

THE FLOWER
BOOK



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THE FLOWER BOOK





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DAISICS
IN THE DAWN

MATTHEW PRINCE


THE FLOWER BOOK

being a procession of
flowers 
passing from MEADOW
& COPPICE 
through THE HEDGE?
 to 

THE GARDEN

 POOL 
AND HERB-PATCH



THE story of which is told by
©NSTANCE SMEDLEY ARMFIELD
pictured by MAXWELL ARM-
FIELD and published by 
CHATTO & WINDUS in the year of
·M·C· OUR LORD ·M·X·

THE FLOWER BOOK

WRITTEN BY CONSTANCE ARMFIELD
PICTURED BY MAXWELL ARMFIELD



LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
MCMX

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TO
JESSIE HORNCastle
WITH OUR LOVE

1910

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THE MEADOWS AND
COPPICE

I

I

Freshly the dawn-wind stirs among the Grasses,
 (Tight-closed the Daisy-buds: no sign of breaking,)
Up through the ashen skies the night hue passes.
 The Earth is waking—waking!

Now gleams the dawn-light through the murky masses ;
 In Heaven and Earth, cloud, leaf, and bud are breaking ;
From Day's eternal radiance Death passes.
 The Earth is waking—waking!

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Grass

THE first of the year! The world is dark and silent. The air is cold. But the sky is lightening; a streak of red steals in the horizon, and with the growing light the guardians of the Flower World emerge, upright, closely standing—the humble blades of Grass.

Marching, marching, marching, over the Earth go the little Foot-soldiers. Now the Sun is rising, and the blades flash in sheets of silver, saluting at attention. From one to the other passes the message of life. Each murmurs to his brother; each lifts his head, fresh with joy; each waits, contented, for his ultimate service.

Over the world march the little Foot-soldiers, bringing the message of life, for wherever the Grass grows,

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man and beast may live. They march by the side of the roads, and spread out in fields of green, and give pasture. They carpet the Earth, refreshing weary feet. Always they serve, and always together; no blade of any consequence alone, but vastly useful with its brothers.

They stand very humbly, scarcely higher than the ground. Sheep nibble, cows graze, men trample over them. Now and again they raise their heads to the Sun and grow valiantly upward, until the scythe comes and mows them to the Earth again. The little Foot-soldiers must give up their strength for others.

When the Foot-soldiers raise their pennons high, so that the wind shakes through and the Sun bestows its golden guerdon on them, they look more like their cousins. Though they are so lowly, their near relations are the Grain-givers, who rustle with pride in their riches, carrying, like the Grass, the message of plenty; like them, at their best when thickest on the field.

They have still more brilliant relatives, for they are kin to the Flowers of Knighthood—the proud, the pure, the exquisite—the Fleurs-de-lys.

By turquoise rivers, commanding sapphire pools, rise the broad swords of the Water Knights. These are the Warrior Lilies, flaunting gold and purple banners, straight as steel, calm in their magnificence. Are they

GRASS

not blazoned on the golden fields of heraldry? How insignificant the Foot-soldiers look beside them! yet, where the Irises stand thickest, the Grass becomes more green and beautiful, as if in admiration of their kinsmen.

Into Queen's Gardens go the Knights. Now they stand white and pure, Virgin Lilies, no longer leading armies, but holding the Holy Grail. The gold lies in the cup of purity. White and still, they line the walks where the Queen passes, and in their train come the little Foot-soldiers, standing in front of the Lilies. Now they are green as jewels and thick as velvet. No blade raises its head above another; they are mown to a perfect sward. No breeze can ruffle them. The Grass is stiller than the Lilies. May not the Queen's foot brush them? They bend low with happiness; here, in unity and peace, is their most perfect service.

Over the world march the little Foot-soldiers; out into the coppice and the meadows they travel, and now they lift their blades with a certain swagger and run free, nodding to the wild flowers. They swarm into the hollow, and give place to a fairy ring. Up amongst the roots of the trees, and out into the sun to shake with the Daffodils.

Here is a friendly world, where cousins dance with one another. Even the Lily-cousin nods to them. Deli-

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cate are her pure white bells, encased in a virgin sheath of green. She bends humbly, however. The least of the Lilies is nearest to the Grass.

Over the world go the little Foot-soldiers. On the first of the year they are ready, and stand in their place through the seasons, lifting their swords to their King, the Sun. Where light is, they are; where they grow, life is. Clothing, feeding, serving, the little Foot-soldiers march for ever and ever and ever.

Snowdrops

“**W**E want to get out,” said the Snowdrops. They were such restless little things. All the flowers were tucked up, sleeping away in their deep warm beds. Only the Snowdrops stirred and tumbled, and wouldn’t be still.

“Be quiet,” said a drowsy leaf. “The world is asleep. It has drawn the sheet over its head, and it is quite impossible to wake it.”

“We wouldn’t say a word,” begged the Snowdrops. “Oh, we do want to see what the world looks like with a sheet all over its head.”

“Like a ghost,” said a gruff old Root. “The sight would freeze you stiff.”

But this was a foolish remark. It only made the Snowdrops more curious.

“The world couldn’t hurt us if it’s asleep,” said they valiantly.

“Oh, do lie down,” said the Daffodil bulbs. “It isn’t nearly time to get up yet. We peeped out too early once, and were sadly nipped. Never again.”

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“Afraid!” whispered a Snowdrop, nudging another. “We’re not afraid. The Violets are up still.”

“So’s the Grass,” said a Snowdrop. “So are lots of things. Come on.”

“You have only your nightgowns on,” cried the Hyacinths. “You’ll catch your deaths, you naughty babies!”

But the Snowdrops were off. Up they pushed till they were at the surface. Here was the world, buried in white silence, with a grey nightcap of cloud.

Hoo! How desolate it was!

But the Snowdrops were taking deep breaths of the pure air, and lifting their little white gowns—yes, positively, they were dancing!

“How sweet to be free!” they lisped. “We have the whole world to ourselves. Dear world! We can say now how much we love you. When you are awake, you are so big and active, and have so many children to attend to; but now you are resting, we can creep up close, close, and kiss you.”

Not a word said the great cold Earth; colder awake, however, than when sleeping. The Snowdrops could nestle up beside it now: there was nothing to push them away.

“How still it is! I think the world has stopped moving,” said the little ignoramuses, and shook their bed-gowns out, quite satisfied.



Snowdrops

SNOWDROPS

“Oooh, how cold it is!” groaned the Daffodils far down below. “Those foolish babies must be frozen to death by now.”

But the Snowdrops were pirouetting as gaily as if it were June.

Daisies

THE red had deepened on the horizon into a band of crimson. Colour was emerging from the grey. In the motionless ranks of the Grass-blades the dawn-red showed, dotted amongst them in tight-closed buds.

So crimson were the new-comers, for all the world they seemed like hearts set in the Grass.

“What is amongst us?” whispered the Grass-blades. And over the world ran the question: “What has come?”

“Our hearts are showing,” murmured the Grass.

The crimson was glowing into gold. Over the meadows rose the Sun. Brighter and brighter the Sunlight streamed. Birds twittered, mist-wreaths lifted: the dew shone on the ready Grass-blades.

The buds were opening.

“The Sun is in them—the Sun is in our hearts,” called the Grass, and the joyful dew-drops shone like fire.

The buds parted. First peeped out a golden Sun,

DAISIES

then the crimson gave place to a circle of virgin white, until each Sun was decked with a dazzling crown, and, Queens of spotless purity, the Daisies stood amongst the Grass.

“The Queens are with us,” whispered the Grass, and bent in a hush of salutation.

“Rise up,” said the Daisies. Their round little faces were shining with laughter. Each turned to the Sun, a mirror for its beams, spreading wider and wider till the crowns stretched outward in embrace of every ray. Wide, wide, the Queens’ hearts opened.

“But you are Queens,” said the Grass, and stood at attention around them.

“Protect us,” said the Daisies, and the Foot-soldiers closed in compact ranks.

“How come Queens amongst Foot-soldiers?” murmured the Grass.

“Our place is with the humblest servants,” said the Queens, and the tips of their crowns crisped upwards. “Our joy is to serve,” they cried, “and to teach you to smile.”

The humble Grass stood mute.

“Oh, smile!” cried the Queens. “Laugh with us!”

The meadows stretched in waves of green, studded with white, fresh, gay, and Spring-like. Behold, the Grass was laughing with the Daisies!

Violets

THE trees were leafless. The mould about their roots was thick with rotting vegetation. Grey mists surrounded the meadows, and the light was dull.

Only the Violet-bank stayed green and flowering. The flowers rose like priests, solemnly bowing their heads, defying frost and wind.

“There is no death,” they were declaring. “There is no death.”

Round them the bare trees soared, round them the dead leaves mouldered; all the glad green of the wood was gone, and darkness and corruption showed.

But still the Violets bowed their heads, and breathed forth life in all its warmth and fulness.

“Life is eternal,” said the Violets. They had risen like Kings in the Autumn. When everything was fading the Violets had come out, big with their mission, clad in richest purple, and had boldly issued defiance of the cold that threatened Earth’s green plenty.

“Death is only a dream,” said the Violets, and swelled



Violets

VIOLETS

with triumph, sending forth scent until the wood was glad because of them.

“The world will wake again,” said the Violets. Snow and frost had crept up through the trees; the Earth was bound as with iron; but on the sheltered bank beneath the hedgerow the Violet-leaves stayed green, and blossoms peeped out under their curved shields.

“Life is eternal,” they murmured, unshaken in their prayer of affirmation. Colour and scent and form were still within the wood, strong, sweet, and pure; the royal purple was lightening into the blue of hope.

The Earth was stirring, the boughs were growing big with buds, green was breaking. Other flowers were peeping—Snowdrop, Aconite, and Crocus; the Daisies flowered. Here were the Primroses.

There came a rush of colour through the wood. The Violet-banks were blue. Out from the green they hurried, the youthful priests of Spring. Their breath came warm, laden with the promise and resemblance of all the flowers that had ever been and ever would be.

“There is no death,” they cried, and the message rushed in gusts over the meadows. Thousands of priests had risen to swell the triumph-song.

They had stepped out at the first breath of despair, and had kept their trust all the long winter; while the year lay bound in the dream, they had prayed. Now

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their prayers were fulfilled. Life was rising for all to see.

So with heads still bowed, but blue—oh, blue as deepest Heaven—the Violets made thanksgiving.

But as the world had awakened, there was no need to keep vigil. So the priests extinguished their gold and orange candles, and always bowing their heads, retired beneath the Violet-leaves.

Wood-Anemones

“IT simply won’t wake up,” said the Rain, and fell in a deluge of tears. The Twigs received it apathetically.

“I have showered entreaties on the buds,” murmured the Rain, “and poured forth prayers to the flowers, but nothing will come out. One or two peep at me, but directly I stop they go back to bed. I never knew such a sleepy Wood.”

“Nor did I,” cried the Breeze, and behold! the Wood was full of its presence. Oh, what a turmoil! But though it shook every branch and blade, not a single bud opened, and at last it too sank down among the Twigs on the ground. Then they *had* to listen.

“Never, never was there such a sleepy Wood,” chattered the Breeze. “I’ve shaken it until I’m weary; but the more I toss and rumple, the tighter the buds close. I can see them all ready to jump out, too, which makes the situation particularly irritating.”

“It’s so much more comfortable to sleep,” said the Twigs. “What’s the sense of coming out into such a

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noise, to be scuffled, and slapped, and washed, and generally made unhappy? One can't escape you awake."

"Talk of ingratitude!" exclaimed the Breeze. "Why, how often have you thanked me for my refreshing motion?"

"And me for quenching your thirst and brightening and adorning you?" cried the Rain.

"Talk of gratitude, then," said the Twigs, and continued to lie in provoking slumber.

"Oh, what are we to do with this sleepy, stupid, ungrateful Wood?" sobbed Breeze and Rain together. "It will never, never, never wake up, however we scold and attack."

"Perhaps that isn't the way to wake it," said a soft voice from below the Twigs.

The Raindrops pursued investigations, and discovered some Twigs that had apparently sunk into the ground.

"Perhaps you will wake the Wood for us, then," said they contemptuously.

"We can but try," said the small brown things.

"How? How?" said the sharp Breeze, hurrying up.

"We can kiss it," said the buried Twigs.

"Kiss it!" exclaimed the Breeze.

"Kiss it!" said the pelting Rain. "My dears, if the Wood won't waken when we've done so much, do you imagine a kiss will be of any use?"

WOOD-ANEMONES

“And such kisses, too!” said the Breeze, as some tiny green shoots rose above the Earth.

“We can but try,” said the buried Twigs; and lo and behold! pink buds showed between the pale green leaves. Larger and deeper they grew, until amongst the moss and fallen branches the soft rose-coloured buds were everywhere.

The Breeze and Rain grew suddenly shy; they had never seen so many kisses. The Breeze popped behind the hedge, and whistled to the Rain to follow, and the sleeping Wood was kissed in silence.

“It is waking,” whispered the Breeze.

“I must try kissing next time,” said the Rain.

Softly the flowers were opening, as though a pattern of blue and yellow were being drawn across the Wood. Overhead, green sprayed the branches. Here was King Sun, smiling approval; and Breeze and Rain were too enthralled to retreat, but echoed his benediction, and caressed the Wood till every leaf was sparkling.

“It is quite awake,” said the Breeze, and taking courage, looked about.

The pink buds were gone. In their place were white stars, so pure the Breeze scarcely dared to touch them.

“Where are the kisses?” it whispered.

“We were the kisses,” said the stars. “The pink buds held us.”

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“But you are stars,” said the Rain, falling like a shimmering veil.

The Breeze hovered rather uncertainly. It had always thought stars were out of its sphere, and did not know how to behave.

But the stars saw everything.

“Have no fear,” they cried. “Play with us, dance with us: nothing can hurt us. We are so strong.”

“Certainly they wakened the Wood,” said the Rain.

“Yes, they must be strong,” said the Breeze, reassured, and swooped amongst the Wind-flowers.

But they were laughing softly.

“We only loved it,” they whispered.

Daffodils

EXPECTATION was rife in the copse. The meadows were more alive than ever. Clouds scudded across the blue; the March winds frolicked in a perfect whirl. Something was certainly going to happen.

The turf by the meadow ditches was dotted with clumps of green; everywhere the barricades were rising—a fair, possibly. One could scarcely recognize the close-cropped fields for these blue-green palings. Not all together in an orderly assembly, either, but rising from the ditches up to the higher levels, and scattered thickly in the coppice. Most decidedly their presence had significance.

Besides, there was something in the air—a strange anticipation. Everything was whispering. Evidently the visitors were due.

But the Sun had not made his appearance, and the new-comers were thoroughly conversant with Etiquette. They were peeping between the palings, though. The gleam of their gay clothes could be discerned. Oh, if

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only King Sun would deign to look in for a moment ! It was slow work waiting, especially when the delightful creatures were positively there in everybody's sight !

Here he came. Up the skies, decked in their freshest azure hue in honour of the day, brightly flashed His Royal Gaze. Hills and copse and uplands shone with joy and glory. And out to greet him in all the newness of their fresh Spring costumes rose the illustrious company of the Daffydillies, Players in Ordinary to His Majesty. Now the season was begun indeed. Here were the Elegants, stiff-petticoated, frilled, and starched, swaying and nodding with exquisite grace.

“Positively, they are still more beautiful this season,” ran the admiring murmur. “How fresh their costumes look ! Such a delicate style !”

The Daffydillies fluted out with charming condescension, and twirled a little so that the audience could see the perfect set of their kirtles. But they did not perform.

The meadows began to grow impatient. Could it be hinted that everyone was agog to see the new dances ? Would it be presuming to beg, very reverently, for a single pirouette, just a taste of the performance which would be given, naturally, in the Daffydillies' own good time ?



Daffodils

DAFFODILS

But the Daffydillies stuck out their skirts very stiffly.

“We do not dance now,” said they. “We interpret rhythm. Dancing is common. And we cannot do anything without accompaniment.”

“Or inspiration,” languished a tall bud.

“It is the same thing,” nodded the others. “We must wait for the Mood.”

Here it was, coming up over the downs with the clouds racing free before it. In a moment it was among them, this rousing, riotous, turbulent March Mood. Oh, how the Daffydillies shook their skirts out, first to the left and then to the right! and there they were, dancing and shaking and rippling in wonderful figures.

“The Water Dance!” gasped the Daffodils, and ducked nearly to the earth, while the long lines of blue-green barriers swept up and down like waves.

“Now we are eddying,” said the Daffodils, explaining out loud, as they had no printed programmes, and all the leaves were erect and swirling into the most fascinating little curls.

“Grand Finale!” said the Daffodils, and lifted golden trumpets and bent backwards, nearly double, and then leapt forward in one great triumphant blare.

“Quite the most successful ballet ever seen,” cried all the audience. The Daffodils bowed, and returned to elegant stiffness. The sweet, old-fashioned creatures

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always said the same things every year ; still, fair words are pleasant hearing.

The meadows were whispering again. Would the beautiful strange visitors deign to repeat—just the last measure ? They would only ask for one.

But the Daffodils were on their dignity, and refused to do so much as consider the request. As they had explained, they were dependent entirely on their accompaniment, and the Mood had gone. There wasn't a breath of it left.

The sun shone all day, but the strangers stayed motionless. Birds and butterflies and field-flowers had to go to sleep without the dancers having yielded. The uplands slept all night, and so they missed the Wind Revels.

Yet what a performance ! At two in the morning the Mood descended. It crept up the downs close to the ground, and all the Daffydillies trembled and awoke beneath a wild sky, through which the Moon was breaking. Vast clouds were voyaging across like storm-tossed frigates in full sail.

Oh, what a night ! Now the Mood had caught the dancers, all of them. Fiercely they leapt forward, then began to dance, faster and faster, in a perfect gallop of excitement, till the barriers swept the very Earth, and then again seemed to be tearing themselves

DAFFODILS

up by the roots. They were joined, too, by a dual troupe of ghost-shadows, which mimicked every movement.

“ Looking-glass Figure ! ” called the Daffodils, as the Moon shone out and all the fields were white. Oh, how the ghosts frolicked !

“ Meadow Dance ! ” called the Daffodils. And the Moon peeped, while the shadows went dancing half-way up the field.

“ Grand Finale ! ” cried the Daffodils, all aroar with the Mood, or the Wind, or the Music, whatever you will.

Now they lashed like rigging in a gale, and then shivered into breathlessness, and then leapt towards the Moon. Surely they would be free from their roots this time, and go soaring upward, upward ?

But they were in their places next morning, fresh as paint, stiff-kirtled, frilled, and starched when the Sun awoke the world. Ready, too, to oblige with a Morris Dance, when the Mood stole up with the fleecy clouds. They were not a bit tired.

Nor did they spoil their audience's pleasure by telling of the great Wind Revels it had missed. Like true artistes, the whole soul of the Daffodils was thrown into what they were doing at the moment.

Yes, they were a great success. The audience was

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constant to the very end. The meadows did not even grumble at the rather untidy traces that were left when the glorious company had departed. One excused much to such delightful creatures.

Besides, the fields soon looked themselves again, and, save for a clump of yellowed stumps here and there, no one would have known that only a month or so ago a company of Players had erected their booths and usurped the whole attention of the district.

Primroses

THE early dew glistened on the moss. The shadows were deep in the hedgerow, for the morning Sun was only just kissing the tips of the Grass-blades far out in the field.

In the heart of a Primrose clump a soft bud was peeping. Shy, it crept up, a little virgin gazing gently on the world. The bank was damp and muddy, but the Primrose looked through leafless boughs where the sky showed blue.

Oh, the vastness of the heavens! Deep down in the clump of green the Primrose peered. Its stem was weak, and its petals delicate.

“Of what use can I be in this great world?” faltered the Primrose.

Timidly other buds were peeping, shyly as child-maids spying from their bed-clothes, trustfully as child-maids who meet the kind gaze of the early Sun, and steal out to greet him.

The Earth gave up its greyness; the dew was washing it away, and bringing out the colours clean and fresh.

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As the Sun neared the bank, even the shadows ran and left the moss as green as jewels. Green the ooze in the ditch, green the leafage scrambling to the tree-roots. Amongst the tangle the Primroses shone softly; their fragrance stole through moss and mould, faintly as child-maids breathe.

The Sun was very bright ; its beams reached every nook and corner. More and more Primroses opened, spreading their petals out in simple trust, looking upward with the wide-eyed gaze of innocence.

Most were half buried in the green, but some were rising, to venture forth in tender companies.

They stole down the hedgerow. By twos and threes they studded the green pastures.

The Sun blazed down. The lowly Grass-blades gave them welcome ; the Daisies smiled in gracious friendliness.

But the farther they ventured, the paler grew the Primroses, and the more their frail stems drooped. Alas for timid virgins ! They had hardly gained the meadow before they missed the shelter of their home.

“ Oh, we are not fit for the open world,” they faltered, and stopped their travels.

There was shade in the coppice behind the hawthorn-trees. Some Primroses peeped through the hedge. Alders and birches rose in the spinney. A tiny



Primroses

PRIMROSES

brook babbled under the hazel-roots. The Sun could only shimmer through the green.

“The noonday cannot hurt us here,” whispered the Primroses.

They slipped down into the hollow ; here was peace indeed. Up the glade they started. The pleasant sunshine fell in dappled patches. The little brook purred merrily like tinkling cymbals. Crushing on each other’s heels, the child-maids came—gay multitudes, brave in their numbers. Over glade and hollow, into tree-roots, swarmed the merry virgins like a school set free, until the whole wood was a-flutter with the joy of Spring.

Some sickly little Primroses still struggled to keep their place among the hardier flowers in the broad meadows, but their pale heads drooped, and they continued to have doubts as to their use in the world. But in the coppice, the Primroses suffered no doubts at all. Full of smiles, all poured forth a grateful prayer of happiness.

They had filled the Wood with innocence and gladness. Surely that was well worth living for ?

Buttercups

SOME young flowers were taking a vow. “We will hold nothing but Light,” they agreed, and their petals closed into transparent cups.

“Nothing but Light,” they vowed again. “We shall do that better if our cups are brightly polished.”

So the Buttercups clad themselves in shining armour, and the Light flashed from one to the other.

“We must be vigilant,” they nodded, and their stems tightened and became like springing wire. Oh, how the shining cups sprang upward!

“And ever on guard,” they cried. And their green leaves spread out into many swords.

“Now are we ready to hold the Light,” they prayed, and stood forward, armoured, sworded, with their lifted cups.

The Sun poured down brilliantly and filled the cups, but still the Light came streaming. The armour began to change. Imperceptibly colour stole into it. The Sun had permeated the chalices.

“We are accepted,” said the Buttercups, and stood



Buttercups

BUTTERCUPS

quite still, erect, holding the Light, sheathed in glittering yellow. "Now to carry the Light through the world."

"Our Pages," smiled the Queens from their green cushions.

"Our Comrades," said the Foot-soldiers.

The Buttercups turned dazzled eyes upon their neighbours. Their armour was still a little stiff, and the glory of their treasure was bewildering.

"The Sun is in our hearts," smiled the Daisies.

"We only serve," murmured the Grass, and bent its head.

"With our Pages," said the laughing Queens. "Go up to the Sun together. He is rising higher and higher. Rise, too!"

The Buttercups trembled, their stems separated, dozens of cups broke forth. They leapt joyously upward and upward till the Queens were below—far below. But who was with them? Who was feathering and branching and waving and growing—growing?

"We, too, serve the Sun," said the Foot-soldiers, bowing their heads until the fields were rippling in low waves. "We have been told to shelter you, the beautiful Pages of our Queens."

Then the last stiffness left the Buttercups, and they poured the treasure of their chalices far afield. Over

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the Earth swarmed the Pages, until the meadows shone like a lake of gold and shook with mellow laughter.

“We bring the message of abundance,” cried the Pages. “Our cups cannot hold the Light: it has sunk in and is brimming over.”

“That is the way of Light,” said the wise Queens. The Pages were rioting high in the air, but the Queens aspired no higher. Their place was at the roots of all things, even of the Foot-soldiers. But the Pages were gazing out upon the world.

“There is no place where Light cannot be carried,” they shouted. Vigilant, armoured, wiry, the Golden Pages ran. They plunged into the stream, and the cups grew larger and more golden, for now they drank from running waters.

A glorious regiment flourished over the banks and water alike.

Here were the marsh-lands, dank and oozy.

“Light can penetrate,” carolled the Pages, and launched out fearlessly into the slime. Their leaves spread strongly outward, closing into boats to carry them, the great cups lifted sturdily, deep Marsh Mari-golds.

“Married to Light,” sang the Pages. “Even the marshes are married to Light.”

Hyacinths

OH, what a stir and excitement! Even the oldest trees were being decorated. The Oaks had wreathed their trunks in young red shoots that gave a most youthful appearance. The Beeches made one wink, their costumes were so startling. Black and brightest green! The Silver Birches maintained their leadership in elegance by a delightful idea: they had covered themselves with green mist like the spray of fountains. But perhaps the Sycamores were most conspicuous: they had hung tassels all over themselves.

There was no doubt that a very important festival was going to be held. The Horse-Chestnuts bowed with loads of candles, the Whitsun Pear shone with Fairy-lamps, and the Flowering Cherry-trees had turned themselves into huge Chinese Lanterns. Even the Grass-blades had had their faces washed.

“But then, a Poets’ Congress doesn’t come too often,” said the Privet Hedge, who was doing its best with a fine collection of farthing-dips. “The least one can do is to light up well.”

THE FLOWER BOOK

“Yes, and it’s worth while taking trouble, for Poets make a note of everything,” said the Blackthorn, putting forth its few blossoms.

“Their enthusiasm is so infectious,” said homely Mother Elder, and brought forth great nose-gays of buds.

“But what is it all about?” asked a Dandelion, who had only arrived in the Wood that Spring.

“The Poets’ Congress,” said a courteous Champion.

“What’s a Poets’ Congress?” asked the Dandelion.

“Well, you *are* green,” said Mother Elder. “Fancy not knowing about that. All the Poets of the Flower World will assemble shortly to sing the Hymn of Praise.”

“All are allowed to join in the chorus,” piped a young Mountain-Ash, and burst into a perfect ecstasy of blossom.

“Oh, it is such a glorious Hymn!” gasped the old Hawthorn Bush, making superhuman efforts to come out.

“It is the perfect expression of Spring,” said the Birch-trees, and spoke as artistic authorities. The Dandelion bloomed as well as it could; it was a common little plant, given to intruding, although just now the general exuberance put it in the shade.

“They are beginning to arrive,” whispered the

HYACINTHS

Campion. "Shrink as small as possible. They need all the room."

But the Dandelion continued to poke out its head, for the Poets were making their appearance. They stood about in little groups of twos and threes. Here and there one would be seen quite alone.

"Meditating," explained the Campion. "Look how he droops his head."

"No wonder, with such heavy curls," sniffed the Dandelion, and erected his own shock complacently.

"Modesty is extremely becoming," replied the Campion reprovingly.

"What a lesson in elegance!" murmured the Birches, drooping too.

"Now they are beginning to brush out their hyacinthine curls," said the Mountain-Ash, very excited. "Oh, how they curl!"

What a Congress it was going to be! The Poets were streaming into the Wood; up the dell and through the meadows to the spot whence the pæan was to rise they pressed upon each other's heels—Poets of all sorts and sizes, big and little, strong and weakly. Here was a hollow of Minor Poets, who made up for their shortness by their grace; here was a ridge of Great Poets, shaking their curls out, tall and free. They all were improved by each other's company.

THE FLOWER BOOK

The Wood was filled. The Campion and Dandelion had disappeared—every inch was given over to the Poets.

Their curls were fresh and crisping; their supple bodies swayed in perfect unison. The time had come: upward all their bells were lifting until they stood alert and ready.

Now for it! Oh, the blast of blue! Ever increasing in depth, clear as azure, the pæan of the blue bells rose, eddying, rippling into perfect stillness.

The whole Wood lay bathed in blue, an inland sea on which the clouds cast shadows and the sunbeams played.

Harebells

SUMMER drowsed in hedgerow and meadow. The riot of Spring was over. The Harebells arrived in the heat of the year. They lifted their heads in the valley, to find Sorrel and Clover and Vetch around them.

“We are the Messengers,” said the Harebells. “We must go out into the world.”

“You will die in the heat,” said the Meadow-flowers. “Even here the Sun is shrivelling us to extinction.”

“Messengers must always keep fresh,” carolled the Harebells, and went into the dust of the highways.

“You will be trodden on,” said the Flowers in the Hedgerows. But the Harebells stood on the very fringe of the road.

“We must carry the Message to those who need it,” said they. “It is possible to be fresh in the Sun, even though one is fashioned delicately. We know no fatigue, but march on, rejoicing!”

“You will perish if you climb,” called the last Field-flowers. “We are making a desperate struggle for existence. The winds come down so searchingly.”

THE FLOWER BOOK

“We can bear to be searched,” sang the Harebells, and climbed up on to the headland and shook their bells out into the gulf of blue.

“The sea-winds—the cruel sea-winds!” shivered the Meadow-flowers. But the Harebells only waxed a stronger blue; their wire-like stems resisted the wind splendidly.

“There is no foothold on the crumbling cliff,” came faintly from the uplands.

But the Messengers shrilled loud: “We find foothold everywhere.”

“Wait till you climb the mountains,” said the other flowers. But the Harebells continued upward.

Now ice-cold rills purred round them, and snow shone white against the sky. Rocks started from the Earth, and even faithful Grass-blades found it hard to thrive. The Harebells were growing a still intenser blue. Deep as a King’s mantle, luminous as evening skies, the bells crisped outward, spreading ever, as though to send the message farther and farther.

“There is nothing to live on up yonder—no Earth at all,” said the Grass-blades, and came to a standstill.

The Harebells mounted still.

Pure and clear, their blue bells rustled on the mountain crags. The frail bells swayed over the ether. Far, far below, summer lay in a sleeping world. Here was the



Bluebellis

HAREBELLS

freshness of the mountain wind, cold and free ; here was the great Sun, blazing in the silence. Now the Harebells had reached the summit of all things.

Far down they saw the first of their brothers, those who were still in the valley : they watched the blue specks travelling upward, along dusty roads, over cliffs, and up into the mountains—always climbing—till there was nothing between them and heaven.

THE HEDGE

Fight the good fight ! No raging wind
Shall pierce the guard we keep,
Or harm the blooms that lie behind,
Waiting the call from sleep.

Fight the good fight! and still endure,
Spring's guerdon on our crest ;
Throughout the Winter, guarded sure
Has been the Flowers' rest.

Blackthorn

THE Hedge stood round the garden, and protected it so well that none of the Meadowflowers could peep inside. Roots and branches twisted one with the other, making a firm barrier. One of its chief buttresses was the Blackthorn.

“You are an unresponsive playfellow,” sighed the Wind, and circled through the barren branches in a confidential fashion, as though they were on the most friendly terms.

“I’m on duty,” said the Blackthorn, speaking the plain truth, and not deigning to notice the enemy’s wiles.

“Still, just a bit of a game,” pleaded the Wind. “If you’d poke out your head for an inch, so that I could frolic with you.”

“Yes, and through me and into my garden,” grunted the Blackthorn. “Will you never learn that I’m too old to be taken in?”

“Oh, you are a provoking creature!” cried the Wind, and tried to slap it.

The Blackthorn did not move a twig.

THE FLOWER BOOK

“You’re so forbidding,” whimpered the Wind.

“It’s my business to forbid intruders,” replied the Blackthorn, in no way stirred.

“Oh, do let me peep at the garden for a second,” cried the Wind, with a sudden swoop, and abandoning all pretences.

But only a few twigs creaked; the garden was perfectly safe.

“Exasperating old thing!” sobbed the Wind, and went off in a screech of rage. The day was dry and fine, so it whirled aloft, muttering and crying.

“Hard, cantankerous old fossil!” complained the Wind. “There’s no youth in it; it has no heart.”

“Of whom are you talking?” said a dreamy little Cloud.

The Wind gave a sigh, and sank into the Cloud’s bosom thoroughly exhausted.

“The Blackthorn,” it murmured. “I can’t make the least impression. It is age-bound.”

The Cloud floated peacefully.

“Have you never seen the Blackthorn smile?” it asked.

“Smile!” said the Wind. “That grizzled, rough-barked, knotted-fingered——”

“Look down,” whispered the Cloud.

Certainly the Hedge looked different. Little glints



Blackthorn

BLACKTHORN

were flickering on the Blackthorn's iron countenance. It was breaking, softening.

"The Thorn is smiling!" cried the Wind, and fell right through the Cloud, scattering its fleeciness afar.

Down swooped the Wind to the hedge, and rushed past the Blackthorn, almost beside itself with joy.

"You are young after all," cried the Wind in a whirl of ecstasy.

"Young in heart," said the Blackthorn, unbending a little.

"You look so beautiful I must kiss you," said the Wind, and played with the smiles. "I have lain in the bosom of a Cloud. You are as white," murmured the Wind. "How sweet! how fresh!"

The smile shimmered in brighter radiance. Now the Blackthorn was entirely melted.

"Aha, I have you!" screamed the Wind, and lashed wildly. The air was filled with snow. Like a whirling mist the smiles broke out, and were caught and tossed and torn until there was nothing but the conquering Wind.

And the unconquered Blackthorn.

The Wind paused to look, and found its treachery had not advanced its purpose at all. The smile had faded, but the Blackthorn stood more impervious than ever; instead of the smile, it was clad in green armour.

THE FLOWER BOOK

“Hoo!” cried the Wind. “You old cheat!” and flung upon the hedge. But the armour was impenetrable.

The most annoying part was that the Blackthorn still looked young.

“I believe you are a magic tree,” whimpered the Wind.

“I do my duty,” said the Blackthorn. “There is magic in that.”

Elder

WHAT is this slight creature doing among us?" asked the Oak.

Ash, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, and Brier stretched out their leaves inquiringly. Now the Oak had pointed out the fact, they realized there was an intruder in the Hedge.

"Rather graceful," said the Brier, curving its branches with conscious elegance.

"I call it weedy," growled the Blackthorn. "Look at those thin green rods."

"Why, they are mere reeds," said the Hawthorn. "Of pith, I declare! A child could snap them."

"Let us crowd it out immediately," said the stout Ash-branches.

"Oh, please let me stay," said the stranger, and put forth green leaves in the prettiest fashion.

There was something gentle about it, a soothing quietness.

"But we defend the garden," explained the Oak. "One must be strong for that."

THE FLOWER BOOK

“ Besides, you take up so much room,” said the Ash.

“ A Hedge needs breathing-spaces,” said the Elder.

“ I will be your sanctuary.”

“ Of what use is a sanctuary ?” growled the Blackthorn. “ We are on active service.”

“ I hold peace,” the Elder murmured, and from its green rods more leaves sprouted, until a beautiful green bush pushed out like a maiden’s bower.

The Hedge-trees did not know what to say. They had expressed disapproval, but the harmony of the new-comer was not disturbed. There it stood, sending forth a wealth of leaves in perfect peace.

Then Thorn, Ash, and Oak, pushed below the soil as well as above, but the Elder’s roots were tenacious.

“ For all its gentle talk,” scowled the Blackthorn. “ The deceiver !”

“ One must be strong to keep peace,” answered the Elder.

“ Strength lies in interlacement,” said the Oak. “ But this tree might be in the garden itself.”

“ I am a garden in myself,” smiled the Elder ; and, behold, a mass of flowers broke forth. They were pale green, the most modest and subdued of creamy-green—hardly green at all. The sweet fragrance stole into the sunshine ; the bush was covered. Never had such a display of blossom graced the Hedge.

ELDER

“The flowers are a peaceful colour,” murmured the Oak.

“Their perfume soothes,” said the Hawthorn generously.

“A delightful freshness,” said the Brier.

The Elder-tree continued blooming. Into the bower the green light filtered in hushed silence.

“One feels rested, somehow,” said the Blackthorn.

“But how strange to bear flowers without growing thorns to protect them!”

“None of us can expand when we’re set close together,” muttered the Oak.

“I keep peace, you see,” said the Elder, showering petals as freely as sea-foam. “Nothing helps growth so much as peace.”

Now the Elder displayed a profusion of green berries.

“What a crop!” said the Ash. “Does not our presence affect you at all?”

“Peace is never conscious of pressure,” smiled the Elder-tree.

“All the same, the garden would not be protected if there were only Elder-trees to guard it,” growled the Blackthorn.

“So I come where you are closest pressed,” replied the Elder-tree, “and need peace.”

THE FLOWER BOOK

“ Naturally the Elder flourishes,” said the Ash-tree.
“ It gives to the Wind. There is no fight in it.”

“ The Wind doesn’t get through,” said the Oak.
“ The twigs grow too closely together.”

“ Peace protects all it guards,” said the Elder.

The Hedge-trees said nothing. Perhaps, after all,
it was wiser to hold their peace !

Brier

“**T**HE Brier has been summoned to the Garden!
The Brier is going to the Garden !”

All the Hedge was rustling. Even the Blackthorn-leaves were pushing out. The Oak-shoots turned pink with excitement.

“How? Why?” asked a perturbed Plantain, poking up its ugly little head. Usually the Hedge took no notice of the Hedgerow, but to-day all ceremony was put on one side by this amazing promotion.

Never had anyone in Hedge or Hedgerow received an invitation to the Garden. Vague rumours of untellable delights had been wafted, but the Hedge-trees guarded secrets faithfully. This was all the more possible because they had never been granted a sight of the Garden’s magnificence. On the garden side of the Hedge grew a thick wall of Yew. Still, even Yew has its confidential moments, and certainly rumours had penetrated. But to be actually going inside!

“And to stay!” said the Hawthorn. “Once a cousin of mine was bidden to the garden. They say he blushed so much, he stayed red ever after.”

THE FLOWER BOOK

“Why should the Brier be chosen?” the inquisitive Plantain asked. “I should have thought the Elder-tree would be more suitable.”

“Yes, why the Brier? I thought nothing but flowers were allowed in the Garden,” said a Dandelion, joining in presumptuously.

“What do weeds like you know of the matter?” said the old Thorn. “Keep in your place, and don’t go pushing where you have no business.”

“I’m much more a flower than the Brier,” said the Dandelion, whom no one could snub.

“Hush! hush! The Brier is to be considered Royal now,” whispered the Ash. “Perhaps you had better be told, so that you will know how to keep your distance. A Royal Baby is coming, and the Brier has been summoned to nurse it.”

“Oh, why?” the Plantain asked, bristling and pointing its curious nose.

“Royalty needs nourishment,” said the communicative Ash. “No one in the Garden is unselfish enough to provide it, so they have to come outside.”

“To us,” said Hedge and Hedgerow together, united in the common glory. “We are certainly sturdy.”

“Oh yes, we are certainly that,” said the Dandelion, and imagined it was Royal until it lost its head and

BRIER

went floating all over the meadow and vanished into air.

But the Hedge was watching the departure of the Brier, and could waste no attention on fleeting illusions. The Brier was rising to fulfil a splendid purpose.

All the same, the Hedge felt no envy. The Brier clung to the soil piteously.

“You will miss the freedom,” said the Ash-boughs compassionately.

“I hear they do nothing but clip you in the Garden,” said the Oak.

“Yes, they detest growth,” said the Bramble. “I don’t know what they’ll say to your wild shoots. I couldn’t bear if mine were cut. How can you?”

“My strength is wanted for the Royal Nursling,” answered the Brier; and rose from the earth with sudden renunciation. As it did so the Hedge heard a proud sigh, and the words came faintly, “After all, I am of Royal stock.”

And then there was a gap in the hedge.

“Back again?” said the Hedge next year.

A shoot had pushed through the leaves.

“Yes,” smiled the Brier. “They planted me on the other side of you. I thought I could peep through, and here I am!”

THE FLOWER BOOK

"How do you get on in the garden?" asked the Hedge, with great excitement.

"Very cramped, isn't it?" said the Oak.

"Very weakening, from all accounts," remarked the Thorn.

"I cannot describe such beauty," said the Brier; and all were conscious of a new distinction in its bearing.

"Artificial, though," growled the Blackthorn.

"Oh no," said the Brier. "The sky and the Sun are above, just as here, and the dew and the rain water the soil."

"But there's no Wind," said the Oak. "We see to that."

"It is certainly more sheltered," conceded the Brier. There was a delightful fragrance proceeding from it which was new.

"Your leaves are smaller and finer," said the Oak-tree.

"One grows finer in the garden," said the Brier, "especially when one is close to Royalty."

"How's the Royal Baby?" said the Elder.

"Just one cluster of pink Roses," smiled the Brier. The Hedge quivered.

"Why, what is happening to you?" asked the Ash-tree, almost in a whisper.

"I am putting on my jewels," said the Brier.

BRIER

Over its branches clusters of pink pearls were starting. Gradually they opened, and each held a golden diadem.

“Well, I never did,” said the Oak.

“Anything like that—I should think not,” said the Thorn, looking blacker than ever.

“My cousin did, though, as I told you,” said the Hawthorn. “The Garden is accountable for any transformation. My cousin lost its scent when it turned red.”

“But I didn’t blush,” said the Brier, very gay indeed in its jewels. “I only served. If one performs one’s duty faithfully, one is rewarded royally in the Garden. All the same, it is charming to be here. There is no such united society yonder.”

“You have become sweet, Brier!” said the Hedge.

Honeysuckle

“**O**NE can’t get so much as a breath of air,” said a miserable blade of Grass. “As for growing, it’s impossible. The trees have blocked out the Light.”

“They grew up into it,” said a tiny voice. Two green leaves were opening on a weedy stem. “Why shouldn’t we?”

“The trees have taken the room,” said the Grass, looking sicklier every minute. “The strong usurp everything from the weak. It’s no good struggling against them. We can’t get to the Light; they are first in the Hedge.”

“There is no limit to Light,” said the tiny voice; “and I need it; so there must be a way to it. I shouldn’t have been sent up if I hadn’t been meant to live.”

“I wasn’t meant to,” moaned the Grass, and dwindled into wretchedness.

The Honeysuckle leaves peered upward. Overhead were apparently impenetrable stems and branches; scarcely a glimmer showed between. Yet, if one looked



Honeysuckle

HONEYSUCKLE

very trustfully, there were some interstices through which one might grow.

“It’s no use wanting to have leaves, my dear,” said a crackly Twig. “No Light will ever come down here. Give up the struggle and grow dry. It’s the most sensible plan.”

“Yes, we struggled desperately,” sighed a neighbouring Branch, “but in vain. Give up and resign yourself to the darkness. It was doubtless sent for some wise purpose.”

“The Light is there,” said the Honeysuckle. “While life is in me, I shall climb. I have gained a little, even though it still is dark.”

“But you don’t know how thick the branches are,” chorused the Twigs.

“I know the Light is there,” said the Honeysuckle.

“Oh, if you don’t need advice !” snapped the Twigs

“I need help,” said the Honeysuckle gently, and helped itself up by one Twig’s extended arm, and rested against another, and accepted a friendly shove, yet all in a truly independent manner, overbearing no one, and taking no undue advantage. The Twigs scarcely noticed its advent.

“You’re making no progress,” said a Thorn stem. “I’ve deluded myself into thinking I was growing, but it was all a delusion ; and I could strain and push with

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ever so much more force than you because I'm so much stronger."

"I can only do my best," said the Honeysuckle. "I am quite contented. If I grow a little every day, I shall get to the Light in time."

"Yes, when you are so attenuated with the effort that you fade directly the Sun strikes you. I've seen Weeds grow past me before," said the Thorn.

"But I am not making any effort," whispered the Honeysuckle; "only keeping my thought on the Light."

"The Light is too high up for me," said a withered Branch. "I do very well here; darkness is more comfortable to sleep in."

"Possibly; but I am awake," said the Honeysuckle, and gently avoided the Branch because it was rotted through and through, and no support for anyone.

Now the Light was coming. Rather dimly, as it had to filter through so many leaves; but every now and then there were little breaks through which one looked up high into clear blue. Sunbeams pierced the greenness too, gay and warming.

The Honeysuckle put forth leaves with fresh activity. One must dress up before one enters the great world. Ah! here was a burst of blue, with great clouds scurrying across.

HONEYSUCKLE

“What is this? What is this?” gasped the Honeysuckle, for it was being swept against the twigs and leaves.

“Are you afraid?” said the voice. “I am the free Wind of heaven. Shall I snap you in two?”

But the Honeysuckle was lying resistless on the bosom of the Wind, yielding to every motion, and letting the Wind do all the playing.

“You are a friend after my own heart!” cried the Wind. “I see you like freedom as much as I do. How you bend!”

“A friend to us too!” said the Sunbeams. “How your shining leaves reflect us!”

“Oh, isn’t it lovely here in the Light?” cried the Honeysuckle to the Hedge. But the leaves around stirred restlessly in answer.

“This is all very well,” said they; “but it isn’t the Garden. Oh, Wind, Wind, tell us about the Garden!”

“What Garden?” said the Honeysuckle.

“The Garden we protect,” sighed the Leaves. “The Garden we can never see into because of the close Yew wall. Give us news of the Garden, dear Wind.”

The Wind, however, was racing up the meadow and had no breath to spare.

“I’ll go and see, if you like,” said the Honeysuckle.

“Alas!” said the Leaves, “we are clipped directly

THE FLOWER BOOK

we poke our heads above the Yews. Only beautiful flowers may enter the Garden.”

“Then I must put forth beautiful flowers,” said the Honeysuckle.

“You are very confident,” said the Hedge-trees. All were beginning to notice this new-comer, who had such bright and glossy leaves and waved about so joyously.

“How can I be otherwise,” smiled the Honeysuckle, “when everything that I desire is given to me? I wanted to grow into Light, and here I am out in it!”

“You had a hard climb,” said the Tree-tops.

“Not at all,” said the Honeysuckle; “I enjoyed every step of the way.”

“You are vigorous,” said the Tree-tops rather grudgingly, “for such a weak-stemmed creature.”

“My stem is growing strong,” answered the Honeysuckle. “I am sure I shall be given strength enough to gain the Garden.”

“Then come the shears,” said the Trees.

“I can but do my best,” replied the Honeysuckle. “If only beautiful flowers are admitted into the Garden, it is worth while trying to be worthy of the honour.”

“But the Yew Hedge!” said the Trees. “How to get through? The Yew grows so close, there is no air inside.”

“Air enough,” said the Honeysuckle. A long feeler

HONEYSUCKLE

was penetrating the thickest leaves. Now it was softly conquering their opposition. Up and out again, and here was the top of the Yew wall.

“ Oh, I thank you, I thank you !” said the Honeysuckle in a rush of gratitude to the Life which had brought it from the Earth into the radiance of the Sun and Wind, until every difficulty was gone, and the heart’s desire obtained. “ Oh, thank you, thank you !” cried the Honeysuckle, and lo and behold ! out from the thin stem came buds which opened into golden trumpets.

The fragrance floated over the Yew wall, for the golden trumpets showered benison and praises.

“ The Honeysuckle has not been cut down !” cried the Hedge. Against the blue, blue skies the golden trumpets lifted.

“ No !” said the Honeysuckle; and behold, the golden trumpets were blowing all over the Hedge. “ I have much to be grateful for. If you had not helped, I never could have risen. The least I could do was to climb up to the Garden and tell you about it.”

THE GARDEN

Through the garden now shall pass
Every season's richest store,
Rising from the humble Grass,
Blooming, changing, evermore.

Here is garnered loveliness,
And the blossoms ever start,
Fresh, anew, as those that press
From the garden of the heart.

Tulips

“**T**HEY don’t even wait till flowering-time is over,” said a perturbed little Bulb. “If you are in the least sickly, they pull you up.”

“Cut you down, I believe,” corrected another voice.

“That’s almost as bad,” grumbled the first. “When you’ve striven your best and come out in the Garden, it’s very hard to be nipped off just when you are starting to enjoy life.”

“You don’t enjoy life when you’re sickly,” murmured a withered Bulb.

“You don’t grow sickly if you grow your best,” remarked a fine large one. “The moral of all you’ve been saying is, that if we want to stay in the Garden, we’ve got to grow as well as we can.”

“There’s the Wind, though, and sometimes a late Frost,” whimpered the withered Bulb.

“All the more reason to grow our best,” replied the fine large Bulb. “It’s no good worrying about the dangers in front of us. Our concern at present is what we are going to grow into. If we aren’t a success, remember, we shan’t be allowed in another year.”

THE FLOWER BOOK

“I don’t believe I shall take the trouble to grow up,” moaned the old Bulb. “The Garden’s all right when you get there, but so much strength is needed to grow through all that earth.”

But the Bulbs were all briskly conversing as to their plan of action. One thing they agreed on : it was best to rise in companies.

“If several of us keep in the same mind we make much more of an impression,” said the fine large Bulb. “So let’s decide the form we’re going to take, and then collect together.”

“The gardener wants his Garden to be gay,” said a perky little Bulb. “I shall be golden yellow, as bright as ever I can be.”

“I shall be as warm-hearted as possible,” said a crimson Tulip.

“I shall be a blaze of scarlet, like the sunset on the greenhouse windows,” snapped another eager voice.

“I shall be orange, like the sunset in the skies,” said another. And circles of Tulips collected round the different speakers, and then others changed their minds, and approached first one and then the other, trying to be both red and yellow, orange and scarlet, all at once.

Still a quantity of Bulbs were meditating. The biggest of all had not announced his intention yet, and so a respectful voice inquired it.



Tulips

TULIPS

“I am thinking out something unique,” came the answer. “For some time I’ve been feeling that I ought to do more for the garden than merely exist as a Tulip. It’s all very well for you to be flowers, but some of us who have extra strength ought to be more.”

“But you can’t be more than a flower!” gasped all the Tulips.

“You couldn’t,” said the big Bulb loftily; “but I can. And, what’s more, I’ve decided to be. Such extraordinary force wasn’t given me for nothing. I feel as if I can be anything I please.”

“What shall you be?” asked the other Bulbs breathlessly.

“A Parrot,” said the big Bulb solemnly.

“A Parrot!” cried all the Tulips.

“Yes,” said the big Bulb, waxing more important every minute. “I shall grow my petals like tail-feathers, and have crested combs on them like a Cockatoo’s; and I shall curl them and wave them, and grow bigger and bigger, until I am the most gorgeous creature that the garden has ever seen, whether as bird *or* flower.”

“Hoo!” said all the Tulips in a hushed whisper. “I believe you really will!” For the Bulb’s voice was so authoritative, it compelled belief.

THE FLOWER BOOK

“I shall be a Parrot too,” said a fairly large Bulb.

“So shall I,” said another.

“If they can, so can I,” chimed in another; and behold! quite a circle was gathering. It really was a unique idea to be Parrots!

Only the most daring Bulbs entertained the thought, however; the others shook their roots and dubbed it a wild notion.

“Though some of us certainly are stronger than our fellows,” said they; “and, being stronger, might do more. We shall double our petals.”

This thought was deemed practical, and many adopted it.

“I feel I have a particular responsibility to be beautiful,” said one of the double Tulips. “Everything in me whispers that my taste is superior to ordinary Tulips; besides, one must be original if one is to attract attention.”

“Oh yes, we must do a lot to ourselves,” chorused many Tulips, and thought out artistic shades, and mixed purple and cream and brown, and were generally very busy trying to be beautiful.

“How lovely you are growing!” said a soft little voice; and the shyer Bulbs who had not come forward yet joined in the chorus, “Oh yes, how beautiful you all will be!”

TULIPS

“What are you going to be?” asked a crimson Tulip kindly.

“We don’t know. We can think of nothing but you,” came the modest answer; and lo! the little Bulb was blushing a beautiful pink.

“Yes, we do love you so much, each is more perfect than the other,” murmured the chorus. And there was a whole company of Tulips, the softest pink imaginable, all shades of it, into deepest rose. Some instinctively doubled their petals, copying the example of the other Tulips, but all were suffused with the gentle glow.

“You are a great success,” said the other Tulips staring at them almost jealously. The pink Tulips seemed different. They were more beautiful than the grandiloquent Parrots or the carefully selected æsthetes.

But the pink Tulips only replied, “Oh, how kind of you to notice us at all when you are so magnificent!” and grew more transparent and more lovely every minute, till the other Tulips seemed opaque beside them.

Still some bulbs were silent.

“Of what are you thinking?” asked a rose-flushed Tulip.

“The Light,” said the quiet Bulbs.

“I meant, what were you thinking of becoming?” said the pink Tulip.

“We can think of nothing but the Light,” said they.

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“You must have some ambition and desires,” stormed the Parrot Tulips, “or how will you ever push through?”

“The Light will draw us up,” said the quiet Bulbs.

“But surely you *want* to be something?” asked an elaborately shaded Tulip, who had become quite fringed in its efforts to be beautiful.

“Light,” said the quiet Bulbs in perfect unison.

“Light’s nothing,” fretted the fringed Tulips.

“We like to do something for *ourselves!*” stormed the Parrot Tulips. “Assume forms and colours. Haven’t you any desires?”

“Only to be a transparency for Light,” answered the quiet Bulbs. “There is nothing so beautiful as Light, so if it shines through us we shall radiate its beauty; we want no other, for there is no other.”

“What of our colours,” cried the other Tulips, “and our fringes, crests, combs, shading?”

“Light gives you all the colour you possess; without Light, you could not grow an inch,” answered the quiet Bulbs, and now they were shining with the light they spoke of. Pure and white, their flowers rose among the other Tulips like angel blooms. Their beauty was transcendent.

“We understand,” murmured the pink Tulips. “They loved the Light so much they have grown like it!”

Gillyflower

“**W**HAT a comfortable cranny !” said a little voice.

“I see no residential advantages at all,” replied another voice from a slightly lower position.

Two Seeds had settled on the wall a few inches apart.

“There is a little earth,” said the first voice, which came from a Gillyflower.

“So little, it’s scarcely worth mentioning,” whimpered the second speaker. “I’ve sprung from very different surroundings. I was born in a bed of purple velvet. My parents were Show Pansies, and I am used to the richest soil procurable.”

“We shall get a lot of Sun, though,” said the Gillyflower.”

“You come of common stock,” answered the Pansy crossly. “I believe you’re related to the Cabbage, aren’t you? and the Shepherd’s Purse. I’m of pure lineage. Naturally, I need finer conditions than you.”

“The finer your stock, the stronger you should be,” cried the Gillyflower sunnily. “Follow my example,

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and make the best of it. The wall's quite willing to hold your roots if you approach it gently."

"I could never bring myself to ask favours from a wall," fretted the Pansy. "I ought to be in the bed below, amongst the prize flowers."

"You wouldn't have half such a view," comforted the Gillyflower. "If we poke out our heads we shall see all over the garden."

"No one will see us, though," said the Pansy. "Everyone's attention is fixed on the flowers in the beds."

"But we can see everyone," said the Gillyflower, and inquiring leaves stole forth. "Just try."

"Heartless creature!" thought the Pansy, and contracted itself to spite the Gillyflower.

"The wall is made of earth, so there's no reason why we shouldn't thrive," said the Gillyflower.

"You have no sympathy," said the Pansy, becoming quite wizened in its anger. "But, then, you are so coarse; you can't understand a Show Pansy's needs."

"Oh, make the best of it," laughed the Gillyflower, and opened more and more leaves in its thankfulness to the smiling Sun. "Here comes the rain!"

"It will wash away the little earth there is!" cried the Pansy.

"Protect it with your leaves, then," said the sturdy Gillyflower.



The Wall

GILLYFLOWER

“I have scarcely any,” said the Pansy.

“Put out some,” said the Gillyflower ; and the Pansy was forced to obey.

“Hold on !” said the Wind. “I’ve come for a game.”

“How unfair !” sobbed the Pansy.

“Not a bit,” said the Wind. “I’ve given you fair notice.”

“It’s unfair when I’ve so little to hold on to,” said the Pansy.

“You’ve the wall,” said the Wind. “Come ! Out with your buds, and I’ll blow them open.”

“My buds are to be Show Blooms,” said the Pansy. “Do you think I’d trust them to your roughness ?”

“Keep them to yourself if you want to,” said the Wind, and swept over the Pansy and up to the Gillyflower. Here was a better response.

“I’m ready for you,” gasped the Gillyflower. “Blow your hardest. My buds want waking.”

What a tussle ! The Wind had met a playmate after its own heart. Stouter grew the Gillyflower at every encounter, then out came the Sun, laughing to see the fun ; and at last the Wind dropped with a pleasant sigh, and the Sun shone down in approbation.

“Fine !” said the Sunbeams ; and the blossoms spread out golden and tawny in a wealth of gratitude.

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“What a view !” sighed the Gillyflower. “I had no idea the garden was so beautiful.”

The Pansy opened a small yellow eye and saw the Gillyflower springing from the wall like a signboard of summer ; but the Pansy was of a thoughtful turn of mind, and now was wakening.

“Cheer up !” said the Gillyflower again. “See ! I will shelter you.”

“I could never grow to my full size now,” said the Pansy.

“Grow a small size,” said the Gillyflower. “What matter, as long as you grow your best ?”

The Pansy put forth tiny buds.

“Like that ?” it murmured. “Oh dear, they’re so small.”

“Small things can be cheery,” said the Gillyflower. “You’ll produce a better effect if you smile.”

The Pansy opened more tiny yellow eyes and smiled.

“I feel quite different,” it confessed. “How warm the Sun is, and the view is certainly delightful ! After all, all positions are good when one’s heart is at ease.”

“Aha, you have found out the secret !” cried the Gillyflower. “I see it in your face, Heart’s-ease.”

Pinks

“**N**O one disputes that the look of the path would be improved by a border,” agreed the flowers. “The point is, who is going to volunteer?”

At this there was a remarkable silence.

“We’d offer at once, but we should hide you all,” said the Hollyhocks at last.

“So should we,” said the Dahlias. “That’s the worst of being important. If we were only the size of a Pansy, now——”

“We should attract much too much attention,” chorused the Pansies. “Besides, we are so capricious. A border must have regular habits.”

“We’d offer, only we are so fragile,” sighed the Iceland Poppies, “our delicate colours would soon be soiled.”

Many flowers chimed in with this reason; the edge of the path was such an exposed position.

“Bordering isn’t work for flowers,” declared a Zinnia. “Grass or Box is more fitted for the purpose. Flowers should be protected, not protect.”

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“But what about the path?” said a gentle voice.
“Surely it is our duty to protect it beautifully.”

“One would get dreadfully trampled on at the edge of the path,” said a Heliotrope.

“And picked if one’s in reach,” languished a Verbena.

“And crowded, jammed together,” said a Sweet William. “Flowers need room. Stick to Grass.

“Oh, but the straight path must be specially beautiful! It’s the principal thing you see when you come into the Garden. Really, it’s a question of the whole Garden’s well-being,” said the gentle voice. A group of Pinks was speaking. They stood up stiffly; their grey gowns and white aprons betrayed their lowly station, but their cleanliness was a household proverb. There was no mistaking that the Pinks felt keenly. Dewdrops had started to their eyes.

“It’s not my responsibility any more than anybody else’s,” muttered a Nasturtium.

“Exactly. I don’t see why you’re fussing so about something that’s common property,” said a Primula.

“Not care about our Garden!” cried the Pinks—“our beautiful Garden, where we are so carefully looked after! What could we care for more?”

“Grass,” said Sweet William, who was a flower of sturdy, but few, ideas.

“No, no. The beds in the Garden are meant for

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flowers," said the Pinks. "If no one else will serve, we will do our best."

But at this quite a sharp little fracas occurred among the other Pinks. Some had set their hearts on being red, and others preferred to be single, and others were hoping for rings, and others had secret longings to be taken for Carnations. To serve as a border would necessitate the giving up of private ambitions.

"I couldn't wear uniform," said a Pink, who, by dint of much education, was becoming lemon-tinted.

"I wouldn't be seen in a white apron," said a Clove Pink; "it's so bunchy. Single petals are refined."

"White is common," said a salmon-hued Pink. "Let us try and keep ourselves select. There's no reason why we shouldn't rise to the position of Carnations if we stop making ourselves cheap."

"Yes, don't spread," said a single Pink very earnestly. "The great thing is not to spread."

"There can't be too many for a useful border," murmured the white Pinks; but they kept this remark to themselves. They did not want to provoke dissension.

"You can never protect us!" cried a Snapdragon; "you're much too slight. Anyone can tread you down."

"We can get up again," said the Pinks; "and we will keep close together."

"There's one thing, they aren't at all noticeable,"

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said a Fuchsia, dropping her flowerets complacently. "They have no personality."

"Which is very restful," said the Snapdragon, glancing at the myriad forms and colours of the highly cultivated flowers around him. "It's a comfort to have some neighbours who aren't for ever talking of themselves."

Here rose an indignant chorus voicing the dignity of freedom.

"To be content to form a border, one must have the spirit of a slave!" stormed a crimson Peony, waxing nearly purple in its fury.

"Freedom!" cried a Rose-tree, and sent out a wild shoot.

"Self-development!" gasped a Calceolaria, appearing quite delirious, so original were its markings.

The Pinks said nothing. They had quietly lined the path, and found all their attention was required to perform their duties, for nearly everyone who passed stooped down to pull a handful. These must be replaced, if the broad white border was to be kept intact. Oh, how busy the White Pinks were! Subdividing into companies, they covered the ground, settling in threes and fours, and striking roots of their own, yet all obedient to the parent roots. Humble, active, the white Pinks increased in numbers every minute, until such fragrance

PINKS

issued from their ranks, such a wealth of blossom lifted, that they seemed to all comers a perfect expression of peace and abundance.

Behind them the complaints were rising as usual. Some flower was always being trimmed or separated or cut—the old grievances. The most cultivated plants were for ever suffering injustice.

“When I’d forced so many buds out,” grumbled the Lupin, “it’s very hard to have them nipped! I’d set my heart on bearing blooms all down my stalk.”

“Oh, why should we be thinned just when we are feeling most attached to each other?” moaned the Iceland Poppies.

But the happy Pinks waxed full and plentiful in peace.

“How lovely the air feels through our roots!” they murmured, for they had been so busy that some of their roots had grown over the earth instead of below it. “How free! How splendidly free!” whispered the Pinks, lifting radiant faces to the Sun. They had no sense of crowding, no fear of being gathered, no dread of separation. When they were transplanted, did it not mean the border was extending farther?

Larkspur

“**I** CAN be anything I have a mind to be,” repeated the little new Larkspur. It lay deep down beneath the soil, with the message thrilling through—“anything I have a mind to be.”

What *had* it a mind to be? Oh, how the little Root wondered!

“What have you a mind to be?” it inquired of an old Root near by.

“Devout,” came the answer.

“I don’t know what that means,” sighed the new little Root, which was already finding out how much there was to learn.

“I bow my head and think of heaven,” said the Root of Monk’s-hood.

“What’s heaven?” asked the little Root.

“Heaven is what we see when we grow out of the earth,” said the old Monk’s-hood.

“What’s it like?” asked the little Larkspur.

“Nothing on earth,” said the Monk’s-hood.

“That’s not a description,” said the new Root, who

LARKSPUR

was so dreadfully eager to know about everything in this wonderful unexplored world.

“No one’s idea of heaven describes it to anyone else,” said the Monk’s-hood. “You must wait till you grow into sight of it yourself.”

Was ever such a provoking answer? Still, it made the Larkspur redouble its activity. One had to take trouble to see heaven, as it could not be described. So when the other roots inquired the little root’s desire, it said it wasn’t going to decide until it had seen heaven. The other roots drew in at that, and stopped communicating with the new root. It did not notice their withdrawal, however, because its mind was set on heaven.

Up it pushed, keeping its mind on heaven as it had been bidden, and lo! it was out of the earth.

Oh, how the first leaves thrilled! They shone with bright anticipation. Almost in awe they uncurled and looked up. Was that heaven?

So far that they seemed almost out of sight, the skies floated—an arc of blue softened by white towards the garden trees, but rising into infinite depth and space. A brown speck was winging up, higher and higher, a lark that vanished into the clear blue. The lark had aspired into fulfilment.

Upward, upward gazed the tiny leaves, and the thought that the root had nurtured gathered form.

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“I, too, must wing upward,” thought the Root. And again: “But I will be blue!”

Ever with thought fixed on heaven, the leaves waxed stronger. But reverence had been born of contemplation, and the leaves spread out into a shelter for the flower that was to be like heaven. There was no hurry. The leaves must grow ready first. Besides, thoughts of heaven came slowly.

Heaven was so infinite to watch, so infinitely graded in its hues. Some days pale as steel, and others azure, and then at evening glowing into a blue of such intensity that all the garden hushed in awe.

How the Larkspur worshipped! Heaven was so wide-spreading. Not only did the thought rise up, but out—ever outward.

“I want to tell,” sighed the Larkspur. That was an integral part of the desire. It must express the worship, send it forth, outward—ever outward.

Now the thought was rising into flower. Like a tall spire, the sheathed stalk lifted out of the sheltering leaves into the sunlight, drawn upward irresistibly.

The blue was showing brighter; the thoughts were expanding into flowerets on either side. They opened slowly—angel-trumpets—blue as heaven, rising to express the root’s desire to tell—to tell!

Sweet Williams

THE Sweet Williams stood in a solid clump by the green Bay-tree. They were at a remote end of the straight path, but every year Calceolarias visited a neighbouring bed, and brought a suggestion of fashion into their retreat.

“Still there?” said the Calceolarias, shaking out their puffs to the best advantage.

“We never move,” said the Sweet Williams.

“Don’t you really, you extraordinary creatures?” said the Calceolarias. “What a constitution you must have!”

The Sweet Williams did not know they possessed such a fine-sounding thing, and said as much.

“Not know what a constitution is!” cried the Calceolarias, rustling all their puffs. “Such ignorance is past believing! Everyone has a constitution. If you don’t take care of it, you die.”

“We don’t,” said the Sweet Williams.

“But, then, you are only yokels,” said the Calceolarias, and preened themselves on their thin stems and

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felt delightfully delicate. "We have to take incessant care of ours, and naturally one sees the results. We are treated very differently from you."

"You are planted in the soil, and depend on the goodwill of the Sun and Wind and Rain, don't you?" said the Sweet Williams, with a puzzled expression.

"We arrive in a very different way," observed the Calceolarias. "We'd have you know we're carriage folk. The Garden has to be made ready before our chariot calls for us at our Glass Palace and wheels us here, and directly it is becoming chilly, we shall be called for and wheeled away again."

"Where to?" asked the Sweet Williams.

"Back to our Palace, of course," said the Calceolarias. "It is kept at an even temperature through winter, for it is entirely heated by hot-water pipes. We wilt at the tiniest draught."

"We never mind the cold out here," said the Sweet Williams. "But, then, we never think about it."

"Yokels never think about anything," said the Calceolarias; "that's why they are so healthy. In a Hot-house one's nerves become like harp-strings; the faintest change of atmosphere affects them. Some of us are positive miracles of nervousness; we can swoon for no reason at all."

The Sweet Williams remained silent, because their



Sweet Williams

SWEET WILLIAMS

comprehension could not grasp the value of this performance.

“So you see we are made of different stuff from you,” concluded the Calceolarias, raising their drooping puffs and smiling a little under the Sun’s brightening influence.

“Poor things!” said the Sweet Williams, whose blunted understanding pitied weaklings.

“Poor!” cried the Calceolarias.

“For being so sickly,” said the honest Sweet Williams.

“We are not in the least sickly!” cried the Calceolarias, inflating their puffs with astonishing vigour. “We are superfine.”

“What’s the use of that?” asked the Sweet Williams. Long residence in one spot had given them very simple natures.

“You are almost idiots,” flounced the Calceolarias. “There’s no use in being superfine. That’s why we’re so charming. We live to be gay and adorn the Garden.”

“That’s what we’re all here for,” said the Sweet Williams.

“Dullards!” scoffed the Calceolarias. “Very gay you are with your brown bristles!”

“Wait till our neckerchiefs come out,” said the Sweet Williams, undisturbed by the slighting opinion

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of the Calceolarias. They knew their neckerchiefs were safely folded, and when the right time came to put them on, they would do the Garden credit. One must be in workaday garments part of the year.

“We wouldn’t dream of appearing unless we were dressed out!” flourished the Calceolarias. “But that marks the difference in our refinement.”

Again the Sweet Williams had no reply to make; they were confused by fashionable talk. It was pretty to see the Hothouse Folk appear on the lawn. They certainly added to the Garden’s gaiety. But visitors who paid such flying visits could not enter very deeply into the thoughts of old-established residents. Now, the Sweet Williams considered they had paid all the attention that was necessary, and returned to their thoughts of the neckerchiefs and the order of their donning. The daily visits of the Sun, the friendly terms which it was necessary to keep up with the Bay-tree, an equally necessary resistance to a pushing neighbour, a young Nasturtium—such things, in addition, gave the Sweet Williams plenty to think about.

As for the Calceolarias, they were now occupied in welcoming some cousins who had gone on the stage. Their clowns’ dresses were most amusing. One laughed at the mere sight of the dabs and spots. So expressive, too!

SWEET WILLIAMS

“What an entertainment for the other Garden flowers!” the Calceolarias said to the clown cousins. “Living in one place all the year round, they must positively pant for the season when we come out from the Hothouse. We hope we do not make them discontented with their own lot; we should be really sorry if we did that.”

The Sweet Williams were not fretting, however. Their hearts were too big with rejoicing. The new neckerchiefs were out—deep pink and velvety crimson, and white with rose-coloured rings, and pure white, like whipped cream.

“How fresh they look! What a beautiful texture!” said the Bay-tree, bending over them approvingly.

“Delightful! firmer and finer than ever,” said the Wind.

“A richer colour, I declare,” cried the Sunbeams, and kissed the neckerchiefs till they were thoroughly well aired and warm. It was indeed worth while to be alive.

“Positively, the common flowers are trying to adorn themselves!” rattled the Calceolarias; “and very well they look, considering, for it is plain that everyone cannot live in a Hothouse and be superfine. Still, it is pleasing to know we are of unique value, and we quite enjoy giving the Garden the benefit of our presence. I

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hope the yokels have enough intelligence to appreciate the sight of us. Are you grateful, dolts?" cried the Calceolarias.

The Sweet Williams could not speak. Their honest hearts were flowing over with fragrance. They did not know any other way to express their gratitude. They had been so closely protected through the darkness, so stimulated in the Spring, so well fed, so well sheltered, so faithfully companioned by the Wind and Sun and Rain. And now the joy of fulfilment was theirs; and the gay neckerchiefs, ringed and spotted and compact, were making their corner of the Garden beautiful. Oh yes, they were grateful indeed.

The Calceolarias continued to dance and act, but their performance was becoming rather monotonous. At last, even they themselves frankly voiced the opinion that it was time for the Gardener's Barrow to trundle up.

Here it was coming!

"We are not sorry to go," said the Calceolarias. "The company of the yokels was pleasant, for one grows weary of nothing but one's own set, even when there are clowns in it. Still, one can't perform for ever. Heigho! we shall be glad of a rest-cure. Our constitutions are quite shattered by so much activity. Now for the soothing temperature of our Glass Palace."

SWEET WILLIAMS

“Good-bye,” said the Sweet Williams. They were folding up their neckerchiefs ready for next season.

But the Calceolarias did not reply. They waved languid puffs from the Barrow, then gave a concluding performance, and swooned . . . for no reason at all!

Stocks

“**N**OW, all together,” said the tiny Seeds. “Whatever happens, let us keep close together ; then we shall always be warm and cosy, and the Wind and Rain can’t get amongst us.”

So the Seeds huddled closer and closer. It was very soothing to live in the midst of one little set, it gave one such a pleasant feeling of importance.

“ We must take care not to assume too pronounced colours,” said one little Seed.

“ Let us take even greater precautions and mix our tints,” said a Seed. “ Could we all be a little of everything ?”

This proceeding was felt to be rather *too* timid, however, and the Seeds determined they would merely keep greenish.

The Stocks chose nicely modulated tints, therefore, and were careful to take in a good supply of greenish hue.

“ At first we must keep identical in aim,” they chorused. “ As we grow up we may develop some slight

STOCKS

individuality, but we must never forget we come from the same Stock."

This was felt to be so essential that they decided their flowers should begin by being entirely green.

"Now, up into the world," said the Stocks; "and remember, our watchword is 'All together.'"

The little plants started so near to each other that the patch looked like a Grass-bed.

"How pleasant to be united!" they murmured. "How bleak the outside world appears compared to our little set! We will never, never separate."

But one grey morning the Stocks were suddenly uprooted, and when they came to their senses, they were set out ever so far from each other.

"Oh, how cruel! how purposeless!" they gasped. "We were helping each other to grow; in fact, we had become absolutely dependent on each other."

"Exactly," said a flood of Sunlight. "So you had to be parted. Now draw strength from me."

"Oh, we are fainting, we are expiring," murmured the Stocks. "How ruthlessly the Light beats down now we have not each other to shelter behind! Oh, it is too strong: it is beating us to the ground. We can never stand this blinding radiance!"

"Why, I bring life!" said the Sunlight; but the little Stocks were falling to the earth. The Light was more

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than they could bear after the comfortable dimness they had lived in when they were all squashed up together.

“Oh, what is this?” sighed the almost inanimate Seedlings. “What is this new attack? Raindrops are falling on us. We cannot endure their onslaught. It will dash us to pieces!”

“Sillies!” said the Raindrops, splashing them unmercifully. “You need a good douche-bath. You had no room to stretch yourselves before.”

“We didn’t want to stretch ourselves,” whispered the weakly Stocks. “We preferred to hug each other.”

“Suffocate each other!” said the Wind, arriving with a dash. “You were packed so close you could see nothing but each other’s personalities. Grow up and look out and shake yourselves.”

“You’re so cold,” whimpered the Stocks. “We sympathized with each other.”

“And squeezed each other and cramped each other,” cried the Wind. “I’ll shake your minds out for you. Whew! How narrow they’ve grown!”

“We cannot exist in such harshness,” gasped the Stocks; but somehow they did. When the Sunbeams came again, vigorous green leaves greeted them.

“We were looking for you,” said one of the Stocks,

STOCKS

and its voice was transformed. "It seems our minds need opening. Light will be useful for that."

"Yes, your influence is most expanding," said another Stock, waxing hardy in the Sunbeams' mirthful company.

The Raindrops' visits were appreciated too.

"You always have something good for us," said the Stocks.

"You are learning how to take," said the Raindrops, and lavished treasures on the Stocks, who were becoming quite big plants.

"I want to see your flowers," said the Wind, ruffling the leaves with the freedom of an old friend. "Out with them!"

"We were keeping them back till they were more of a size," said the Stocks. "You see, we were brought up on the principle of 'All together,' and one cannot grow entirely away from the principles of one's youth."

"'All together' is a very good principle," said the Sunbeams. "It's one we've adopted. Where are the darling babies?" and they peeped at the tight green clusters.

"They are all on one stem and green," said the Stocks, rather ruefully. "It is a pity we took in such a lot of greenish hue."

"We can kiss it away," laughed the Sunbeams;

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and surely the flowers were coming out in every conceivable shade, until there was a very festival of colour.

“Why, what is this?” said the Stocks, as the flowers rose higher and higher. “Now we have grown up, we are all together again. How has it happened?”

Then the Sunbeams and the Raindrops and the Wind danced joyfully over the bed.

“We did it,” they cried, “all together!”

“All together!” cried the Stocks, in a sudden rush of fragrance. “How we blend! How perfectly our tints agree! Why, the bed is one posy. It must have been a good principle, after all.”

“The principle was right,” said the Sun; “but you each had to work out your own problem alone.”

The Stocks were too engrossed in the joy of reunion to listen to preaching, however. Stronger and stronger rose their grateful perfume.

“All together again! All together!”

Hollyhocks

THE Hollyhocks had been a great success last season. They recalled their triumph complacently as they planned the new campaign.

“There can be no disputing that we were the finest sight in the Garden,” said a crimson Seed. “Times without number we were noticed.”

“Even though we were in the Kitchen Garden,” echoed another.

Some of the Hollyhocks looked rather black at this; they did not care to be reminded they had been born in a Cabbage-bed.

“We must see that we start to the utmost advantage possible this year,” said a pink one; “it’s a duty we owe to ourselves.”

“And to the Garden!” cried another. “Our mission is to adorn, so it is obvious we must choose the place where we can be most useful.”

This was universally agreed.

“We should look very effective where the Lilies stand,” said a Snow-white Hollyhock. “I noticed last

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year what a becoming background the Yew Hedge made for them."

"Or in the bed sheltered against the south wall," remarked a purple Seed. "We might become giants in really favourable conditions."

"Or down the centre path among the crowds of flowers; then everyone would see us overtopping them," said a Yellow Hollyhock. "There is not much Wind there, either. The Shrubs prevent it."

"Not a breath comes by the south wall," said the purple Hollyhock.

"Nor against the Yew Hedge," cried the white one. "You couldn't have a more protected spot. Oh, what should we grow into if we were thoroughly protected, when we grew to such a size in the Wind!"

"The Wind was a good friend of ours," said a voice. A handful of Hollyhock Seed was lying a little distance from the others. They had come from a Hollyhock which the Wind had blown over, and the others looked contemptuously on them.

"Friend!" cried the Hollyhocks. "That rough creature!"

"We grew strong playing with him," said the humble Seeds.

"My dear, if the Wind were a fit companion, he would be welcomed in the Garden," said the Snow-

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white Hollyhock, whose head was already becoming twisted at the prospect of growing against the Yew Hedge like a Lily. "But every precaution is taken to guard the flowers against him."

"Not us," said the humble Seeds. "We were set right out on the edge of the Cabbages."

Here the Hollyhocks moved hastily, and the yellow one said sharply :

"We had to put up with him there ; but as a reward for our patience we are going to a position where he will be considered an intruder."

"I am sure he helped us," murmured the humble Seeds. "It seems rather ungrateful to leave him. Besides, what about the Cabbages? They were so proud of us."

"You have a low mind," said the Pink Hollyhock. "Is it not a duty to rise?"

"From the Cabbage-bed?" said the humble Seeds.

"*From* the Cabbage-bed," said the Crimson Hollyhock. "We did so well there, we are going where more can admire us."

"And where we shall reflect more credit on the Garden—don't forget that," admonished the Yellow Hollyhock.

"I think we ought to go where we are most needed,"

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said the leader of the humble Seeds, and stepped out boldly in open defiance of the other Hollyhocks.

“Are we not as beautiful as the Lilies?” cried the Snow-white Hollyhock.

“Or as the flowers which line the path?” cried the pink one.

“The Lilies are adorning the Yew Hedge, and there are thousands of flowers along the centre path,” replied the humble Seeds. “Instead of going into the Flower Garden, we will try to spread to the Waste Patch and replace the Weeds. If we have gained in strength, we might be able to fight them.”

“The Waste Patch!” said the Hollyhocks, almost withering with indignation. “For us!”

“Why not?” said the humble Seeds valiantly.

But, oh dear! reasons were not lacking. They came in a cloud.

“Think of the inconvenience we should cause by setting ourselves in such an unfrequented spot!” cried one. “We ought to be where everyone can easily set eyes on us.”

“There are no flowers in the Kitchen Garden,” said another. “We are much too good to be wasted there.”

“But we could make the Waste Patch beautiful,” pleaded the humble Seeds. “What matter if no one sees us, as long as we serve to good purpose?”

HOLLYHOCKS

“We all can do as we like,” said the other Hollyhocks. “We’ve a right to our own judgment, and we believe in making the most of ourselves.”

* * * * *

“I’m suffocating !” said a miserable voice. It came from the centre of a sickly group of leaves which had pushed up by the Lilies. The latter were as calm as usual. The voice of the stranger was so weak they did not hear it.

“Stuck-up creatures !” said the yellowing Leaves. “Oh for our old freedom ! How this hedge presses on us ! There’s no room to grow ! Not a breath of air !”

“I’m not going to try to flower,” moaned another group of Hollyhocks. “It’s difficult enough to keep up leaves.”

“There’s no air at all !” whimpered the other plant. “I can’t go on with the struggle,” and it laid down hope and leaves together.

* * * * *

“The soil is cracking,” groaned the Crimson Hollyhock.

“The wall’s like a prison,” murmured the pink one. They were doing their best to flower against the wall, but their stems were undersized, and their blossoms meagre.

“I wouldn’t mind meeting the Wind again,” con-

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fessed the Crimson Hollyhock. "He was very rousing. I wonder what's become of him?"

"He's about just as usual," said a Turquoise Butterfly, hovering up obligingly. "You know he never comes here."

"He used to be such a friend," sighed the Pink Hollyhock. "He's quite dropped, though; I can't believe he's in his usual health, or he'd have come to look us up."

"He's tried once or twice to get in to those of you in the centre path," said the Butterfly.

"How are they?" asked the Crimson Hollyhock.

"Complaining very much of overcrowding," said the Butterfly. "And they say the other flowers never let the Wind come through. They weren't looking very well when I last saw them. But I haven't been paying much attention to any of you lately, I confess. There's no doubt that the real triumph of the garden this year is——"

"Yes, yes?" cried the Hollyhocks eagerly. But the Butterfly had flitted off, and they were left to the blank silence of the wall, thinking of the merry life in the Kitchen Garden where the faithful Wind had brought them constant news.

The Cabbages and Cauliflowers and all the homely folk waxed fuller every day with joy and gratitude,

HOLLYHOCKS

however. Lining the Cabbage-bed were the tallest flowers of the Garden, a brilliant company of giants leading faithfully up to the rising ground, where, against an azure sky, shaken like splendid banners, stood the Show Hollyhocks.

There was no longer a Waste Patch.

Sweet Peas

“**W**HAT an extensive world!” sighed the Sweet Peas. They were growing in a clump on the terrace; the Garden and the meadows spread away into blue distance.

“The higher you grow, the more you’ll see,” said a Jessamine shoot. “The Butterflies say that the world is boundless, and I’m inclined to believe them. Wherever you turn, there are new vistas.”

“We want to see everything,” said the Sweet Peas, stretching up intensely. “Oh, world, world, how beautiful you are! If we could only travel!”

“You see quite as much of the world if you stay in one spot,” said the Jessamine, who spoke with the authority of an old resident. “There is always something new to see in the sky or the Garden—in fact, it is impossible to take in one half of the beauties, so there is no sense in running all over the place.”

“We are restless,” murmured the Sweet Peas, and flung out groping tendrils. “We don’t know what we want, but we want something more than we have.”

SWEET PEAS

The sensitive tendrils quivered; stalks and leaves were covered with glistening tears.

“You will never be happy with so much sensibility,” said the Jessamine. “Besides, climbers who aren’t grateful for their support run wild and are cut down.”

“We will try to be contented,” sighed the Sweet Peas, and twined penitently round the Pea-sticks.

But their thoughts continued to fly outward all the same. Now they were growing, such marvellous vistas discovered themselves.

“Oh, what lies behind the hills?” they wondered. “Where does the river come from? How glorious to leap from our stake and go free after its silver line. Oh, the silver, silver river!”

Much yearning was turning them grey. When the dewdrops started to their leaves the next morning, they looked something like the river. There was faint comfort in this. If you cannot follow your idol, it is pleasant to feel you are like it.

“Look up!” whispered the Jessamine. “The clouds that pass over us journey all over the world, and the sky that you see stretches over the whole of it. Watch the sky!”

The Sweet Peas stopped glistening and looked up, somewhat calmer; but they were soon longing again.

“Oh, if we could fly!” they sighed. “Something in

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us is urging us to free ourselves from the stake and fly into the blue above. If only we were winged !”

“Thoughts can be winged,” said the Jessamine, “if you like to make them so. We prefer still thoughts, but everyone thinks differently.”

“Oh yes ; we could not have still thoughts,” agreed the Sweet Peas fervently. “We like them in you, but they would not satisfy our hunger. If the thoughts are winged, though, will they fly free ?”

“If you make them beautiful enough,” said the Jessamine.

“If we could only think what we see,” murmured the Sweet Peas, “how it would ease us to give it expression ! The tints of dawn are so poignant. Oh, if we could express them !”

“Try,” said the Jessamine.

Very timidly, pale blooms stole forth from the Pea-stalks, winged like Butterflies.

“We have done it,” gasped the Sweet Peas in an ecstasy of realization, and out sprang more blossoms.

“The early blue of morning is more thrilling still,” they quivered, and lifted blue-winged petals. “Yet that grows faint before our longing for the Sunset,” they yearned, and sent forth pink and crimson blossoms in a positive excess of rapture.

Out sprang the blossoms, always winged, always a

SWEET PEAS

little discontented. The fretful look came from the sad fact that the blossoms never flew.

“They cannot be beautiful enough,” said the Sweet Peas. “Oh, if our thoughts could travel! But they are never quite what we meant when we conceived them; and so it is, I suppose, that they do not fly away from us. If only our thoughts could come right out of us and leave us free to go on creating, sure that our thoughts were beautiful enough to fly!”

A strong hand touched the Pea-stalks. The Gardener had come. Strange peace descended on the fretting tendrils.

“What has happened?” said the Sweet Peas a little later. Lightness filled them; much air wafted between the leaves.

“Your flowers were so beautiful, the Gardener has taken them,” said the Jessamine. “He will send them afar.”

“They are going to travel,” gasped the Sweet Peas. Their tears glittered in the Sunlight, flashing their gratitude, their deep rejoicing.

“Oh, now we can send forth our thoughts with new spirit,” they said. “It is as if we had been born anew.” And they poured forth thoughts so swiftly that one saw nothing but bloom. Now was the joy of expression theirs indeed! The Gardener came for

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the thoughts every evening, and so the Sweet Peas had restful nights, and awoke to the joy of ever fresh activity. All the beauty they saw they could mirror, and send forth the hues of the skies, winged and free, farther and farther. Where the thoughts went to the Sweet Peas could not say. But of that, what matter? Their business was to bear them.

The Sweet Peas' tendrils flung out no more in search of the unknown, but twined stoutly round the home-stakes, so that all energy could be given to thought-making.

They did not want to travel now; the sky filled their vision, and its incessant changes held more store of beauty than the Sweet Peas could ever express, thought they ever so fast.

* * * *

The air grew colder; the first frost rested on the Sweet Peas, cooling the ardour of creation.

That evening the Gardener did not come, but the Sweet Peas awoke with sweet new calm. The dewdrops shimmered on them like a shroud of fire. Intensely the few thoughts shone; a poignant fragrance floated, pure and penetrating.

Then the Sun rose higher, but the Sweet Peas remained in the shroud of fire. Day and night it never left them; the Autumn mist had come.

SWEET PEAS

At last the wings vanished, and the thoughts were big with fruit. Then the Gardener came again, and carried the thoughts away very carefully. It would appear these were of the most value of any. He placed each in a special receptacle and wrote thereon.

But the Sweet Peas looked up to the Jessamine peacefully, as dreamers gaze.

“We want to rest,” said the Sweet Peas. “We do not want to think any more; we are content to be.”

“The Gardener is keeping your thoughts,” said the faint voice of the Jessamine. “They will awake and bear more thoughts, and they will sleep and awake in their turn. We all need sleep. I am going to doze off myself for a little, though I am a light sleeper. My stars are such early risers.”

The Sweet Peas said nothing. They were lying down.

Lilies

VIRGIN Sheaths of green were peeping from the ground.

“What do you hold?” asked the inquisitive Crocuses.

“Purity,” said the Virgin Sheaths.

“You won’t keep it long,” said the Crocuses. “Some of us thought we would be pure white, and just look at the mess we’re in. Take our advice. We started from the same root as you did.”

“You have not protected yourselves,” said the Lilies mildly.

“Oh, we couldn’t bother much about leaves,” cried the careless Crocuses, and opened their blossoms more and more freely. “We like to come out at once and enjoy the Sun. There’s no sense in waiting.”

“No, indeed!” cried a very muddy Crocus, and spread out its petals till they fell from the stem.

“No loss,” said a yellow one. “That’s the stupid part of trying to be white ; white shows up the mud

LILIES

so appallingly. You take the advice of a sensible Crocus and grow a nice medium yellow."

"Purple," said a morose-looking Crocus—"dark purple. That shows no dirt."

"Mauve," said a full-blown beauty. "But don't open too soon. Swell out as much as you can, and, if you are clever enough, you may be taken for tissue paper. Still, one can't be stuck up," it added, and slowly the petals parted. Very soon its day was over.

The Lily Sheaths tightened more surely, and continued to grow upward.

"You have decided to be white," said a little Shoot, creeping up to the Lily-leaves. "I can see it by your strength of purpose. I do admire strength so much. I, too, wish to be white. It seems, one must rise above the earth if one is to keep spotless, so my way will be the same as yours. May I accompany you?"

"Certainly," said the courteous Lily Sheaths, who, for all their uprightness, were very gentle.

"I am so weak," sighed the Convolvulus, availing itself of the permission, and clinging to the leaves instantly. "Please help me; it is impossible to climb without support."

"By all means," said the tender Lily-leaves; and the Convolvulus twined round the tall stem that was rising.

"Now I am near you I can drink in inspiration,"

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murmured the Convolvulus. "Oh, how I long to be exactly like you! I could not produce anything unless I was close beside you. Oh, how I love you!"

Closer and closer the Convolvulus twined.

The Lilies struggled to give all the support it sought, but at last even their meekness was conscious of undue pressure.

"Do not hold quite so tightly," said the gentle Lilies. "We find it difficult to attend to our own blossoms;" and their stems tried to expand and rise higher.

"You are blinding us!" they murmured. "We cannot see anything but you! Pray leave us free to do our appointed tasks."

"I want to help you." whimpered the Convolvulus. "Surely my love is helpful. I am caressing your blossoms."

"You are keeping them closed!" gasped the Lilies; and with new vigour lifted their buds above the Convolvulus's tendrils.

"I want to rise as high as you!" cried the Convolvulus. "Oh, how can you go on and leave me the very least little bit behind? Do I not want my cup to be white? Why should I not hold it aloft with yours? It is your duty to help me;" and the Convolvulus grasped the Lilies with a steel-like grip.



Convolvulus

LILIES

“This cannot be right,” said the Lilies. “Our treasure can never grow to perfection if we are so nipped and squeezed.”

“If I loose hold the littlest bit, I perish,” said the Convolvulus. “Why should I perish? I want to be white too.”

“Gardener! Gardener!” said the Lilies. “Please come and help the Convolvulus, for we are fainting!”

Here he was, and lo and behold! the Convolvulus was plucked from the Lilies, and they were growing in full liberty.

“But the poor Convolvulus!” said the gentle Lilies, for below them lay a heap of yellowing tendrils.

“That is my responsibility,” said the Sun.

The tendrils had faded into nothingness. The Lilies breathed softly. Certainly the departure of the Convolvulus was a relief.

“You must not give your strength to weeds,” said the Sun. “You have a treasure to guard and uphold so that the whole Garden can see. Come! Upward!”

The Lilies bowed their heads in meek acceptance of the reproof. Their stalks grew greener and greener. Now they were standing in a line against the Yew Hedge, slim priestesses, conscious of nothing but the cups they bore.

Dew upon the grass. Dew upon the virgin Lily-

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leaves. Dew upon white freshness, gradually springing into form. The first cup had opened.

White it gleamed against the dark Yew Hedge. Crystal drops suffused it, shimmering with unearthly radiance. Alabaster, thrilling with light and life.

“Is your treasure for workers?” asked a Bee.

“Yes,” said the priestess. “Take all you can hold;” and the Bee drank deep from the cup of purity until light and radiance seemed to permeate its whole being, and it remained quite still.

Then Divine energy awoke within the worker, and the Bee buzzed off anew, leaving gold-dust in the cup as tribute.

More whiteness. A line of fire running along the hedge, the Lilies opened one after another. The Sun caught the glistening moisture until each Lily-cup was dazzling in its dew-filled splendour—so rare, so deep the treasure it carried!

“Here you are!” said a soft but indomitable little voice. “And here am I!”

Out of the dark Hedge sprang a pale green vine. A big white cup expanded. The Convolvulus had come up by another way.

“I thought you were lying on the ground,” said the Lilies.

“Oh no,” answered the Convolvulus. “I managed

LILIES

to get up. I was determined to be white. So, as the only way seemed to be by the dark Hedge, I took it. The shade was very grateful after the way the Sun had beaten down on me, and I grew strong on the journey."

"How beautifully you have flowered!" said the Lilies.

"Yes," said the Convolvulus. "I have learnt there are many ways of rising from the Earth; but I was right to want to rise. It is worth everything to bring forth a bloom that is pure white, and hold it up for everyone to see."

The Lilies held their cups in meekness. The grateful fragrance rose like an anthem.

The Convolvulus was clambering up the Peacock's neck, however. Here was a goal indeed!

Roses

“**M**UCH is expected of us nowadays,” sighed a full, pink Rose, the hardy Captain Christie. “Extraordinary things!” said a golden Maréchal Niel.

“Well, we are a large family,” came in contented accents from the White Cottage Rose. Its clusters grew peacefully, for they knew nothing of the trials of fashionable blooms.

“We are certainly extremely popular,” murmured a languid Devoniensis. “Our poorest relations are made much of nowadays.”

“Everything is sacrificed to speed,” grumbled the sunset-hued Gloire de Dijon. “Once on a time I was counted a quick climber.”

“Yes, pushing new-comers are sprouting up on every side!” cried the perfectly moulded show-bloom of La France. “A thousand flimsy blooms a season are now considered the mode. A select quantity of perfect blossoms is out of date. Quantity, not quality, seems to be the only thought.”



ROSES

"It all depends on the stock," said the Gloire de Dijon. "I must say I believe in large families. One must show the family tree is flourishing."

"An old-established stock excuses much," returned a Baroness Rothschild, unfurling its satiny pink petals elegantly. "But great display is out of place in a newcomer. In fact, I always believe in moderation. One has such a dangerous tendency to lose one's shape if one is too energetic."

"It *is* so important to maintain good form, at all costs," agreed La France, and all the Royal Roses nodded seriously. "Good form is everything," said they.

"Without it one is a mere sport," said the sturdy old Captain Christie. "But good form can only be attained by cutting down everything that isn't necessary, and concentrating on absolute perfection in what one does put forth. I don't care how much one could do if pushed to it! One mustn't push too much."

Again all the Royal Roses agreed with a sigh that the secret of good breeding lay in cutting off superfluities.

"One mustn't be afraid to cut," said the Malmaison. "Extravagance has sapped many a Rose-tree before now."

"There's nothing like retrenching," agreed the Gloire de Dijon, somewhat quickly — "so very strengthening!"

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“A fine show is all right if one has sufficient stability,” said the Maréchal Niel. “Flimsiness, of course, is unforgivable.”

“There’s nothing flimsy in pillars,” said a sharp voice. “I call pillars very good form, and as for stability, you can’t have anything more solid than a mass of bloom. That’s what we are—a mass of it!”

A Crimson Rambler had joined in. A hush descended on the Royal Roses, a poignant, trembling hush.

The stout old Captain Christie broke it. He had the biggest heart of any.

“We are not used to associating with the masses,” said he gently. “We’ve not been brought up to the idea.”

“Hoo!” cried the Ramblers all together. “We’ve not been brought up to low society like you;” and lo and behold! they were shouting from thirty feet upwards. “Still, we can adapt ourselves to anything,” they added pertly, and came down forthwith, sprawling all over the ground.

The Royal Roses kept themselves to themselves in immovable stiffness.

“To adapt oneself is beneath a true Rose’s dignity,” said the Baroness Rothschild at last, pointedly addressing the Souvenir de la Malmaison.

ROSES

“Quite so,” said the latter. “It is the height of good breeding to remain unchanged under the most trying circumstances. I should wither immediately if tricks were played on me. It would be the least I could do to show my rank.”

“Of course, if one is first-cousin to a common Brier!” said the *Devoniensis*, and paused with exquisite delicacy.

“The parent stock, if you please,” said a sharp voice; and there were the Briers standing up all over the place. “In Japan, which is a country renowned for its taste, we are the only recognized representative of the family. Simplicity there is considered good form. Incidentally, we are also the national Rose of our own country, and at last are receiving proper recognition.”

This was undeniable. The Briers were among the most fashionable of the upstarts. The Royal Roses remained tight closed. They could not open their hearts to such common kindred.

“They are just like the Hedge Roses,” whispered the *Devoniensis*—“our foster-nurse’s family!”

“We can’t expand,” murmured the *Maréchal Niel*. “Folks might see a family likeness if we did. The only way is to keep ourselves shut up and apart.”

But the Briers and the *Ramblers* continued to throw out feelers with undaunted perseverance.

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“Come, come,” said the Briers. “All forms of growth are good. We are certainly ungoverned by old-fashioned limitations. We believe in flowering to the full, and grow freely, so that there may be more of us to flower.”

“Freedom and abundance,” said the Ramblers, and rose up in fantastic masses, fountains and pillars and hedges and bowers spraying and spreading and stretching in untrammelled luxuriance.

The Royal Roses were almost overwhelmed by the extravagance. But they were to recover all their ground.

“You are not the flowers of lovers,” said a sudden voice. It came from a deep, deep velvet rose, the deep red Charles le Fèvre.

Then it was the turn of the Ramblers and the Briers to dwindle.

“We stand as the symbol of love for all the world,” said the deep red Rose. “The poetry of the world is born from us. Poets and lovers will ever kneel to us, for we are the most perfect symbol that the world possesses; and as long as there are lovers we shall reign.”

As if in answer, a great wave of fragrance rose. Perfect in form and colour, cup-shaped, expanding, rich, full, fresh and dewy, the Royal Roses sent forth their treasure, the perfume that is the voice of love.

“We are the Roses of lovers,” said the Royal Roses.

ROSES

“From time immemorial, over the whole world, we serve as expression of love.”

There was nothing in the garden now but the voice of the Royal Roses.

“We must be tended by lovers,” said they—“true Rose-lovers. We can only give our best to those who love us. How we are loved!”

The perfume sighed forth overwhelmingly.

The Ramblers and the Briers stayed silent. They had no perfume to speak with. Their faint attempt was utterly submerged in the wealth that was pouring from the Royal Roses.

“That’s why we are set apart from all the other flowers,” continued the Royal Roses. “And a Rosary is made of us, where Rose-lovers tell our blossoms as priests tell their beads. No honour is too great for us, no care too incessant. The flowers of lovers must be tended with complete devotion.”

“*We* do not look so well with other flowers,” murmured the Ramblers, flowering very small indeed.

“*We* grow best together,” said the Briers. “May we surround your Rosary?”

“May we not stand among you?” asked the Ramblers. “We shall shade you and serve as a background for your loveliness.”

What had happened?

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The Briers had turned sweet, the Ramblers drooped reverently, and the Royal Roses were bending gracious heads.

“We shall be set off by you, fair cousins,” said La France.

“You shall be our bodyguard,” said Captain Christie.

“We will wax big in your fountains of shadow,” said the Baroness Rothschild.

“You shall overtop the south wall,” said the Gloire de Dijon. “There’s plenty of room above me.”

* * * * *

Of course all was changed. Had not the Royal Roses opened their hearts and sent forth their message of love?

THE POOL

Within the waters of the pool
The Light is shining clear and cool ;
Far down beneath the waves it lies,
Reflected with the floating skies ;
And where the deepest waters are
A sunbeam glitters like a star.

Iris

“**W**E are considered bold,” muttered the Poppies, “but we could never venture into such depressing dulness as that which lies around the pool.”

“They are turning away from all the pleasures of the garden,” came from the mist of blue where the Cornflowers danced.

“We are used to gay society,” twittered the Lobelia. “We should be lost down there.”

“Oh yes; it is best in the Sun! It is far more amusing out here,” rose from all parts of the garden, where bells and cups and widespread petals rustled and jostled and lifted in gay profusion.

The Irises had closed round the pool. Syringa and Weeping Willows shaded it, but one side was free, and some of the Irises had mounted guard upon the rocks; others fringed the water's edge in solemn battalions. All were clad in armour firmly swathed about them and fashioned in broad plates and greaves. For all its silvered sheen, the armour was invulnerable.

The pool was very silent; the hum and twitter and

THE FLOWER BOOK

flirt of wing which kept the garden lively were no longer heard. A great hush rested on the water, deepening to emerald beneath the Willow-branches, and mirroring the blue and white of the skies where it stretched abroad. Insects skimmed the surface sometimes, but their voice was drowsy, and the dragon-flies darted as noiselessly as light.

Solemnly the Irises stood watching, yet not in idleness. Bud after bud pushed forth until the stems were sprouting between every armour-plate, and one morning a blue banner flaunted, patterned gorgeously. Out came others—purple, blue, and gold—until the pool was flagged as for a festival.

Now, the Iris-Knights were magnificent indeed, and stood like nobles, careless of their splendour because of its abundance. For when a gonfalon grew faded, there was another tightly furled behind it, and out it came, unrolling fold and streamer.

“How you toss your banners!” said a dark-complexioned Iris. A group stood on the rocks. They were smaller than the others, and bore flags of swarthier hue; the blue was so dark it was almost purple, but bars of gold and white flashed splendidly across the velvet. These smaller Knights kept a little apart from the others. They were of foreign extraction, and showed it in the stiffness of their bearing.



IRIS

“Why don't you do the same?” returned the magnificent Iris-Knights. “It is so glorious to put out new colours every morning.”

“We have only the flags we carry,” murmured the Spanish Knights. They were thin and keen like rapiers; beside the English Knights they appeared almost meagre.

“Ah, we have an endless store,” replied the other Irises, and continued to unfold pennons of gold and silver, and azure, fresh and delicate as Summer skies.

The Spanish Knights continued to hold their single flags erect. That was all they could do, but they did it well, and saw that they were dew-washed and sun-dried.

Dear me! What was happening? The other Irises had ceased to attend to theirs! The last streamers were wilting and drooping. Finally, all fell down, and the Irises, no longer magnificent, were standing as before in their grey armour.

The Spanish Irises still held up their banners. Their mien was exactly the same as ever, possibly a shade astonished.

“Where is your endless store?” they murmured.

“Reserved for next year,” said the other Irises stoutly. “We came to the conclusion that so much display was tiring, so we're going to rest a little before we burst forth again.”

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The Spanish Irises made no comment to this; they had grave matters to think about. The pool was the place of honour; there could be no doubt of that. But had not they made a poor show with single banners?

“We did the best we could,” they reflected sadly. “But we have no more flags, and these are becoming dusty. The time has come when they must be laid down, and now we shall look dull indeed.”

“Cheer up,” murmured the Pool which reflected them. “Be sure you would not have been placed here if you were not needed. Lay down your flags and trust.”

“Oh, but we wished to do you honour,” said the Spanish Irises, and with this their fiery love burst the sheath of reserve in which it had been prisoned.

The love bore fruit. Now, when the other flags had faded and the pool lay unadorned—now, when their service was most needed—the Spanish Irises opened scarlet oriflammes.

Pond Lily

THERE was a great stirring and whispering among the Lily-leaves. Every now and then one would rise, make a clumsy obeisance, and fall flat on its back again.

The Pond Lily floated tranquilly in the midst of the disturbance. She never bowed to the Wind; what her attendants did was a matter for them to decide.

“There is nothing to be afraid of,” said the Pond Lily for the thousandth time. “The Wind can’t move us; we are too firmly rooted. I can’t think why you let yourselves be ruffled.”

“The Rushes are shivering,” muttered the Lily-leaves, “and the Reeds are screeching with fright.”

“All the same, there is nothing to fear,” said the Pond Lily, opening its petals calmly.

“The Willow’s shaking,” said the Lily-leaves. “It’s bending right down to the water. We must make our bow quickly.”

Two or three leaves tottered up from their stalk and flapped in an ungainly salutation. The Wind returned

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their attention by sweeping them down until they sank beneath the waves.

“ Oh, oh! we’re drowning!” cried the Lily-leaves.

“ Oh no, you’re not,” said the Pond Lily. “ But you must expect to feel the Wind if you rise up to meet it. If you lay still as I do, it couldn’t get under you.”

“ It creeps along the water,” whimpered the Leaves. “ It’s amongst us now. We never know when it will poke in. Our nerves are unstrung by its dodges. I’m sure the best thing to do is to placate it.”

Several Leaves trembled to their tips at this, and sprang up, to be lashed down in a perfect gale. This time nearly all the Lily-leaves went under.

“ Now we are submerged for ever and ever!” they gasped as the waters closed above them. “ The Wind has drowned us, as we always knew it would.”

But, lo and behold! they were all on the surface again.

“ I should be quite worried at having to tell you so often that there is nothing to fear, only then I should be disturbed myself, and that I do not wish to be,” smiled the Pond Lily, balancing to a nicety among the attacking ripples.

“ Look! look!” cried the Lily-leaves. “ The Willow has lost a branch! The Wind has torn it away!”



Yellow Water-lily

POND LILY

“It must have been rotten,” said the Pond Lily.

“Still, that shows we are right to be afraid,” chattered the Lily-leaves. “Hoo! The branch is being driven upon us. The Wind is going to beat us with it.”

“Keep still,” said the Pond Lily.

“Let’s bow to it,” gasped the Lily-leaves. “Let’s acknowledge it. It may be pacified. Bow! Bow! All rise and bow!”

“Keep still,” said the Pond Lily. “If you rise, you will let the Branch in amongst you. Keep perfectly still.”

The Lily’s calm was so inspiring that the Leaves obeyed for once; and the Branch, after lingering around the edge of the group for a few minutes, went off on a side-current.

“Ah!” sighed the Leaves in a trance of relief, and heaved up and down as if overcome with emotion.

“Keep still,” said the Pond Lily; “it is coming back.”

The Leaves began to whirl and rustle, then suddenly dropped flat, and the Branch floated by without noticing them.

“Saved! saved!” murmured the Leaves; and behold! they were all upright on their stalks, pirouetting with joy.

But this was soon over, and they were lying flat on

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their backs, gazing up at the calm blue sky. Their fear and the Wind had vanished together.

“Good children!” said the Pond Lily, opening more buds in the peace and sunshine.

“Where’s the Wind?” said a Leaf, tilting up ever so slightly.

“Don’t ask for it,” said the Lily.

“No; don’t put yourself in its mind,” murmured another Leaf. “‘Out of sight, out of mind.’ Lie low.”

So the Leaves lay flat on the water, and no breath of Wind came near.

“The Reeds are still whispering,” said a Leaf.

“They imagine they are sensitive,” said another Leaf, now quite at peace, and staring up at the Sun unwinkingly. “Their nerves are always troubling them.”

“Yes, they tremble at nothing at all,” said still another. “They think that a sign of refinement.”

The Pond Lily smiled placidly. It was very amusing to listen to the Leaves. Now that their own disturbed condition had passed, they lay as flat and complacent as if nothing had ever moved them.

“It’s so silly to fuss,” said a drowsy Leaf.

“When there’s no reason,” concluded another, and then all the Leaves were quite silent.

“I wonder you’re content to lie so close to the

POND LILY

water," said a neighbouring Lily-bud. "You can get no view from there."

This bud, like its sisters, had craned its neck so much in the endeavour to look about that it had become abnormally long, and rose out of the water in a comically inquisitive fashion.

"I am quite content," said the White Pond Lily.

"But there are so many advantages in having long stalks," cried the eager Yellow Lily. "We are well above our leaves, for instance, and that is as it should be. You are on exactly the same level as yours."

"I need to be," smiled the Pond Lily. "They want all the influence that I can give."

"We believe in holding ourselves aloof," said the Yellow Lily. "But then, of course, we are more cultivated."

Whoosh ! came the Wind. The Pond was rippling like a sea. The Yellow Lilies bent and swayed, and finally went under in the whirl. Their long stalks were so cruelly exposed.

The White Pond Lily remained serene ; its stalk was well anchored.

But there was a pleasant side to the disaster. The Yellow Lilies soon were up again, rather refreshed by their bath than otherwise ; in fact, they were laughing.

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“ We don’t really object,” they confided. “Of course we ought to keep ourselves to ourselves ; but when the Wind comes along and sets us all dancing together, we find the Leaves rather fun, after all !”

Water-Crowfoot

“OH, those children!” said the Rushes. “Why can’t they keep in their place? They’ll soon be all over the Pond.”

“Little ragamuffins!” said the Arrowhead stiffly, as became a guard. All its leaves were nicely pointed, and its head rose above them commandingly.

“They’re going right up to the Pond Lilies,” said the Willow-Herb, fussing together on the Bank. “Well, did you ever see such temerity!”

The Sedges were whispering as usual; they never spoke out. But it was plain they had noticed and were making plenty of comments, too.

“Little ragamuffins!” repeated the Arrowhead, whose fine array of weapons made up for a lack of conversation.

“They want whipping,” said the Rushes, straining towards the Pond-Babies. “You come here, and I’ll give you such a thrashing!” they muttered, and swished about pettishly because the Pond-Babies were out of reach.

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The little Water-Crowfoot did not know they were the subject of attention, because they were so busy playing. The gay little flowers poked out their faces everywhere, but then, they did *so* enjoy running about. It was such fun out in the midst of the Pond now they had escaped from the company of the stately plants around the edge. The Grown-ups protected from the Wind, but they *did* cast a shadow. Besides, the Wind was not nearly as rough as the Rushes pretended. It never did more than play with them.

“I don’t believe the Lilies are proud,” said the Babies to each other one June morning. They had all got clean pinafores on, and were sunning themselves, vastly pleased with the world.

“No, it’s no sign of pride to keep out of the way of the Bulrushes,” giggled a Pond-Baby. “If it is, we’re proud.”

This was thought a delightful joke, and passed all over the Pond, until the Sedges got hold of it. Then there was a fine fuss.

“Little ragamuffins!” said the Arrowhead, keeping by the Bulrushes, of course.

“We have decided to take no notice,” said the Bulrushes, bristling with anger.

“Well, we think something ought to be done,” chattered the Sedges, and the Willow-Herb joined in,



Water Crowfoot

WATER-CROWFOOT

shaking their heads and wagging about. The least breath influenced them.

“Look at them! Look at them!” said the Sedges. “They are openly defying us. They must know their rude joke has got round to us.”

But the Pond-Babies knew nothing of the kind. The joke had long gone out of their heads. Now they were entertaining a serious purpose.

“We really must go and see them,” they were murmuring. “It would be such fun!”

“And it’s more polite to go when our pinnies are clean,” said a very fresh little flower. “They get rumpled where we’ve played about all day.”

“Yes, there’s nothing like starting out on an adventure the very first thing in the morning,” said another Baby, dancing with excitement.

But here came the question who was to go first.

“We can’t all go at once,” said the Water-Crowfoot. “At least, we all can go, but we can’t speak together, and we can’t all touch. Suppose a few of us——”

“No, no, no! All together! We always stick together,” cried the Babies, clustering in a tighter mass than ever.

So the Bank had new cause for excitement when it was seen that the Water-Crowfoot had actually pushed into the Lilies’ company. There was no mistaking the

THE FLOWER BOOK

fact: there they were, in a great sheet, surrounding the Lilies and positively touching them.

“Never in my life,” said the Bulrushes—“never, never, never did I dream of such impudence. No, not though we’ve been here for fifty years should we have dared to presume so far.”

“Invading their very bed,” said the Sedges. “Have they no sense of privacy at all?”

“Don’t they know that everyone respects the Lilies’ bed?” asked the Sedges, quite whimpering in their agitation.

“They’ll never come in ours,” said the Willow-Herb, getting into a fearful flurry at the mere idea.

“The cheeky little things!” cried the Rushes, who were still most agitated. “They’re kissing the Lilies.”

“Why don’t the Lily-leaves interfere?” said the Sedges.

“They don’t seem to mind at all,” said the Rushes. “They are being kissed, too.”

“Little ragamuffins!” said the Arrowhead. The remark still fitted the situation, so there was no sense in changing it.

The Pond-Babies were having the most lovely time, however. The Lilies told them they were as sweet as Summer, and the little Crowfoot flowers exhaled the

WATER-CROWFOOT

sweetest fragrance in a burst of joy at being so appreciated.

“We’re so glad we came!” cried the Babies.

“So are we,” said the Lilies. “Do stay.”

“We don’t crowd you, do we?” asked the Babies.

“Oh no; there is plenty of room,” smiled the Lilies.

“Oh, it is nice out here with you!” sighed the Babies, lying on their backs, and raising simple eyes to the blue, blue heavens.

“Now we are quite, quite happy, and I think it is time for our nap.”

The Sun was streaming down so fiercely that the Pond was putting on her veil.

“Quite right; go to sleep,” murmured the Lilies.

“We are going to have a little doze, too.”

So all the Babies slept, still staring at the Sun beneath the covering of the Pond’s thin veil.

Water-Plantain

THE stem of the Water-Plantain branched out like candelabra, and its waxen blossoms rose like tiny candles. It stood at the head of the Pond, where the spring bubbled up through the sand and kept the Pool eternally refreshed and pure. The water was very clear, and the Plantain rose as if it were upon an altar. Nothing could be more graceful! It bore small likeness to the plant that had poked out its rough head by the Brook in the coppice ever so long ago.

“Where do you come from?” the little plant had asked, and the Brook had chattered, nothing loath, about the Pond.

Next year the Plantain had pushed into the meadow—a stage nearer. The flowers were friendly enough, but all trace of the Brook had vanished. However, there was a report that something ran through the ditch by the Hedge.

So next Spring the Plantain pushed its brown nose in there. The ditch was green and oozy, but under the moss Water certainly trickled.



Water Plantain

WATER-PLANTAIN

“Are you the Brook?” asked the Plantain.

“I am a stream,” rippled the Water. “I flow from the spring in the Pool. I have just watered the garden, and am off underneath the meadow. I don’t know what is going to happen to me.”

“You’ll come out right enough in the wood,” said the Plantain consolingly. “As for me, I am seeking the Pool.”

“You!” said a Dandelion. “Why, the Pool’s in the garden. Such as you aren’t allowed in there.”

“I have come all the way from the wood,” said the Plantain.

“You’re free to do that,” said the Dandelion. “I’ve been all over the meadow. But to get on the other side of the Hedge is quite a different matter.”

“It must be accomplished,” said the Plantain, very common and plain, but sturdy beyond description.

Sure enough, next year the Plantain poked up its head in the lawn.

Here was a gracious place indeed! The Plantain scarcely dared flower. However, the beauties all round were so compelling that it ventured to poke out a bud.

“Hullo!” said the Dandelion’s voice. It was there, too, rather flattened, but with plenty of blooms sprouting up.

“Are you bound for the Pond?” asked the Plantain,

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very pleased to see a fellow-being of its own class in life.

“Not particularly,” yawned the Dandelion, opening a set of yellow teeth. “But I know the garden, and I thought you might like company.”

“That’s very kind,” said the Plantain.

“Wasn’t it?” said the Dandelion, puffing itself out complacently.

“Perhaps you would be so kind as to tell me the way to the Pool,” said the Plantain.

“Certainly,” said the Dandelion. “As I go everywhere, I know everything that one can possibly know about everything! My knowledge is simply amazing.”

Here the Dandelion’s head swelled so prodigiously that it burst.

“Perhaps among the flowers?” sighed the Plantain, turning a humble gaze towards the ranks of gorgeous creatures that rose near by. There was no place on the lawn for it; here it was lying uprooted!

But one seed escaped to the flower-bed.

Next year a tiny plant stole out behind the Syringa. The spot was so sheltered that it managed to escape notice for awhile.

“I want to find the Pond,” it confided to the Syringa.

“Yes, it’s a pleasant place,” said the old Syringa, who was so gentle it would even answer weeds.

WATER-PLANTAIN

“Do you know it?” asked the Plantain.

“I have the privilege of sheltering it,” answered the Syringa. “My branches overhang the Pond.”

“Oh, am I as near as that?” gasped the Plantain.

Behold, it was uprooted again! It had been espied.

“I want to go to the Pond,” it cried, but no one heeded; and lo! it was lying on the rubbish-heap. Yet it had flowered and the seed had formed.

The Breeze was hovering near; of universal sympathy, like the Syringa.

“You are close to the Pond,” it comforted. “I will carry you there.”

Then the Plantain’s small heart broke at such kind words and opened wide, and in a few moments the Plantain seed was sinking deep, deep down in icy coldness. Then all the longing disappeared, for here was fulfilment! The waters of the Pond had closed overhead.

Was it to die?

“What are you doing here?” came in a strange murmur.

“I don’t know!” gasped the Plantain. “I only knew that I must come.”

“Why?” asked the murmur.

“I wanted to live by the source of the Brook,” said

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the Plantain. "It seemed to me that must be the best place to live in."

"Why?" asked the murmur.

"I don't know," said the Plantain. "I am a weed, and quite uncultivated. I only knew I must come."

"You have come," said the murmur. "That is enough. Now you have to forget the journey, to live and flower here. You must be born again."

* * * * *

In the Spring the Water-Plantain rose, serene and strong, extending graceful branches set with candles.

The past was quite forgotten. The Water-Plantain was only conscious of the bliss of standing like a faithful worshipper, holding the symbol of the light which bubbled deep down in the Pool.

THE HERB PATCH

Pressure of growth, dim strife, glad emergence, are ended ;
Here in the Herb Patch has infinite silence descended,
 Subduing the tumult of living.

Grasping of tendril, swift urgency of blossom, seed-making
No longer trouble : instead of the triumph of taking,
 The fragrance of giving.

Nasturtium

THE Herb Patch grew behind the Yew Hedge. The ground fell towards the south, so that the Herbs basked in the gentle sunshine all day long; the Hedge sheltered them from the sharp Winds, and the sandy soil did not harbour moisture. It was a peaceful spot; even the leaves were of quiet shades, and when flowers pushed forth, they were almost unnoticeable. This end of the garden was quieter even than the Pool. No rich growth of stem and leaf sprang here; no pageant of blossom graced the silence. From one year's end to the other the ancient bushes of Sage and Lavender and Southernwood and Rosemary looked much the same. They had been there ever so long, and were still alive and peacefully active, increasing a little every year and losing none of their virtue.

“Don't you ever get tired of grey?” said a young Nasturtium, poking out its cheeky scarlet face.

The Nasturtiums arrived every year; they were the only garden flowers that visited the Herbs. But then,

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they were so exuberant they went everywhere. There was no keeping them out, in fact. In spite of their indisputable forwardness, they were such cheerful company that the Herb Patch was brighter for the sight of them.

“No,” said a Lavender-bush, very neat and precise, with its silvery leaves arranged in exact rows. “Grey wears so well.”

“But surely it is a little dull,” said the Nasturtium, gambolling about in its golden green display. “Besides, grey is dusty. Now the sun is inside my leaves. You can see it shining through.”

“And if you appreciate neatness, what could have a nicer effect than the white star in the centre of each leaf?” said another Nasturtium, flourishing prodigiously.

“And if you set value upon delicacy, I consider we are *most* delicate,” cried a third voice. “We are positively transparent. There is no excuse for looking down on us—no excuse at all.”

With this, the Nasturtiums began to climb the Hedge, where they pushed out blossoms, and glowed and blazed like angry fires.

The Nasturtiums on the ground became very active, too, and scarlet and crimson and orange and golden faces appeared everywhere, until the Herb Patch appeared to be undergoing an invasion.



Nasturtium

NASTURTIIUM

The old bushes rested calmly, however. Their stems had become so tough they were like wood, and these slight-stalked creatures could run about amongst them without causing much disturbance. So after the Nasturtiums had enjoyed a burst of self-assertion, they quieted down again.

“Why are you all dressed alike?” said an inquisitive Nasturtium, protruding its face towards a group of Marigolds. They were clad in orange, bright enough, but without any variation of colour or marking. Each was exactly alike, and quite content to be so.

“I think you push the family idea too far,” said the Nasturtium, quite unabashed by the Marigold’s stiffness. “It’s all very well for two or three to adopt the same colour, but when it comes to the whole lot—well, you look as if you were dressed in a uniform.”

“And the conspicuousness of the colour makes one notice more,” said a dark Nasturtium, joining in with zeal. “One gets so tired of a colour as bright as yours, if you *never* diversify it.”

“Common!” sniffed a pale Nasturtium. “That’s the effect—common.”

“Yes, I won’t be unkind and say vulgar,” said a coppery Nasturtium, spreading out its mottled petals complacently. “You have nothing to mark you at all. Lilies are orange, but think of their spots and stripes.”

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The Marigolds continued to bloom in their customary stolid fashion. The Herb Patch was so used to the Nasturtiums that they failed to excite any notice at all. However, the Nasturtiums were too full of good spirits to mind being ignored. In fact, they rather enjoyed the calmness. It enhanced the joy of frolicking.

“Sober old things!” said they, and scrambled all over the place.

The Herbs rose above the heads of these intruders, resting in the knowledge of their established position. Although of simple habits and modest dress, Lavender and Southernwood and Rosemary were the patricians of the Garden. They came of purer stock than anyone. No one had ever tampered with their ways of living amidst the new-fangled improvements which had even touched the Royal Roses; they preserved their old simplicity, and now remained aloof, urbane and gracious, greeting intrusion with unshaken patience. They were so very old.

“Oh, what a lot of flowers!” cried a Nasturtium, suddenly lifting its head to discover the Lavender was a mass of bloom. “Imagine your being so active at your age! My! what a lot! You’re quite covered. I congratulate you.”

The Lavender dispensed an answering wave of fragrance. The Nasturtium’s compliments were in-

NASTURTIIUM

comprehensible, but they sounded friendly. Age was never thought of in the Herb Patch, nor was the occasional wealth of flowers held as singular or calling for remark. Each Herb had its purpose, and lived to fulfil it as a matter of course.

“And what perfume!” the Nasturtium exclaimed. “Most refreshing, and of such superfine quality, too. You’re not so insignificant, after all.”

Again the Lavender perceived that the Nasturtium meant kindly, and favoured it with grateful scent.

“Not but what I smell,” said the Nasturtium, gambolling joyfully around the Lavender Bush—“very strongly, too. Some folks call me pungent. I expect that’s why I feel so at home with you.”

“We are all in our right places, so this must be yours,” said the Lavender with unfailing grace, and always delicate, even with a Nasturtium.

“We set each other off so well, too,” said the Nasturtium. “I couldn’t wish a better contrast than your dulness. You don’t mind my mentioning it, do you, dear old root? but that bluey-purple shade is very dowdy—in fact, quite out of date. One must attract attention nowadays; there are so many claiming it, one can’t be too original. You’ve never thought of hybridizing? Imagine yourself a bright rose-pink now, and Verbena-scented!”

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“I can’t,” said the Lavender very patiently. “And why should I?”

“To be noticed!” said the Nasturtium impertinently. “Of course some have natural advantages!”

“As long as I do my work well I am satisfied,” said the Lavender. Its straight stalks rose in elegant precision, bearing ordered ranks of blossoms.

“Oh well, please yourself,” cried the Nasturtium. “After all, that’s what we’re here for!”

The Lavender forbore to contradict. It had quite enough to do in tending each small floweret.

* * * * *

“Why, what has happened to you?” cried the Nasturtium.

All the Lavender-stalks were cut; rows and rows were spread out on a white cloth, exposed to the Sun. The other Herbs were cut and drying, too.

“Our service is accepted,” said the Lavender.

“But all your beauty’s sacrificed,” cried the Nasturtium.

“We are of use,” came from all parts of the Herb Patch.

The air was filled with a great wave of fragrance, indescribably fresh and strong and healthy.

“Is all that coming from you quiet, unassuming, old——” began the Nasturtium, and was silenced by

NASTURTIUM

such a rush of stinging fragrance that it actually ceased from teasing.

“I should like to be of use,” it said.

“We all should,” said the Nasturtiums. But now they looked a little glum and yellow. “But we have rollicked about too much, I’m afraid.”

“It is never too late to be useful,” said the Herbs. “Lay down your petals.”

So the Nasturtiums did so. They waited a little while, then they all laughed with joy.

They were to be of use! They were all being cut —for their capers!

Evening Primrose

THE flowers were going to bed. Clouds stretched across the sky like sheltering wing-feathers, and as the Sun rays glinted up them they seemed to be gathering colours from the flowers below. Rose and Poppy surrendered their bright hues, the golden *Calceolarias* grew dim, Stocks and Pansies lent their purple, and behind all, the heavens were collecting the purest blues which the Larkspur and the Cornflower could afford.

A still glow lay upon the distant meadows, and trees and coppice shimmered with the strange light. The top of the Yew Hedge caught the last gold of the Sun; it glittered on the edges of the Yew-needles, until the shadows lost their blackness and the Peacock gleamed like a bronze against the sky. The milky cups of the *Convolvulus* stole up its side like spirit-flowers.

The business of the day was over, and most of the flowers were folding up their frills and ruffs and spreading petticoats.

“I must say it seems a waste of time to go to sleep!” said a Poppy.

EVENING PRIMROSE

“Yes. Why does everything stop?” murmured a Cornflower. “Why can’t we go on dancing?”

“Because no work would ever be done, and then you would have no strength to dance with,” said the gentle Seven Sisters, who had been in the garden from time immemorial, and spoke with the knowledge of centuries.

“But we don’t work at night,” said an energetic Nasturtium. “We can’t come out without the Sun!”

“You don’t work, perhaps,” said the Seven Sisters. “But, none the less, work is done.”

“In the night!” said a Tiger Lily. “How can that possibly be, when the Sun gives all our colour and warms our buds to life?”

“They would not open if the work had not been done,” said the Seven Sisters. “Day is the time for action; but thought must come first, and in the night, when everything is quiet, including yourselves, thought is at work.”

“How can we think when we’re asleep?” asked a Geranium. “I sleep as fast as a bud, although I don’t shut my eyes.”

“I close up entirely,” said an Iceland Poppy. “I’m sure I have no thoughts when my petals are furled.”

The Seven Sisters swayed softly in the darkening

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twilight. The voices of the flowers were growing muffled.

“Don’t you know about the Garden Angels?” said the Seven Sisters. “They are always with us, but in the day-time they droop their heads. The bees and birds and flies make such a disturbance, their thoughts can scarcely be felt. Besides, you are all preoccupied with the Sun, and so they have to wait in patience.”

“I’ve never seen them,” murmured the Larkspur.

“One is standing beside you,” smiled the Seven Sisters. “You live in such a peaceful corner that your Garden Angel can put forth some thoughts in the day.”

“You don’t mean the Evening Primrose?” said the Larkspur, very much astonished.

“Why, they’re common weeds!” piped the Calceolarias. “They grow anywhere.”

“God be thanked,” said the gentle Seven Sisters. “Anywhere and everywhere they’re wanted.”

“And keep vigil all night,” said the Larkspur. “How tired they must grow!”

“No wonder the poor things look so jaded in the day,” said the Poppy.

“It is not the night-work that tires them,” murmured the Seven Sisters. “The Angel by the Larkspur blooms day and night, but out on the Broad Walk——”

The voice of the Seven Sisters sank into silence.

EVENING PRIMROSE

The twilight had encompassed the garden, and every flower was sleeping.

But the Garden Angels were opening their eyes—wan stars peeping through the shadows ; they clustered round the Pond, and penetrated to the Herb Patch. Some stole through the interlacing Oak and Ash, to breathe their tranquil benison upon the meadows.

When bird and insect filled the air with noise, and the flower-world was thrilling with the action of the light, the Evening Primroses drooped unnoticed ; but now they lifted up their flowers like holy thoughts, and reigned in stillness.

Now their prayers might flow unhindered, and bud and leaf and stem of all the garden flowers gathered strength for the coming busy day.

* * * * *

Meadows and Coppice were shrouded in shadows ; the Hedge slumbered at its post ; Garden and Pool and Herb Patch lay at rest.

Only the Garden Angels were awake. Their prayers grew more fervent as the dawn approached. Love flooded them with fragrance, and on their widespread petals glistened tears.



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