Beneath the Sun and Wind

Whenever a piece of the land is to be set apart for a garden, two mighty rulers must be consulted as to the boundaries. When this earth child is born and flower garnished for the christening, the same two must be also bidden as sponsors. These rulers are the Sun and the Wind. The sun, if the matter in hand is once fairly spread before him and put in his charge, is a faithful guardian, meeting frankness frankly and sending his penetrating and vitalizing messengers through well-nigh inviolable shade. But of the wind, who shall answer for it or trust it? Do we really ever learn all of its vagaries and impossible possibilities? If frankness best suits the sun, diplomacy must be our shield of defence windward, for the wind is not one but a composite of many moods, and to lure one on, and skilfully but not insultingly bar out another, is our portion. To shut out the wind of summer, the bearer of vitality, the uplifter of stifling vapours, the disperser of moulds, would indeed be an error; therefore, the great art of the planters of a garden is to learn the ways of the wind and to make friends with it. If the soil is sodden and sour, it may be drained and sweetened; if it is poor, it may be nourished; but when all this is done, if the garden lies where the winds of winter and spring in passing swiftly to and fro whet their steel-edged tempers upon it, what avails? What does it matter if violet or pansy frames are set in a sunny nook, if it be one of the wind's winter playgrounds, where he drifts the snow deep for his pastime, so that after each storm of snow or sleet a serious bit of engineering must be undergone before the sashes can be lifted and the plants saved from dampness; or if the daffodils and tulips lie well bedded all the winter through, if, when the sun has called them forth, the winds of March blight their sap-tender foliage? Yet the lands that send the north winds also send us the means to deter them—the cold-loving evergreens, low growing, high growing, medium, woven dense in warp and woof, to be windbreaks, also the shrubs of tough, twisted fibre and stubborn thorns lying close to the earth for windbuffers. Therefore, before the planting of rose or hardy herbs, bulbs or tenderer flowers, go out, compass in hand, face the four quarters of heaven, and, considering well, set your windbreaks of sweeping hemlocks, pines, spruces, not in fortress-like walls barring all the horizon, but in alternate groups that flank, without appearing to do so heavily, the north and northwest. Even a barberry hedge on two sides of a garden, wedge point to north, like the wild-goose squadrons of springtime, will make that spot an oasis in the winter valley of death. A wise gardener it is who thinks of the winter in springtime and plants for it as surely as he thinks of spring in the winter season and longs for it! If, in the many ways by which the affairs of daily life are re-enforced, the saying is true that "forethought is coin in the pocket, quiet in the brain, and content in the heart," doubly does it apply to the pleasures of living, of which the outdoor life of working side by side with nature, called gardening, is one of the chief. When a garden is inherited, the traditions of the soil or reverence for those who planned and toiled in it may make one blind to certain defects in its conception, and beginning with a priori set by another one does as one can. But in those choosing site, and breaking soil for themselves, inconsistency is inexcusable. Follow the lay of the land and let it lead. Nature does not attempt placid lowland pictures on a steep hillside, nor dramatic landscape effects in a horizonless meadow, therefore why should you? For one great garden principle you will learn from nature's close companionship—consistency! You who have a bit of abrupt hillside of impoverished soil, yet where the skyline is divided in a picture of many panels by the trees, you should not try to perch thereon a prim Dutch garden of formal lines; neither should you, to whom a portion of fertile level plain has fallen, seek to make it picturesque by a tortuous maze of walks, curving about nothing in particular and leading nowhere, for of such is not nature. Either situation will develop the skill, though in different directions, and do not forget that in spite of better soil,

it takes greater individuality to make a truly good and harmonious garden on the flat than on the rolling ground. I always tremble for the lowlander who, down in the depth of his nature, has a prenatal hankering for rocks, because he is apt to build an undigested rockery! These sort of rockeries are wholly separate from the rock gardens, often majestic, that nowadays supplement a bit of natural rocky woodland, bringing it within the garden pale. The awful rockery of the flat garden is like unto a nest of prehistoric eggs that have been turned to stone, from the interstices of which a few wan vines and ferns protrude somewhat, suggesting the garnishing for an omelet. Also, if you follow Nature and study her devices, you will alone learn the ways of the winds and how to prepare for them. Where does Spring set her first flag of truce—out in the windswept open? No! the arbutus and hepatica lie bedded not alone in the fallen leaves of the forest but amid their own enduring foliage. The skunk cabbage raises his hooded head first in sheltered hollows. The marsh marigold lies in the protection of bog tussocks and stream banks. The first bloodroot is always found at the foot of some natural windbreak, while the shad-bush, that ventures farther afield and higher in air than any, is usually set in a protecting hedge, like his golden forerunner the spice-bush. If Nature looks to the ways of the wind when she plants, why should not we? A bed of the hardiest roses set on a hill crest is a folly. Much more likely would they be to thrive wholly on the north side of it. A garden set in a cut between hills that form a natural blowpipe can at best do no more than hold its own, without advancing. But there are some things that belong to the never-never land and may not be done here. You may plant roses and carnations in the shade or in dry sea sand, but they will not thrive; you cannot keep upland lilies cheerful with their feet in wet clay; you cannot have a garden all the year in our northern latitudes, for nature does not; and you cannot afford to ignore the ways of the wind, for according as it is kind or cruel does it mean garden life or death! "Men, they say, know many things; But lo, they have taken wings,— The arts and sciences, And a thousand appliances; The wind that blows Is all that anybody knows." —Gray dawn, into which father and Evan vanished with their fishing rods; then sunrise, curtained by a slant of rain, during which the birds sang on with undamped ardour, a catbird making his début for the season as soloist. It must not be thought that I was up and out at dawn. At twenty I did so frequently, at thirty sometimes, now at thirty-five I can do it perfectly well, if necessary, otherwise, save at the change of seasons, to keep in touch with earth and sky, I raise myself comfortably, elbow on pillow, and through the window scan garden, wild walk, and the old orchard at leisure, and then let my arm slip and the impression deepen through the magic of one more chance for dreams. The warm throb of spring in the earth, rising in a potent mist, sap pervaded and tangible, having a clinging, unctuous softness like the touch of unfolding beech leaves, lured me out to finish the transplanting of the pansies among the hardy roses, while the first brown thrasher, high in the bare top of an ash, eyes fixed on the sky, proclaimed with many turns and changes the exact spot where he did not intend to locate his nest. This is an early spring, of a truth. Presently pale sunbeams thread the mist, gathering colour as they filter through the pollen-meshed catkins of the black birches; an oriole bugling in the Yulan magnolias below at the road-bend, fire amid snow; a high-hole laughing his courtship in the old orchard. Then Lavinia Cortright coming up to exchange Dahlia bulbs and discuss annuals and aster bugs. She and Martin browse about the country, visiting from door to door like veritable natives, while their garden, at first so prim and genteel, like one of Lavinia's own frocks, has broken bounds and taken on brocade, embroidery, and all sorts of lace frills, overflowed the south meadow, and only pauses at the stile in the wall of our old crab-apple orchard, rivalling in beauty and refined attraction any garden at the Bluffs. Martin's purse is fuller than of yore,

owing to the rise in Whirlpool real estate, and nothing is too good for Lavinia's garden. Even more, he has of late let the dust rest peacefully on human genealogy and is collecting quaint garden books and herbals, flower catalogues and lists, with the solemn intent of writing a book on Historic Flowers. At least so he declares; but when Lavinia is in the garden, there too is Martin. To-day, however, he joined my men before noon at the lower brook. Fancy a housereared man a convert to fishing when past threescore! Evan insists that it is because, being above all things consistent, he wishes to appear at home in the company of father's cherished collection of Walton's and other fishing books. Father says, "Nonsense! no man can help liking to fish!" The magnolias below at the road-bend. Toward evening came home a creel lined with bog moss; within, a rainbow glimmer of brook trout, a posy of shad-bush, marsh marigolds, anemones, and rosy spring beauties from the river woods,—with three cheerfully tired men, who gathered by the den hearth fire with coffee cup and pipe, inside an admiring but sleepy circle of beagle hounds, who had run free the livelong day and who could doubtless impart the latest rabbit news with thrilling detail. All this and much more made up to-day, one of red letters. Yesterday, Monday, was quite different, and if not absolutely black, was decidedly slate coloured. It is only when some one of the household is positively ill that the record must be set down in black characters, for what else really counts? Why is it that the city folk persist in judging all rural days alike, that is until they have once really lived in the country, not merely boarded and tried to kill time and their own digestions at one and the same moment. Such exceptional days as yesterday should only be chronicled now and then to give an added halo to happy to-morrows,—disagreeables are remembered quite long enough by perverse human nature. Yesterday began with the pipe from the water-back bursting, thereby doing away with hot water for shaving and the range fire at the same time. The coffee resented hurry, and the contact with an oil stove developed the peanutty side of its disposition, something that is latent in the best and most equable of brands. The spring timetable having changed at midnight Sunday, unobserved by Evan, he missed the early train, which it was especially important that he should take. Three other men found themselves in the same predicament, two being Bluffers and one a Plotter. (These are the names given hereabout to our two colonies of non-natives. The Bluffers are the people of the Bluffs, who always drive to the station; the Plotters, living on a pretty tract of land near the village that was "plotted" into house-lots a few years ago, have the usual newcomer's hallucination about making money from raising chickens, and always walk.) After a hasty consultation, one of the Bluffers telephoned for his automobile and invited the others to make the trip to town with him. In order to reach the north turnpike that runs fairly straight to the city, the chauffeur, a novice in local byways, proposed to take a short cut through our wood road, instead of wheeling into the pike below Wakeleigh. This wood road holds the frost very late, in spite of an innocent appearance to the contrary; this fact Evan stated tersely. Would a chauffeur of the Bluffs listen to advice from a man living halfway down the hill, who not only was autoless but frequently walked to the station, and therefore to be classed with the Plotters? Certainly not; while at the same moment the owner of the car decided the matter by pulling out his watch and murmuring to his neighbour something about an important committee meeting, and it being the one day in the month when time meant money! Into the road they plunged, and after several hair-breadth lurches, for the cut is deep and in places the rocks parallel with the roadway, the turnpike was visible; then a sudden jolt, a sort of groan from the motor, and it ceased to breathe, the heavy wheels having settled in a treacherous spot not wholly free from frost, its great stomach, or whatever they call the part that holds its insides, wallowed hopelessly in the mud! The gentlemen from the Bluffs deciding that, after all, there was no real need of going to town, as they had only moved into the country the week previous, and the auto owner challenged to a game of billiards by his friend,

they returned home, while the Plotter and Evan walked back two miles to the depot and caught the third train! At home things still sizzled. Father had an important consultation at the hospital at ten; ringing the stable call for the horses, he found that Tim, evidently forgetting the hour, had taken them, Evan's also being of the trio, to the shoer half an hour before. There was a moment's consternation and Bertel left the digging over of my hardy beds to speed down to the village on his bicycle, and when the stanhope finally came up, father was as nearly irritable as I have ever seen him, while Tim Saunders's eyes looked extra small and pointed. Evidently Bertel had said things on his own account. Was an explosion coming at last to end twelve years of out-of-door peace, also involving my neighbour and domestic standby, Martha Corkle Saunders? No; the two elderly men glanced at each other; there was nothing of the domineering or resentful attitude that so often renders difficult the relation of master and man—"I must be getting old and forgetful," quoth father, stepping into the gig. "Nae, it's mair like I'm growin' deef in the nigh ear," said Tim, and without further argument they drove away. I was still pondering upon the real inwardness of the matter, when the boys came home to luncheon. Two hungry, happy boys are a tonic at any time, and for a time I buttered bread—though alack, the real necessity for so doing has long since passed—when, on explaining father's absence from the meal, Ian said abruptly, "Jinks! grandpa's gone the day before! he told Tim Tuesday at 'leven, I heard him!" But, as it chanced, it was a slip of tongue, not memory, and I blessed Timothy Saunders for his Scotch forbearance, which Evan insists upon calling prudence. My own time of trial came in the early afternoon. During the more than ten years that I have been a gardener on my own account, I have naturally tried many experiments and have gradually come to the conclusion that it is a mistake to grow too many species of flowers,—better to have more of a kind and thus avoid spinkiness. The pink family in general is one of those that has stood the test, and this year a cousin of Evan's sent me over a quantity of Margaret carnation seed from prize stock, together with that of some exhibition single Dahlias. Late in February I sowed the seed in two of the most protected hotbeds, muffled them in mats and old carpets every night, almost turned myself into a patent ventilator in order to give the carnations enough air during that critical teething period of pinks, when the first grasslike leaves emerge from the oval seed leaves and the little plants are apt to weaken at the ground level, damp off, and disappear, thinned them out with the greatest care, and had (day before yesterday) full five hundred lusty little plants, ready to go out into the deeply dug cool bed and there wax strong according to the need of pinks before summer heat gains the upper hand. The Dahlias had also thriven, but then they are less particular, and if they live well will put up with more snubs than will a carnation. Weather and Bertel being propitious, I prepared to plant out my pets, though of course they must be sheltered of nights for another half month. As I was about to remove one of the props that held the sash aloft, to let in air to the Dahlias, and still constitute it a windbreak, I heard a violent whistling in our grass road north of the barn that divides the home acres from the upper pastures and Martha's chicken farm. At first I thought but little of it, as many people use it as a short cut from the back road from the Bluffs down to the village. Soon a shout came from the same direction, and going toward the wall, I saw Mr. Vandeveer struggling along, his great St. Bernard Jupiter, prize winner in a recent show and but lately released from winter confinement, bounding around and over him to such an extent that the spruce New Yorker, who had the reputation of always being on dress parade from the moment that he left bed until he returned to it in hand-embroidered pink silk pajamas, was not only covered with abundant April mud, but could hardly keep his footing. At the moment I spied the pair, a great brindled cat, who sometimes ventures on the place, in spite of all the attentions paid her by the beagles,

and who had been watching sparrows in the barnyard, sprang to the wall. Zip! There was a rush, a snarl, a hiss, and a smash! Dog and what had been cat crashed through the sash of my Dahlia frame, and in the rebound ploughed into the soft earth that held the carnations. The next minute absolutely leaped over the wall, and seeing the dog, apparently in the midst of the broken glass, turned almost apoplectic, shouting, "Ah, his legs will be cut; he'll be ruined, and Julie will never forgive me! He's her best dog and cost spot cash! Get him out, somebody, why don't you? What business have people to put such dangerous skylights near a public road?" Meanwhile, as wrath arose in my throat and formed ugly words, Jupiter, a great friend of ours, who has had more comfortable meals in our kitchen during the winter than the careless kennel men would have wished to be known, sprang toward me with well-meant, if rough, caresses,—evidently the few scratches he had amounted to nothing. I forgave him the cat cheerfully, but my poor carnations! They do not belong to the grovelling tribe of herbs that bend and refuse to break like portulaca, chickweed, and pusley the accursed. Fortunately, just then, a scene of the past year, which had come to me by report, floated across my vision. Our young hounds, Bob and Pete, in the heat of undisciplined rat-catching (for these dogs when young and unbroken will chase anything that runs), completely undermined the Vandeveers' mushroom bed, the door of the pit having been left open! When Mr. Vandeveer recovered himself, he began profuse apologies. Would "send the glazier down immediately"—"so sorry to spoil such lovely young onions and spinach!" "What! not early vegetables, but flowers?" Oh, then he should not feel so badly. Really, he had quite forgotten himself, but the truth was Julie thought more of her dogs and horses than even of himself, he sometimes thought,—almost, but not quite; "ha! ha! really, don't you know!" While, judging by the comparative behaviour of dog and man, the balance was decidedly in favour of Jupiter. But you see I never like men who dress like ladies, I had lost my young plants, and I love dogs from mongrel all up the ladder (lap dogs excepted), so I may be prejudiced. After Bertel had carefully removed the splintered glass from the earth, so that I could take account of my damaged stock, about half seemed to be redeemable; but even those poor seedlings looked like soldiers after battle, a limb gone here and an eye missing there. At supper father, Evan, and I were silent and ceremoniously polite, neither referring to the day's disasters, and I could see that the boys were regarding us with open-eyed wonder. When the meal was almost finished, the bell of the front door rang and Effie returned, bearing a large, ornamental basket, almost of the proportions of a hamper, with a card fastened conspicuously to the handle, upon which was printed "With apologies from Jupiter!" Inside was a daintily arranged assortment of hothouse vegetables,—cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant eggs, artichokes,—with a separate basket in one corner brimming with strawberries, and in the other a pink tissue-paper parcel, tied with ribbon, containing mushrooms, proving that, after all, fussy Mr. Vandeveer has the saving grace of humour. My righteous garden-indignation dwindled; laughter caught me by the throat and quenched the remainder. Evan, knowing nothing of the concatenation, but scenting something from the card, joined sympathetically. Glancing at father, I saw that his nose was twitching, and in a moment his shoulders began to shake and he led the general confession that followed. It seems that he arrived at the hospital really the day of the consultation, but found that the patient, in need of surgical care, had been seized with nervous panic and gone home! After such a thoroughly vulgar day there is really nothing to do but laugh and plan something pleasant for to-morrow, unless you prefer crying, which, though frequently a relief to the spirit, is particularly bad for eye wrinkles in the middleaged. May-day. I always take this as a holiday, and give myself up to any sort of outdoor folly that comes into my head. There is nothing more rejuvenating than to let one's self thoroughly go now and then. Then, besides, to an American, May-day is usually a surprise in itself. You never can tell what it will bring, for it is by no means the amiable and guileless child of the poets, breathing perfumed south wind and followed by young lambs through meadows knee deep in grass and flowers.

In the course of fifteen years I have seen four May-days when there was enough grass to blow in the wind and frost had wholly left for the season; to balance this there have been two brief snow squalls, three deluges that washed even big beans out of ground, and a scorching drought that reduced the brooks, unsheltered by leafage, to August shallowness. But to-day has been entirely lovable and full of the promise that after all makes May the garden month of the year, the time of perfect faith, hope, and charity when we may believe all things! This morning I took a stroll in the woods, partly to please the dogs, for though they always run free, they smile and wag furiously when they see the symptoms that tell that I am going beyond the garden. What a difference there is between the north and south side of things! On the south slope the hepaticas have gone and the columbines show a trace of red blood, while on the north, one is in perfection and the other only as yet making leaves. This is a point to be remembered in the garden, by which the season of blooming can be lengthened for almost all plants that do not demand full, unalloyed sun, like the rose and pink families. Every year I am more and more surprised at the hints that can be carried from the wild to the cultivated. For instance, the local soil in which the native plants of a given family nourish is almost always sure to agree better with its cultivated, and perhaps tropical, cousin than the most elaborately and scientifically prepared compost. This is a matter that both simplifies and guarantees better success to the woman who is her own gardener and lives in a country sufficiently open for her to be able to collect soil of various qualities for special purposes. Lilies were always a very uncertain quantity with me, until the idea occurred of filling my bed with earth from a meadow edge where Lilium Canadense, year after year, mounted her chimes of gold and copper bells on leafy standards often four feet high. We may read and listen to cultural ways and methods, but when all is said and done, one who has not a fat purse for experiments and failures must live the outdoor life of her own locality to get the best results in the garden. Then to have a woman friend to compare notes with and prove rules by is a comforting necessity. No living being can say positively, "I will do so and so;" or "I know," when coming in contact with the wise old earth! Lavinia Cortright has only had a garden for half a dozen summers, and consults me as a veteran, yet I'm discovering quite as much from her experiments as she from mine. Last winter, when seed-catalogue time came round, and we met daily and scorched our shoes before the fire, drinking a great deal too much tea in the excitement of making out our lists, we resolved to form a horticulture society of only three members, of which she elected me the recording secretary, to be called "The Garden, You, and I." We expect to have a variety of experiences this season, and frequent meetings both actual and by pen, for Lavinia, in combination with Horace and Sylvia Bradford, last year built a tiny shore cottage, three miles up the coast, at Gray Rocks, where they are going for alternate weeks or days as the mood seizes them, and they mean to try experiments with real seashore gardening, while Evan proposes that we should combine pleasure with business in a way to make frequent vacations possible and take driving trips together to many lovely gardens both large and small, to our mutual benefit, his eyes being open to construction and landscape effect, and mine to the soul of the garden, as it were; for he is pleased to say that a woman can grasp and translate this more easily and fully than a man. What if the records of The Garden, You, and I should turn into a real book, an humble shadow of "Six of Spades" of jovial memory! Is it possible that I am about to be seized with Agamemnon Peterkin's ambition to write a book to make the world wise? Alas, poor Agamemnon! When he had searched the woods for an oak gall to make ink, gone to the post-office, after hours, to buy a sheet of paper, and caused a commotion in the neighbourhood and rumour of thieves by going to the poultry yard with a lantern to pluck a fresh goose quill for a pen,

he found that he had nothing to say, and paused—thereby, at least, proving his own wisdom. I'm afraid I ramble too much to be a good recording secretary, but this habit belongs to my very own garden books that no critical eyes can see. That reminds me! Father says that he met Bartram Penrose in town last week and that he seemed rather nervous and tired, and worried about nothing, and wanted advice. After looking him over a bit, father told him that all he needed was a long vacation from keeping train, as well as many other kinds of time, for it seems during the six years of his marriage he has had no real vacation but his honeymoon. Mary Penrose's mother, my mother, and Lavinia Cortright were all school friends together, and since Mary married Bartram and moved to Woodridge we've exchanged many little visits, for our husbands agree, and now that she has time she is becoming an enthusiastic gardener, after my own heart, having last season become convinced of the ugliness of cannas and coleus beds about a restored colonial farmhouse. Why might they not join us on our driving trips, by way of their vacation? Immediately I started to telephone the invitation, and then paused. I will write instead. Mary Penrose is on the long-distance line,—toll thirty cents in the daytime! In spring I am very stingy; thirty cents means six papers of flower seeds, or three heliotropes. Whereas in winter it is simply thirty cents, and it must be a very vapid conversation indeed that is not worth so much on a dark winter day of the quality when neither driving nor walking is pleasant, and if you get sufficiently close to the window to see to read, you develop a stiff neck. Also, the difficulty is that thirty cents is only the beginning of a conversation betwixt Mary Penrose and myself, for whoever begins it usually has to pay for overtime, which provokes quarterly discussion. Is it not strange that very generous men often have such serious objections to the long-distance tails to their telephone bills, and insist upon investigating them with vigour, when they pay a speculator an extra dollar for a theatre ticket without a murmur? They must remember that telephones, whatever may be said to the contrary, are one of the modern aids to domesticity and preventives of gadding, while still keeping one not only in touch with a friend but within range of the voice. Surely there can be no woman so self-sufficient that she does not in silent moments yearn for a spoken word with one of her kind. When I had finished sowing my first planting of mignonette and growled at the prospective labour entailed by thinning out the fall-sown Shirley poppies (I have quite resolved to plant everything in the vegetable-garden seed beds and then transplant to the flowering beds as the easier task), Lavinia Cortright came up, note-book in hand, inviting herself comfortably to spend the day, and thoroughly inspect the hardy seed bed, to see what I had for exchange, as well as perfect her plan of starting one of her own. By noon the sun had made the south corner, where the Russian violets grow, quite warm enough to make lunching out-of-doors possible, and promising to protect Lavinia's rather thinly shod feet from the ground with one of the rubber mats whereon I kneel when I transplant, she consented to thus celebrate the coming of the season of liberty, doors open to the air and sun, the soul to every whisper of Heart of Nature himself, the steward of the plan and eternal messenger of God. "Hard is the heart that loveth naught in May!" Yes, so hard that it is no longer flesh and blood, for under the spell of renewal every grass blade has new beauty, every trifle becomes of importance, and the humble song sparrow a nightingale. The stars that blazed of winter nights have fallen and turned to dandelions in the grass; the Forsythias are decked in gold, a colour that is carried up and down the garden borders in narcissus, dwarf tulips, and pansies, peach blossoms giving a rosy tinge to the snow fall of cherry bloom. To-day there are two catbirds, Elle et Lui, and the first Johnny Wren is inspecting the particular row of cottages that top the long screen of honeysuckles back of the walk named by Richard Wren Street. Why is the song sparrow calling "Dick, Dick!" so lustily and scratching so testily in the leaves that have drifted under an old rose shrub? The birds' bath and drinking basin is still empty;

I pour out the libation to the day by filling it. The seed bed is reached at last. It has wintered fairly well, and the lines of plants all show new growth. As I started to point out and explain, Lavinia Cortright began to jot down name and quantity, and then, stopping, said: "No, you must write it out as the first record for The Garden, You, and I. I make a motion to that effect." As I was about to protest, the postman brought some letters, one being from Mary Penrose, to whom Mrs. Cortright stands as aunt by courtesy. I opened it, and spreading it between us we began to read, so that afterward Lavinia declared that her motion was passed by default. "WOODRIDGE. "MY DEAR MRS. EVAN, "I am going into gardening in earnest this spring, and I want you and Aunt Lavinia to tell me things,—things that you have done yourselves and succeeded or failed in. Especially about the failures. It is a great mistake for garden books and papers to insist that there is no such word in horticulture as fail, that every flower bed can be kept in full flower six months of the year, in addition to listing things that will bloom outdoors in winter in the Middle States, and give all floral measurements as if seen through a telephoto lens. It makes one feel the exceptional fool. It's discouraging and not stimulating in the least. Doesn't even nature meet with disaster once in a while as if by way of encouragement to us? And doesn't nature's garden have on and off seasons? So why shouldn't ours? "There is a quantity of Garden Goozle going about nowadays that is as unbelievable, and quite as bad for the constitution and pocket, as the guarantees of patent medicines. No, Garden Goozle is not my word, you must understand; it was invented by a clever professor of agriculture, whom Bart met not long ago, and we loved the word so much that we have adopted it. The mental quality of Garden Goozle seems to be compounded of summer squash and milkweed milk, and it would be quite harmless were it not for the strong catbriers grafted in the mass for impaling the purses of the trusting. "Ah, if we only lived a little nearer together, near enough to talk over the garden fence! It seems cruel to ask you to write answers to all my questions, but after listing the hardy plants I want for putting the garden on a consistent old-time footing, I find the amount runs quite to the impossible three figures, aside from everything else we need, so I've decided on beginning with a seed bed, and I want to know before we locate the new asparagus bed how much ground I shall need for a seed bed, what and how to plant, and everything else! "I like all the hardy things you have, especially those that are mice, lice, and water proof! If you will send me ever so rough a list, I shall be grateful. Would I better begin at once or wait until July or August, as some of the catalogues suggest? "Bart has just come in and evidently has something on his mind of which he wishes to relieve himself via speech. "Your little sister of the garden, "MARY P." "She must join The Garden, You, and I," said Lavinia Cortright, almost before I had finished the letter. "She will be entertainer in chief, for she never fails to be amusing!" "I thought there were to be but three members," I protested, thinking of the possible complications of a three-cornered correspondence. "Ah, well," Lavinia Cortright replied quickly, "make the Garden an Honorary member; it is usual so to rank people of importance from whom much is expected, and then we shall still be but three—with privilege of adding your husband as councillor and mine as librarian and custodian of deeds!" So I have promised to write to Mary Penrose this evening. When the Cortrights first came to Oaklands, expecting to remain here but a few months each summer, their garden consisted of some borders of old-fashioned, hardy flowers, back of the house. These bounded a straight walk that, beginning at the porch, went through an arched grape arbour, divided the vegetable garden, and finally ended under a tree in the orchard at the barrier made by a highbacked green wooden seat, that looked as if it might have been a pew taken from some primitive church on its rebuilding. There were, at intervals, along this walk, some bushes of lilacs, bridal-wreath spirea, flowering almond, snowball,

syringa, and scarlet flowering quince; for roses, Mme. Plantier, the half double Boursault, and some great clumps of the little cinnamon rose and Harrison's yellow brier, whose flat opening flowers are things of a day, these two varieties having the habit of travelling all over a garden by means of their root suckers. Here and there were groups of tiger and lemon lilies growing out of the ragged turf, bunches of scarlet bee balm, or Oswego tea, as it is locally called, while plantain lilies, with deeply ribbed heartshaped leaves, catnip, southernwood, and mats of grass pinks. Single hollyhocks of a few colours followed the fence line; tall phlox of two colours, white and a dreary dull purple, rambled into the grass and was scattered through the orchard, in company with New England asters and various golden rods that had crept up from the waste pasture-land below; and a straggling line of button chrysanthemums, yellow, white, maroon, and a sort of medicinal rhubarb-pink, had backed up against the woodhouse as if seeking shelter. Lilies-of-the-valley planted in the shade and consequently anæmic and scant of bells, blended with the blue periwinkle until their mingled foliage made a great shield of deep, cool green that glistened against its setting of faded, untrimmed grass. This garden, such as it was, could be truly called hardy, insomuch as all the care it had received for several years was an annual cutting of the longest grass. The fittest had survived, and, among herbaceous things, whatsoever came of seed, self-sown, had reverted nearly to the original type, as in the case of hollyhocks, phlox, and a few common annuals. The long grass, topped by the leaves that had drifted in and been left undisturbed, made a better winter blanket than many people furnish to their hardy plants,—the word hardy as applied to the infinite variety of modern herbaceous plants as produced by selection and hybridization not being perfectly understood. While a wise selection of flowering shrubs and truly hardy roses will, if properly planted, pruned, and fertilized, live for many years, certain varieties even outlasting more than one human generation, the modern hardy perennial and biennial of many species and sumptuous effects must be watched and treated with almost as much attention as the so-called bedding-plants demand in order to bring about the best results. The common idea, fostered by inexperience, and also, I'm sorry to say, by what Mary Penrose dubs Garden Goozle, that a hardy garden once planted is a thing accomplished for life, is an error tending to bitter disappointment. If we would have a satisfactory garden of any sort, we must in our turn follow Nature, who never rests in her processes, never even sleeping without a purpose. But if fairly understood, looked squarely in the face, and treated intelligently, the hardy garden, supplemented here and there with annual flowers, is more than worth while and a perpetual source of joy. If money is not an object to the planter, she may begin by buying plants to stock her beds, always remembering that if these thrive, they must be thinned out or the clumps subdivided every few years, as in the case of hybrid phloxes, chrysanthemums, etc., or else dug up bodily and reset; for if this is not done, smaller flowers with poorer colours will be the result. The foxglove, one of the easily raised and very hardy plants, of majestic mien and great landscape value, will go on growing in one location for many years; but if you watch closely, you will find that it is rarely the original plant that has survived, but a seedling from it that has sprung up unobserved under the sheltering leaves of its parent. The old plant grows thick at the juncture of root stock and leaf, the action of the frost furrows and splits it, water or slugs gain an entrance, and it disappears, the younger growth taking its place. Especially true is this also of hollyhocks. The larkspurs have different roots and more underground vigour, and all tap-rooted herbs hold their own well, the difficulty being to curb their spreading and undermining their border companions. English Larkspur Seven Feet High. ENGLISH LARKSPUR SEVEN FEET HIGH. It is conditions like these that keep the gardener of hardy things ever on the alert. Beds for annuals or florists' plants are thoroughly dug and graded each spring, so that the weeds that must be combated are of new and comparatively shallow growth. The hardy bed, on the contrary, in certain places must be stirred with a fork only and that with the greatest care, for, if well-planned, plants of low growth will carpet the ground between tall standing things,

so that in many spots the fingers, with a small weeding hoe only, are admissible. Thus a blade of grass here, some chickweed there, the seed ball of a composite dropping in its aerial flight, and lo! presently weedlings and seedlings are wrestling together, and you hesitate to deal roughly with one for fear of injuring the constitution of the other. To go to the other extreme and keep the hardy garden or border as spick and span clean as a row of onions or carrots in the vegetable garden, is to do away with the informality and a certain gracious blending of form and colour that is one of its greatest charms. Thus it comes about, with the most successful of hardy mixed borders, that, at the end of the third season, things will become a little confused and the relations between certain border-brothers slightly strained; the central flowers of the clumps of phloxes, etc., grow small, because the newer growth of the outside circle saps their vitality. Personally, I believe in drastic measures and every third or fourth year, in late September, or else April, according to season and other contingencies, I have all the plants carefully removed from the beds and ranged in rows of a kind upon the broad central walk. Then, after the bed is thoroughly worked, manured, and graded, the plants are divided and reset, the leavings often serving as a sort of horticultural wampum, the medium of exchange among neighbours with gardens, or else going as a freewill offering to found a garden for one of the "plotters" who needs encouragement. The limitations of the soil of my garden and surroundings serve as the basis of an experience that, however, I have found carried out practically in the same way in the larger gardens of the Bluffs and in many other places that Evan and I have visited. So that any one thinking that a hardy garden, at least of herbaceous plants, is a thing that, once established, will, if not molested, go on forever, after the manner of the fern banks of the woods or the wild flowers of marsh and meadow, will be grievously disappointed. Of course, where hardy plants are massed, as in nurseries, horticultural gardens, or the large estates, each in a bed or plot of its kind, this resetting is far simpler, as each variety can receive the culture best suited to it, and there is no mixing of species. Another common error in regard to the hardy garden, aided and abetted by Garden Goozle, is that it is easy or even practicable to have every bed in a blooming and decorative condition during the whole season. It is perfectly possible always to have colour and fragrance in some part of the garden during the entire season, after the manner of the natural sequence of bloom that passes over the land, each bed in bloom some of the time, but not every bed all of the time. Artifice and not nature alone can produce this, and artifice is too costly a thing for the woman who is her own gardener, even if otherwise desirable. For it should appeal to every one having a grain of garden sense that, if the plants of May and June are to grow and bloom abundantly, those that come to perfection in July and August, if planted in their immediate vicinity, must be overshadowed and dwarfed. The best that can be done is to leave little gaps or lines between the hardy plants, so that gladioli, or some of the quick-growing and really worthy annuals, can be introduced to lend colour to what becomes too severely of the past. There is one hardy garden, not far from Boston, one of those where the landscape architect lingers to study the possibilities of the formal side of his art in skilful adjustment of pillar, urn, pergola, and basin,—this garden is never out of flower. At many seasons Evan and I had visited it, early and late, only to find it one unbroken sheet of bloom. How was it possible, we queried? Comes a day when the complex secret of the apparent simple abundance was revealed. It was as the foxgloves, that flanked a long alley, were decidedly waning when, quite early one morning, we chanced to behold a small regiment of men remove the plants, root and branch, and swiftly substitute for them immense pot-grown plants of the tall flower snapdragon (Antirrhinum), perfectly symmetrical in shape, with buds well open and showing colour. These would continue in bloom quite through August and into September. So rapidly was the change made that,

in a couple of hours at most, all traces were obliterated, and the casual passer-by would have been unaware that the plants had not grown on the spot. This sort of thing is a permissible luxury to those who can afford and desire an exhibition garden, but it is not watching the garden growing and quivering and responding to all its vicissitudes and escapes as does the humble owner. Hardy gardening of this kind is both more difficult and costly, even if more satisfactory, than filling a bed with a rotation of florists' flowers, after the custom as seen in the parks and about club-houses: to wit, first tulips, then pansies and daisies, next foliage plants or geraniums, and finally, when frost threatens, potted plants of hardy chrysanthemums are brought into play. No, The Garden, You, and I know that hardy plants, native and acclimated, may be had in bloom from hepatica time until ice crowns the last button chrysanthemum and chance pansy, but to have every bed in continuous bloom all the season is not for us, any more than it is to be expected that every individual plant in a row should survive the frost upheavals and thaws of winter. If a garden is so small that half a dozen each of the ten or twelve best-known species of hardy herbs will suffice, they may be bought of one of the many reliable dealers who now offer such things; but if the place is large and rambling, affording nooks for hardy plants of many kinds and in large quantities, then a permanent seed bed is a positive necessity. This advice is especially for those who are now so rapidly taking up old farmsteads, bringing light again to the eyes of the window-panes that have looked out on the world of nature so long that they were growing dim from human neglect. In these places, where land is reckoned by the acre, not by the foot, there is no excuse for the lack of seed beds for both hardy and annual flowers (though these latter belong to another record), in addition to space for cuttings of shrubs, hardy roses, and other woody things that may be thus rooted. If there is a bit of land that has been used for a vegetable garden and is not wholly worn out, so much the better. The best seed bed I have ever seen belongs to Jane Crandon at the Jenks-Smith place on the Bluffs. It was an old asparagus bed belonging to the farm, thoroughly well drained and fertilized, but the original crop had grown thin and spindling from being neglected and allowed to drop its seed. In the birth of this bed the wind and sun, as in all happy gardens, had been duly consulted, and the wind promised to keep well behind a thick wall of hemlocks that bounded it on the north and east whenever he was in a cruel mood. The sun, casting his rays about to get the points of compass, promised that he would fix his eye upon the bed as soon as he had bathed his face in mist on rising and turned the corner of the house, and then, after watching it until past noon, turn his back, so no wonder that the bed throve. Any well-located bit of fairly good ground can be made into a hardy seed bed, provided only that it is not where frozen water covers it in winter, or in the way of the wind, coming through a cut or sweeping over the brow of a hill, for flowers are like birds in this respect,—they can endure cold and many other hardships, but they quail before the blight of wind. For all gardens of ordinary size a bit of ground ten feet by thirty feet will be sufficient. If the earth is heavy loam and inclined to cake or mould, add a little sifted sand and a thin sprinkling of either nitrate of soda or one of the "complete" commercial manures. Barn-yard manure, unless very well rotted and thoroughly worked under, is apt to develop fungi destructive to seedlings. This will be sufficient preparation if the soil is in average condition; but if the earth is old and worn out, it must be either sub-soiled or dug and enriched with barnyard (not stable) manure to the depth of a foot, or more if yellow loam is not met below that depth. If the bed is on a slight slope, so much the better. Dig a shallow trench of six or eight inches around it to carry off the wash. An abrupt hillside is a poor place for such a bed,

as the finer seeds will inevitably be washed out in the heavy rains of early summer. If the surface soil is lumpy or full of small stones that escape fine raking, it must be shovelled through a sand-screen, as it is impossible for the most ambitious seed to grow if its first attempt is met by the pressure of what would be the equivalent of a hundred-ton boulder to a man. It is to details such as these that success or failure in seed raising is due, and when people say, "I prefer to buy plants; I am very unlucky with seeds," I smile to myself, and the picture of something I once observed done by one of the socalled gardeners of my early married days flits before me. The man scraped a groove half an inch deep in hard-baked soil, with a pointed stick, scattered therein the dustlike seeds of the dwarf blue lobelia as thickly as if he had been sprinkling sugar on some very sour article, then proceeded to trample them into the earth with all the force of very heavy feet. Of course the seeds thus treated found themselves sealed in a cement vault, somewhat after the manner of treating victims of the Inquisition, the trickle of moisture that could possibly reach them from a careless watering only serving to prolong their death from suffocation. The woman gardener, I believe, is never so stupid as this; rather is she tempted to kill by kindness in overfertilizing and overwatering, but too lavish of seed in the sowing she certainly is, and I speak from the conviction born of my own experience. When the earth is all ready for the planting, and the sweet, moist odour rises when you open the seed papers with fingers almost trembling with eagerness, it seems second nature to be lavish. If a few seeds will produce a few plants, why not the more the merrier? If they come up too thick, they can be thinned out, you argue, and thick sowing is being on the safe side. But is it? Quite the contrary. When the seedlings appear, you delay, waiting for them to gain a good start before jarring their roots by thinning. All of a sudden they make such strides that when you begin, you are appalled by the task, and after a while cease pulling the individual plants, but recklessly attack whole "chunks" at once, or else give up in a despair that results in a row of anæmic, drawn-out starvelings that are certainly not to be called a success. After having tried and duly weighed the labour connected with both methods, I find it best to sow thinly and to rely on filling gaps by taking a plant here and there from a crowded spot. For this reason, as well as that of uniformity also, it is always better to sow seeds of hardy or annual flowers in a seed bed, and then remove, when half a dozen leaves appear, to the permanent position in the ornamental part of the garden. With annuals, of course, there are some exceptions to this rule,—in the case of sweet peas, nasturtiums, mignonette, portulaca, poppies, and the like, where great quantities are massed. When you have prepared a hardy seed bed of the dimensions of ten by thirty feet, which will allow of thirty rows, ten feet long and a foot apart (though you must double the thirty feet if you intend to cultivate between the rows with any sort of weeding machine, and if you have room there should be two feet or even three between the rows), draw a garden line taut across the narrow way of the plot at the top, snap it, and you will have the drill for your first planting, which you may deepen if the seeds be large. Before beginning, make a list of your seeds, with the heights marked against each, and put the tallest at the top of the bed. "Why bother with this, when they are to be transplanted as soon as they are fist up?" I hear Mary Penrose exclaim quickly, her head tipped to one side like an inquisitive bird. Because this seed bed, if well planned, will serve the double purpose of being also the "house supply bed." If, when the transplanting is done, the seedlings are taken at regular intervals, instead of all from one spot, those that remain, if not needed as emergency fillers, will bloom as they stand and be the flowers to be utilized by cutting for house decoration, without depriving the garden beds of too much of their colour.

At the commercial florists, and in many of the large private gardens, rows upon rows of flowers are grown on the vegetable-garden plan, solely for gathering for the house, and while those with limited labour and room cannot do this extensively, they can gain the same end by an intelligent use of their seed beds. Many men (and more especially many women), many minds, but however much tastes may differ I think that a list of thirty species of herbaceous perennials should be enough to satisfy the ambition of an amateur, at least in the climate of the middle and eastern United States. I have tried many more, and I could be satisfied with a few less. Of course by buying the seeds in separate colours, as in the single case of pansies, one may use the entire bed for a single species, but the calculation of size is based upon either a ten-foot row of a mixture of one species, or else that amount of ground subdivided among several colours. Of the seeds for the hardy beds themselves, the enticing catalogues offer a bewildering array. The maker of the new garden would try them all, and thereby often brings on a bit of horticultural indigestion in which gardener and garden suffer equally, and the resulting plants frequently perish from pernicious anæmia. Of the number of plants needed, each gardener must be the judge; also, in spite of many warnings and directions, each one must finally work on the lines of personally won experience. What is acceptable to the soil and protected by certain shelter in my garden on one side of hill crest or road may not flourish in a different soil and exposure only a mile away. One thing is very certain, however,—it is time wasted to plant a hardy garden of herbaceous plants in shallow soil. In starting the hardy seed bed it is always safe to plant columbines, Canterbury bells, coreopsis, larkspur, pinks in variety, foxgloves, hollyhocks, gaillardia, the cheerful evergreen candy-tuft, bee balm and its cousin wild bergamot, forget-menots, evening primroses, and the day-flowering sundrops, Iceland and Oriental poppies, hybrid phlox, the primrose and cowslips of both English fields and gardens, that are quite hardy here (at least in the coastwise New England and Middle states), double feverfew, lupins, honesty, with its profusion of lilac and white bloom and seed vessels that glisten like mother-of-pearl, the tall snapdragons, decorative alike in garden or house, fraxinella or gas plant, with its spikes of odd white flowers, and pansies, always pansies, for the open in spring and autumn, in rich, shady nooks all summer, and even at midwinter a few tufts left in a sunny spot, at the bottom of a wall by the snowdrops, will surprise you with round, cheerful faces with the snow coverlet tucked quite under their chins. Fraxinella, German Iris and Candy-tuft. It is well to keep a tabulated list of these old-time perennials in the Garden Boke, so that in the feverish haste and excitement of the planting season a mere glance will be a reminder of height, colour, and time of bloom. I lend you mine, not as containing anything new or original, but simply as a suggestion, a hint of what one garden has found good and writ on its honour list. Newer things and hybrids are now endless, and may be tested and added, one by one, but it takes at least three seasons of this adorably unmonotonous climate of alternate drought, damp, open or cold winter, to prove a plant hardy and worthy a place on the honour roll. (See p. 376.) Before you plant, sit down by yourself with the packages spread before you and examine the seeds at your leisure. This is the first uplifting of the veil that you may see into the real life of a garden, a personal knowledge of the seed that mothers the perfect plant. It may seem a trivial matter, but it is not so; each seed, be it seemingly but a dust grain, bears its own type and identity. Also, from its shape, size, and the hardness or thinness of its covering, you may learn the necessities of its planting and development, for nowhere more than in the seed is shown the miraculous in nature and the forethought and economy of it all. The smaller the seed, the greater the yield to a flower, as if to guard against chances of loss. The stately foxglove springs from a dust grain, and fading holds aloft a seed spike of prolific invention; the lupin has stout, podded, countable seeds that must of necessity fall to the ground by force of weight.

Also in fingering the seeds, you will know why some are slow in germinating: these are either hard and gritty, sandlike, like those of the English primrose, smooth as if coated with varnish, like the pansy, violet, columbine, and many others, or enclosed in a rigid shell like the iris-hued Japanese morning-glories and other ipomeas. Heart of Nature is never in a hurry, for him time is not. What matters it if a seed lies one or two years in the ground? With us of seed beds and gardens, it is different. We wish present visible growth, and so we must be willing to lend aid, and first aid to such seeds is to give them a whiff of moist heat to soften what has become more hard than desirable through man's intervention. For in wild nature the seed is sown as soon as it ripens, and falls to the care of the ground before the vitality of the parent plant has quite passed from it. That is why the seed of a hardy plant, self-sown at midsummer, grows with so much more vigour than kindred seed that has been lodged in a packet since the previous, season. My way of "first aiding" these seeds is to tie them loosely in a wisp of fine cheese-cloth or muslin, leaving a length of string for a handle (as tea is sometimes prepared for the pot by those who do not like mussy tea leaves). Dip the bag in hot (not boiling) water, and leave it there at least an hour, oftentimes all night. In this way the seed is softened and germination awakened. I have left pansy seeds in soak for twenty-four hours with good results. Of course the seed should be planted before it dries, and rubbing it in a little earth (after the manner of flouring currants for cake) will keep the seeds from sticking either to the fingers or to each other. What a contrast it all is, our economy and nature's lavishness; our impatience, nature's calm assurance! In the garden the sower feels a responsibility, the sweat beads stand on the brow in the sowing. With nature undisturbed it may be the blind flower of the wild violet perfecting its moist seed under the soil, a nod of a stalk to the wind, a ball of fluff sailing by, or the hunger of a bird, and the sowing is done. "For the past week I have been delving in the seed bed, and until it was an accomplished fact, that is as far as putting on the top sheet of finely sifted dirt over the seeds sleeping in rows and rounding the edges after the most approved methods of bed-making, praying the while for a speedy awakening, I had neither fingers for pen, ink, and paper, nor the head to properly think out the answer to your May-day invitation. "So you have heard that we are to take a long vacation this summer, and therefore ask us to join your driving and tramping trip in search of garden and sylvan adventure; in short to become your fellow-strollers in the Forest of Arden, now transported to the Berkshires. "It was certainly a kind and gracious thought of yours to admit outsiders into the intimacies of such a journey, and on the moment we both cried, 'Yes, we will go!' and then appeared but—that little word of three letters, and yet the condensation of whole volumes, that is so often the stumbling-block to enthusiasm. "The translation of this particular but will take a quire of paper, much ink, and double postage on my part, and a deal of perusive patience on yours, so to proceed. Like much else that is hearable the report is partly true, insomuch that your father, thinks it necessary for Bart to take a real vacation, as he put it, 'An entire change in a place where time is not beaten insistently at the usual sixty-seconds-a-minute rate, day in and out,' where he shall have no traincatching or appointments either business or social hanging over him. At the same time he must not hibernate physically, but be where he will feel impelled to take plenty of open-air exercise, as a matter of course! For you see, as a lawyer, Bart breathes in a great deal of bad air, and his tongue and pen hand get much more exercise than do his legs, while all the spring he has 'gone back on his vittles that reckless it would break your heart,' as Anastasia, our devoted, if outspoken, Celtic cook puts it. "The exact location of this desired valley of perfection, the ways and means of reaching it,