at East Meadow, a suburb of Bridgeton that lies toward the shore and is therefore attractive to summer people,

a friend of Evan's has put up a dozen tasteful, but inexpensive, Colonial cottages, and Evan has planned the grounds that surround them, about an acre being allotted to each house, for lawn and garden of summer vegetables, though no arbitrary boundaries separate the plots. The houses are intended for people of refined taste and moderate means who, only being able to leave town during the school vacation, from middle June to late September, yet desire to have a bit of garden to tend and to have flowers about them other than the decorative but limited piazza boxes or row of geraniums around the porch. The vegetable gardens consist of four squares, conveniently intersected by paths, these squares to be edged by annuals or bulbs of rapid growth, things that, planted in May, will begin to be interesting when the tenants come a month later. But here am I, on the verge of rushing into another theme, without having expressed our disappointment that you cannot bear us company this summer, yet I must say that the edge of regret is somewhat dulled by my interest in the progress and result of your garden vacation, which to us at least is a perfectly unique idea, and quite worthy of the inventive genius of The Man from Everywhere. Plainly do I see by the scope of this same letter of yours that the records of The Garden, You, and I, instead of being a confection of undistinguishable ingredients blended by a chef of artistic soul, will be a home-made strawberry shortcake, for which I am to furnish the necessary but uninspired crust, while you will supply the filling of fragrant berries. With the beginning of your vacation begin my questions domestic that threaten to overbalance your questions horticultural. If the Infant should wail at night, do you expect to stay quietly out "in camp" and not steal on tiptoe to the house, and at least peep in at the window? Also, you have put a match-making thought in a head swept clean of all such clinging cobwebs since Sukey Crandon married Carthy Latham and, turning their backs on his ranch experiment, they decided to settle near the Bradfords at the Ridge, where presently there will be another garden growing. If you have no one either in the family or neighbourhood likely to attract The Man from Everywhere, why may we not have him? Jane Crandon is quite unexpectedly bright, as frank as society allows, this being one of his requirements, besides having grown very pretty since she has virtually become daughter to and had sufficient material in her gowns to allow her chest to develop. But more of this later; to return to the annuals, I understand that you have had your hardy beds prepared and that you want something to brighten them, as summer tenants, until early autumn, when the permanent residents may be transplanted from the hardy seed bed. Annuals make a text fit for a very long sermon. Verily there are many kinds, and the topic forms easily about a preachment, for they may be divided summarily into two classes, the worthy and the unworthy, though the worth or lack of it in annuals, as with most of us humans, is a matter of climate, food, and environment, rather than inherent original sin. The truth is, nature, though eternally patient and good-natured, will not be hurried beyond a certain point, and the life of a flower that is born under the light cloud shelter of English skies, fed by nourishing mist through long days that have enough sunlight to stimulate and not scorch, has a different consummation than with us, where the climate of extremes makes the perfection of flowers most uncertain, at least in the months of July and August when the immature bud of one day is the open, but often imperfect, flower of the next. As no one may change climatic conditions, the only thing to be done is to give to this class of flowers of the summer garden room for individual development, all the air they need to breathe both below ground, by frequent stirring of the soil, and above, by avoidance of overcrowding, and then select only those varieties that are really worth while. This qualification can best be settled by pausing and asking three questions, when confronting the alluring portrait of an above-the-average specimen of annual in a catalogue, for Garden Goozle applies not only to the literature of the subject, but to the pictures as well, and a measurement of, for instance, a flower stalk of Drummond phlox, taken from a specimen pot-grown plant, raised at least partly under glass,

is sure to cause disappointment when the average border plant is compared with it. First—is the species of a colour and length of flowering season to be used in jungle-like masses for summer colour? Second—has it fragrance or decorative quality for house decoration? Thirdly, has it the backbone to stand alone or will the plant flop and flatten shapelessly at the first hard shower and so render an array of conspicuous stakes necessary? Stakes, next to unsightly insecticides and malodorous fertilizers, are the bane of gardening, but that subject is big enough for a separate chronicle. By ability to stand alone, I do not mean is every branchlet stiff as if galvanized, like a balsam, for this is by no means pretty, but is the plant so constructed that it can languish gracefully, petunia fashion, and not fall over stark and prone like an uprooted castor bean. Hybridization, like physical culture in the human, has evidently infused grace in the plant races, for many things that in my youth seemed the embodiment of stiffness, like the gladiolus, have developed suppleness, and instead of the stiff bayonet spike of florets, this useful and indefatigable bulb, if left to itself and not bound to a stake like a martyr, now produces flower sprays that start out at right angles, curve, and almost droop, with striking, orchid-like effect. For making patches of colour, without paying special heed to the size of flower or development of individual plants, annuals may be sown thinly broadcast, raked in lightly, and, if the beds or borders are not too wide for reaching, thinned out as soon as four or five leaves appear. Portulaca, sweet alyssum, Shirley poppies, and the annual gaillardias belong to this class, as well as single petunias of the inexpensive varieties used to edge shrubberies, and dwarf nasturtiums. Sweet peas, of course, are to be sown early and deep, where they are to stand half an inch apart, like garden peas, and then thinned out so that there is not less than an inch between (two is better, but it is usually heartbreaking to pull up so many sturdy pealets) and reënforced by brush or wire trellising. Otherwise I plant the really worthy, or what might be called major annuals, in a seed bed much like that used for the hardy plants, at intervals during the month of May, according to the earliness of the season, and the time they are wanted to bloom. Later, I transplant them to their summer resting places, leaving those that are not needed, for it is difficult to calculate too closely without scrimping, in the seed bed, to cut for house decoration, as with the perennials. Of course if annuals are desired for very early flowering, many species may be started in a hotbed and taken from thence to the borders. Biennials that it is desired shall flower the first season are best hurried in this way, yet for the gardenerless garden of a woman this makes o'er muckle work. The occasional help of the "general useful" is not very efficient when it comes to tending hotbeds, giving the exact quantity of water necessary to quench the thirst of seedlings without producing dropsy, and the consequent "damping off" which, when it suddenly appears, seems as intangible and makes one feel as helpless as trying to check a backing horse by helpless force of bit. A frame for Margaret carnations, early asters, and experiments in seedling Dahlias and chrysanthemums will be quite enough. The woman who lives all the year in the country can so manage that her spring bulbs and hardy borders, together with the roses, last well into July. After this the annuals must be depended upon for ground colour, and to supplement the phloxes, gladioli, Dahlias, and the like. By the raising of these seeds in hotbeds they are apt to reach their high tide of bloom during the most intense heat of August, when they quickly mature and dry away; while, on the other hand, if they are reared in an open-air seed bed, they are not only stronger but they last longer, owing to more deliberate growth. Asters sown out-of-doors in May bloom well into October, when the forced plants barely outlast August. Of many annuals it is writ in the catalogues, "sow at intervals of two weeks or a month for succession." This sounds very plausible, for are not vegetables so dealt with, the green string-beans in our garden being always sown every two weeks from early April until September first? Yes, but to vegetables is usually given fresher and deeper soil for the crop succession than falls to flower seeds,

and in addition the seeds are of a more rugged quality. My garden does not take kindly to this successive sowing, and I have gradually learned to control the flower-bearing period by difference in location. Spring, and in our latitude May, is the time of universal seed vitality, and seeds germinating then seem to possess the maximum of strength; in June this is lessened, while a July-sown seed of a common plant, such as a nasturtium or zinnia, seems to be impressed by the lateness of the season and often flowers when but a few inches high, the whole plant having a weazened, precocious look, akin to the progeny of people, or higher animals, who are either born out of due season or of elderly parents. On the other hand, the plant retarded in its growth by a less stimulating location, when it blooms, is quite as perfect and of equal quality with its seed-bed fellows who were transplanted at once into full sunlight. Take, for example, mignonette, which in the larger gardens is always treated by successive sowings. A row sown early in April, in a sunny spot in the open garden and thinned out, will flower profusely before very hot weather, bloom itself out, and then leave room for some late, flowering biennial. That sown in the regular seed bed early in May may be transplanted (for this is the way by which large trusses of bloom may be obtained) early in June into three locations, using it as a border for taller plants, except in the bed of sweet odours, where it may be set in bunches of a dozen plants, for in this bed individuality may be allowed to blend in a universal mass of fragrance. In order to judge accurately of the exact capabilities for shade or sunlight of the different portions of a garden, one must live with it, follow the shadows traced by the tree fingers on the ground the year through, and know its moods as the expressions that pass over a familiar face. For you must not transplant any of these annuals, that only live to see their sun father for one brief season, into the shade of any tree or overhanging roof, but at most in the travelling umbra of a distant object, such as a tall spruce, the northeastern side of a hedge, or such like. In my garden one planting of mignonette in full sun goes in front of the Marchplanted sweet peas; of the two transplantings from the seed, one goes on the southwest side of the rose arbour and the other on the upper or northeast side, where it blooms until it is literally turned into green ice where it stands. This manipulation of annuals belongs to the realm of the permanent resident; the summer cottager must be content to either accept the conditions of the garden as arranged by his landlord, or in a brief visit or two made before taking possession, do his own sowing where the plants are to stand. In this case let him choose his varieties carefully and spare his hand in thickness of sowing, and he may have as many flowers for his table and as happy an experience with the summer garden, even though it is brief, as his wealthy neighbour who spends many dollars for bedding plants and foliage effects that may be neither smelled, gathered nor familiarized. Among all the numerous birds that flit through the trees as visitors, or else stay with us and nest in secluded places, how comparatively few do we really depend upon for the aerial colour and the song that opens a glimpse of Eden to our eager eyes and ears each year, for our eternal solace and encouragement? There are some, like the wood thrush, song-sparrow, oriole, robin, barn-swallow, catbird, and wren, without which June would not be June, but an imperfect harmony lacking the dominant note. Down close to the earth, yes, in the earth, the same obtains. Upon how few of all the species of annuals listed does the real success of the summer garden rest? This is more and more apparent each year, when the fittest are still further developed by hybridization for survival and the indifferent species drop out of sight. We often think erroneously of the beauty of old-time gardens. This beauty was largely that of consistency of form with the architecture of the dwelling and simplicity, rather than the variety, of flowers grown. Maeterlinck brings this before us with forcible charm in his essay on Old-Fashioned Flowers, and even now Martin Cortright is making a little biography of the flowers of our forefathers,

as a birthday surprise for Lavinia. These flowers depended more upon individuality and association than upon their great variety. First among the worthy annuals come sweet peas, mignonette, nasturtiums, and asters, each one of the four having two out of the three necessary qualifications, and the sweet pea all of them,—fragrance and decorative value for both garden and house. To be sure, the sweet pea, though an annual, must be planted before May if a satisfactory, well-grown hedge with flowers held on long stems well above the foliage is to be expected, and in certain warm, well-drained soils it is practicable to sow seed the autumn before. This puts the sweet pea a little out of the running for the hirer of a summer cottage, unless he can have access to the place early in the season, but sown thinly and once fairly rooted and kept free from dead flowers and pods, the vines will go on yielding quite through September, though on the coming of hot weather the flower stems shorten. I often plant seeds of the climbing nasturtium in the row with the sweet peas at a distance of one seed to the fist, the planting not being done until late May. The peas mature first, and after the best of their season has passed they are supplanted by the nasturtiums, which cover the dry vines and festoon the supporting brush with gorgeous colour in early autumn, keeping in the same colour scheme with salvia, sunflowers, gaillardias, and tritomas. This is excellent where space is of account, and also where more sweet peas are planted for their early yield than can be kept in good shape the whole season. Centaurea or cornflower, the bachelor's button or ragged sailor of old gardens, is in the front rank of the worthies. The flowers have almost the keeping qualities of everlastings, and are of easy culture, while the sweet sultan, also of this family, adds fragrance to its other qualities. The blue cornflower is best sown in a long border or bed of unconventional shape, and may be treated like a biennial, one sowing being made in September so that the seedlings will make sturdy tufts before cold weather. These, if lightly covered with salt hay or rough litter (not leaves), will bloom in May and June, and if then replaced by a second sowing, flowers may be had from September first until freezing weather, so hardy is this true, blue Kaiser-blumen. All the poppies are worthy, from the lovely Shirley, with its butterfly-winged petals, to the Eschscholtzia, the state flower of California. One thing to be remembered about poppies is not to rely greatly upon their durability and make the mistake of expecting them to fill too conspicuous a place, or keep long in the marching line of the garden pageant. They have a disappointing way, especially the great, long-stemmed double varieties, of suddenly turning to impossible party-coloured mush after a bit of damp weather that is most discouraging. Treated as mere garden episodes and massed here and there where a sudden disappearance will not leave a gap, they will yield a feast of unsurpassed colour. To me the Shirley is the only really satisfactory annual poppy, and I sow it in autumn and cover it after the fashion of the cornflower, as it will survive anything but an open, rainy winter, and in the resulting display that lasts the whole month of June it rivals the roses in everything but perfume. Godetia is a good flower for half-shady places that it is difficult to fill, and rings the colour change from white through pink to crimson and carmine. Marigolds hold their own for garden colour, but not for gathering or bringing near the nose, and zinnias meet them on the same plane. The morning-glory tribe of ipomæa is both useful and decorative for rapidgrowing screens, but heed should be taken that the common varieties be not allowed to scatter their seeds at random, or the next season, before you know it, every plant in the garden will be held tight in their insinuating grasp. Especially beautiful are the new Imperial Japanese morning glories that are exquisitely margined and fringed, and of the size and pattern of rare glass wine cups. Petunias, if judiciously used, and of good colour, belong in the second grade of the first rank. They have their uses, but the family has a morbid tendency to run to sad, half-mourning hues, and I have put a black mark against it as far as my own garden is concerned. Drummond phlox deserves especial mention, for so wide a colour range has it,

and so easy is its growth (if only you give it plenty of water and elbow room, and remember that a crowded Drummond phlox is an unhappy plant of short life), that a very tasteful group of beds could be made of this flower alone by a careful selection of colours, while by constant cutting for the house the length of the blooming season is prolonged. The dwarf salvias, too, grow readily from seed, and balsams, if one has room, line up finely along straight walks, the firm blossoms of the camelia-flowered variety, with their delicate rosettes of pink, salmon, and lavender, also serving to make novel table decorations when arranged in many ways with leaves of the laurel, English ivy, or fern fronds. Portulaca, though cousin to the objectionable "pusley," is most useful where mere colour is wanted to cover the ground in beds that have held early tulips or other spring bulbs, as well as for covering dry, sandy spots where little else will grow. It should not be planted until really warm weather, and therefore may be scattered between the rows of narcissi and late tulips when their tops are cut off, and by the time they are quite withered and done away with, the cheerful portulaca, feeding upon the hottest sunbeams, will begin to cover the ground, a pleasure to the eye as well as a decorative screen to the bulbs beneath, sucking the fiercest sun rays before they penetrate. Chief among the low-growing worthies comes the verbena, good for bedding, good for cutting, and in some of the mammoth varieties subtly fragrant. Verbenas may be raised to advantage in a hotbed, but if the seed be soaked overnight in warm water, it will germinate freely out of doors in May and be a mass of bloom from July until late October. For beds grouped around a sundial or any other garden centre, the verbena has no peer; its trailing habit gives it grace, the flowers are borne erect, yet it requires no staking and it is easily controlled by pinching or pinning to the soil with stout hairpins. One little fragrant flower, fraught with meaning and remembrance, belongs to the annuals, though its family is much better known among the half-hardy perennials that require winter protection here. This is the gold and brown annual wall-flower, slender sister of die gelbe violet, and having that same subtle violet odour in perfect degree. It cannot be called a decorative plant, but it should have plenty of room given it in the bed of sweet odours and be used as a border on the sunny side of wall or fence, where, protected from the wind and absorbing every ray of autumn sunlight, it will often give you at least a buttonhole bouquet on Christmas morning. The cosmos is counted by catalogues and culturists one of the most worthy of the newer annuals, and so it is when it takes heed to its ways and behaves its best, but otherwise it has all the terrible uncertainty of action common to human and garden parvenues. From the very beginning of its career it is a conspicuous person, demanding room and abundance of food. Thinking that its failure to bloom until frost threatened was because I had sown the seed out of doors in May, I gave it a front room in my very best hotbed early in March, where, long before the other occupants of the place were big enough to be transplanted, and family pushed their heads against the sash and insisted upon seeing the world. Once in the garden, they throve mightily, and early in July, at a time when I had more flowers than I needed, the entire row threatened to bloom. After two weeks of coquettish showing of colour here and there, up and down the line, they concluded that midsummer sun did not agree with any of the shades of pink, carmine, or crimson of which their clothes were fashioned, and as for white, the memory of recent acres of field daisies made it too common, so they changed their minds and proceeded to grow steadily for two months. When they were pinched in on top, they simply expanded sidewise; ordinary and inconspicuous staking failed to restrain them, and they even pulled away at different angles from poles of silver birch with stout rope between, like a festive company of bacchantes eluding the embraces of the police. A heavy wind storm in late September snapped and twisted their hollow trunks and branches. Were they discouraged? Not a particle; they simply rested comfortably upon whatever they had chanced to fall and grew again from this new basis.

Meanwhile the plants in front of them and on the opposite side of the way began to feel discouraged, and a fine lot of asters, now within the shadow, were attacked by facial paralysis and developed their blossoms only on one side. The middle of October, the week before the coming of Black Frost, the garden executioner, the cosmos, now heavy with buds, settled down to bloom. Two large jars were filled with them, after much difficulty in the gathering, and then the axe fell. Sometimes, of course, they behave quite differently, and those who can spare ground for a great hedge backed by wall or fence and supported in front by pea brush deftly insinuated betwixt and between ground and plants, so that it restrains, but is at the same time invisible, may feast their eyes upon a spectacle of billows of white and pink that, at a little distance, are reminiscent of the orchards of May. But if you, Mary Penrose, are leaning toward cosmos and reading in the seed catalogue of their size and wonderful dawn-like tints, remember that the best of highly hybridized things revert unexpectedly to the commonest type, and somewhere in this family of lofty Mexicans there must have been a totally irresponsible wayside weed. Then turn backward toward the front of the catalogue, find the letter A, and buy, in place of cosmos, aster seeds of every variety and colour that your pocket will allow. Of course the black golden-rod beetle may try to dwell among the aster flowers, and the aphis that are nursery maids to the ants infest their roots; you must pick off the one and dig sulphur and unslaked lime deeply into the soil to discourage the other, but whatever labour you spend will not be lost. Other annuals there are, and their name is legion, that are pretty enough, perhaps, and well adapted to special purposes, like the decorative and curious tassel flower, cockscombs, gourds, four o'clocks, etc., and the great tribe of "everlastings" for those people, if such there be, who still prefer dried things for winter bouquets, when an ivy-wreathed window filled with a succession of bulbs, ferns, or oxalis is so easily achieved! It is too harsh, perhaps, to call these minor annuals unworthy, but as they are unimportant and increase the labour rather than add to the pleasure, they are really unworthy of admission to the woman's garden where there is only time and room for the best results. But here I am rambling at large instead of plainly answering your question, "What annuals can we plant as late as this while we are locating the rose bed?" You may plant any or all of them up to the first of June, the success of course depending upon a long autumn and late frosts. No, not quite all; the tallgrowing sweet peas should be in the ground not later than May 1 in this south New England latitude, though in the northern states and Canada they are planted in June as a matter of course. Blanche Ferry, of the brilliant pink-and-white complexion, however, will do very nicely in the light of a labour-saving afterthought, as, only reaching a foot and a half high, little, if any, brush is needed. We found your rose list replete with charming varieties, but most of them too delicate for positive success hereabouts. I'm sending you presently the list for a fifty-dollar rose garden, which it seems is much in demand, so that I've adapted my own experience to the simple plan that Evan drew to enlighten amateur rose lovers and turn them from coveting their wealthy neighbours' goods to spending their energy in producing covetable roses of their own! By the way, I send you my own particular list of Worthy Annuals to match the hardy plants and keep heights and colours easily before you until your own Garden Book is formulated and we can compare notes. You forgot to tell me whether you have decided to keep hens or not! I know that the matter has been discussed every spring since you have lived at Woodridge. If you are planning a hennery, I shall not encourage the rosary, for the days of a commuter's wife are not long enough for both without encountering nervous prostration on the immediate premises. Some problems are ably solved by coöperation. As I am a devotee of the ornamental and comfortable, Martha Saunders née Corkle runs a coöperative hen-yard in our north pasture for the benefit of the Cortrights and ourselves to our mutual joy! I have not dipped pen in ink for an entire week, which has been one of stirring events,

for not only have we wholly emerged from indoor life, but we have had a hair-breadth escape from something that not only threatened to mar the present summer, but to cast so heavy a shadow over the garden that no selfrespecting flowers could flourish even under the thought of it. You cannot possibly guess with what we were threatened, but I am running ahead of myself. The day that we began it—the vacation—by stopping the clocks, we overslept until nine o'clock. When we came downstairs, the house was in a condition of cheerful good order unknown to that hour of the day. There is such a temperamental difference in this mere setting things to rights. It can be done so that every chair has a stiffly repellent look, and the conspicuous absence of dust makes one painfully conscious that it has not always been thus, while the fingers inadvertently stray over one's attire, plucking a shred here and a thread there. Even flowers can be arranged in a vase so as to look thoroughly and reproachfully uncomfortable, and all the grace and meaning crushed out of them. But Maria Maxwell has the touch gracious that makes even a plainly furnished room hold out detaining hands as you go through, and the flowers on the greeting table in the hall (yes, Lavinia Cortright taught me that little fancy of yours during her first visit), though much the same as I had been gathering for a week past, wore an air of novelty! For a moment we stood at the foot of the stairs looking about and getting our bearings, as guests in an unfamiliar place rather than householders. It flitted through my body that I was hungry, and one of the "must be's" of the vacation country was that we were to forage for breakfast. At the same time Bart sauntered unconsciously toward the mail-box under the hat-rack and then, suddenly putting his hands behind him, turned to me with a quizzical expression, saying: "Letters are forbidden, I know, but how about the paper? Even the 'Weekly Tribune' would be something; you know that sheet was devised for farmers!" "If this vacation isn't to be a punishment, but a pleasure, I think we had both better 'have what we want when we want it'!" I replied, for at that moment I spied the Infant out on the porch, and to hug her ladyship was a swiftly accomplished desire. For some reason she seemed rather astonished at this very usual performance, and putting her hands, boy-fashion, into the pockets of her checked overalls, surveyed herself deliberately, and then looking up at me rather reproachfully remarked, "Tousin Maria says that now you and father are tumpany!" "And what is company?" I asked, rather anxious to know from what new point we were to be regarded. "Tumpany is people that comes to stay in the pink room wif trunks, and we play wif them and make them do somfing to amuse 'em all the time hard, and give 'em nicer things than we have to eat, and father shaves too much and tuts him and wears his little dinky coat to dinner. And by and by when they've gone away Ann-stasia says, 'Glory be!' and muvver goes to sleep. But muvver, if you are the tumpany, you can't go to sleep when you've gone away, can you?" A voice joined me in laughter, Maria Maxwell's, from inside the open window of the dining room. Looking toward the sound, I saw that, though the dining table itself had been cleared, a side table drawn close to the window was set with places for two, a posy of poets' narcissus and the last lilies-of-the-valley between, while a folded napkin at one place rested on a newspaper! "I thought we were to get our own breakfasts," I said, in a tone of very feeble expostulation, which plainly told that, at that particular moment, it was the last thing I wished to do. "You are, the very minute you feel like it, and not before! You must let yourselves down gradually, and not bolt out of the house as if you had been evicted. If Bart went paperless and letterless this very first morning, until he has met something that interests him more, he would think about the lack of the news and the mail all day until they became more than usually important!" So saying, Maria swept the stems and litter of the flowers she had been arranging into her apron, and annexing the Infant to one capable finger, all the other nine being occupied, she went down the path toward the garden for fresh supplies,

leaving Ann-stasia, as the Infant calls her, to serve the coffee, a prerogative of which she would not consent to be bereft, not even upon the plea of lightening her labours! "Isn't this perfect!" I exclaimed, looking toward a gap in the hills that was framed by the debatable knoll on one side and reached by a short cut across the old orchard and abandoned meadows of the farm above, the lack of cultivation resulting in a wealth of field flowers. "Entirely!" assented Bart, his spoon in the coffee cup stirring vigorously and his head enveloped in the newspaper. But what did the point of view matter: he was content and unhurried—what better beginning for a vacation? In fact in those two words lies the real vacation essence. Meanwhile, as I munched and sipped, with luxurious irresponsibility, I watched Maria moving to and fro between the shrubs that bounded the east alley of the old garden. In her compressed city surroundings she had always seemed to me a very big sort of person, with an efficiency that was at times overpowering, whose brown eyes had a "charge bayonet" way of fixing one, as if commanding the attention of her pupils by force of eye had become a habit. But here, her most cherished belongings given room to breathe in the spare room that rambles across one end of the house, while her wardrobe has a chance to realize itself in the deep closet, Maria in two short days had become another person. She does not seem large, but merely well built. The black gowns and straight white collars that she always wore, as a sort of professional garb, have vanished before a shirtwaist with an openwork neck and half sleeves, while the flesh exposed thereby is pink and wholesome. Hair not secured for the wear and tear of the daily rounds of school, but allowed to air itself, requires only a few hairpins, and, if it is naturally wavy, follows its own will with good effect. While as to her eyes, what in them seemed piercing at short range melted to an engaging frankness in the soft light under the trees. In short, if she had been any other than Maria Maxwell, music teacher, Bart's staid cousin and the avowed family spinster, I should have thought of her as a fine-looking woman who only needed a magic touch of some sort to become positively handsome. Coffee and paper finished, I became aware that Bart was gazing at me. "Well," I said, extending my hand, "what next?" I had speedily made up my mind that Bart should take the initiative in our camping-out arrangement, and I therefore did not suggest that the first thing to be done was to set our camp itself in order. "Come out," he said, taking my hand in the same way that the Infant does when she wishes to lead the way to the discovery of the fairyland that lies beyond the meadows of the farm. So we sauntered out. Once under the sun, the same delicious thought occurred to each that, certain prudences having been seen to, we were for the time without responsibilities, and the fact made us laugh for the very freedom of it and pull one another hither and thither like a couple of children. Meanwhile the word knoll had not been uttered, but our feet were at once drawn in its direction by an irresistible force, and presently we found ourselves standing at the lower end of the ridge and looking up the slope! "I wish we had a picture of it as it must have been before the land was cleared,— it would be a great help in replanting," I said; "it needs something dense and bold for a background to the rocks." "The skeleton of the old barn on the other side spoils it; it ought to come down," was Bart's rejoinder. "It seems as if everything we wish to do hinges on some other thing." This barn had been set back against the knoll so that from the house the hayloft window seemed like a part of a low shed. Certainly our forbears knew the ways of the New England wind very thoroughly, judging by the way they huddled their houses and outbuildings in hollows or under hillsides to avoid its stress. And when they couldn't do that, they turned sloping, humpbacked roofs toward the northeast to shed the snow and tempt the wind in its wild moods to play leapfrog and thus pass over. Such a roof as this has the house at the next farm, and judging by the location of the old hay barn, and the lay of the road, it must have once belonged to this adjoining property rather than to ours.