

few days afterwards, the Empress-mother caused a pension to be assigned to her, and promised herself to introduce her to the Czar and reigning Empress. It would be difficult to describe Prascovie's emotions when the day for this interview arrived. She was about to enter the presence of an omnipotent sovereign over vast domains, whose decree was life or death to multitudes, and upon whose word hung the future of her father and mother. She was conducted through hall after hall of the imperial palace, all vast and splendid, till in a small room at the end she found the Emperor and Empress.

Here was, at last, the man, to supplicate whose pity she had travelled nearly two thousand miles and braved incredible hardships!

Fortunately for her, Alexander I., Paulovitch, who had now succeeded his father, Paul I., was gracious in his manner, generous in his impulses. In the shrinking girl before him he saw an example of intrepid resolve and daughterly affection he could not but appreciate. Perhaps, also, he was touched by the thought that the humbly-clad suppliant, with her imperfect education, would, under ordinary circumstances, have been leading a soft, luxurious life as a maiden of rank and fashion at St. Petersburg.

The Empress spoke kindly to Prascovie, and bade her state her case, which she did in her usual modest, gentle manner, pleading for the revision of Lopouloff's sentence.

"Your request is granted," said the Czar; and, turning to an attendant, he ordered that a present of five hundred roubles should be given her. Prascovie's heart was too full to utter thanks as she withdrew.

The Minister of the Interior was ordered to investigate Lopouloff's case, and meanwhile Prascovie explored the wonders of St. Petersburg. She was taken by two ladies of the court through the imperial palace, and did not recognise the apartments through which she had passed on her audience of the Czar, so great had her preoccupation been on that occasion. On being introduced into the throne-room she was overcome with emotion.

"That is actually the Emperor's throne, that I feared so much when I was in Siberia!" she murmured; and the thought of the wonderful manner in which she had at last been confronted with the symbol of that dread power caused her to fling herself on her knees before the empty throne and to kiss the steps, while her eyes streamed with tears.

At last the Minister himself informed her that the ukase for her father's release was despatched to Siberia, at the same time asking her if she had any further favour to demand for herself. She thought at once of the two prisoners who had encouraged her project and tried to help her with their little all.

"If His Majesty will grant me anything further after having overwhelmed me with happiness by my father's release," said she, "I would beg for freedom for two friends of mine." She then gave the names of the prisoners to the Minister, who obtained the Czar's consent to the unselfish request. The decree for their liberation was despatched a few days after the other.

And now Prascovie found that her success made her a sudden favourite in the society of St. Petersburg. Everyone was talking of the brave girl who had come so far and dared so much, and her head might easily have been turned by praise and popularity. But she seems to have been of a singularly transparent and ingenuous character. Gentle, firm, and of sound sense, she remained unspoiled in the midst of flattery, and took a naive pleasure in listening to the conversation of people wiser than herself. She had never forgotten her vow to enter upon a conventional life, and shortly after the despatch of the decree for her father's release she left St. Petersburg for Kiew, where she took the veil.

From Kiew she travelled to Nijni Novgorod, intending to establish herself in the convent there with her friend the abbess; and as that town is on the high road from Siberia, she hoped to obtain news of her father.

After Prascovie's departure, Lopouloff and his wife had become intensely anxious about her fate, and as months rolled on their depression increased. They gradually lost all hope of seeing her again. The accession of Alexander I., which set many prisoners free, brought no news of deliverance to the unhappy little colony at Ischim; and the poor father and mother, bereaved of their only child, sunk into wretchedness and despair.

One day a special courier was seen coming along the road towards the officer's hut. "He will not stop here; all our good fortune is for ever gone," thought Lopouloff. But the courier paused before his door, and handed him a special missive. Could it be? Yes, it was the Czar's order for his release, enclosing a sum of money for his expenses to Central Russia. Almost fainting with joy, unable to believe the good news, Lopouloff and his wife fell on their knees and gave thanks to God for the marvel their daughter had accomplished.

And now all was stir and excitement in the little village. Congratulations on the possession of so heroic and persevering a daughter, as well as on the prospect of freedom, were lavished on Lopouloff by those whose own exile appeared all the more bitter by contrast with their comrade's good fortune. Especially were his two poor friends dejected at the thought of his leaving them, though they unselfishly strove to rejoice in his happiness. He tried to comfort them by a gift of part of

the money he had received for his travelling expenses, but they refused to receive it.

The last evening before Lopouloff's departure had come. The two prisoners spent it with him; they felt they could not bear to see him and his wife depart from Ischim on the morrow, and bade them a heart-broken farewell when they parted for the night. For with the disappearance of the parents of Prascovie, a lingering spark of hope that they too might be released *died out in the breast* of the unfortunate exiles. They returned in deep dejection to their own wretched hut, and sank upon a bench in hopeless silence.

Suddenly, voices and steps were heard outside; a thundering knock came at the door, and a well-known voice cried, "Open! open! my friends. Pardon has come for you also!"

Unable to believe the good tidings, the exiles rushed to admit the messenger who, guided by Lopouloff, and escorted by a crowd of inhabitants, bore the decree announcing their release. A letter from Prascovie, containing two hundred roubles and explaining all, was enclosed. The scene that followed is indescribable, for the revulsion from despair to joy was almost more than the prisoners could bear. Loud were the praises on all hands of the devoted daughter and the faithful friend.

And now the true story of Prascovie's adventures is nearly at an end. When she arrived at the convent of Nijni Novgorod, her father and mother were already there to meet her, though she knew it not. "What news have you of my father?" she cried to the abbess. In reply, she was led into the waiting-room, where Lopouloff stood with his wife. Passionate joy, unspeakable gratitude, marked the meeting between the parents and their child.

Prascovie did not survive for many years the happy completion of her mission. The hardships she had undergone, especially her exposure to cold, had planted within her the seeds of consumption. During these last years she is thus described:—

"She was of medium height but shapely figure; her face, surrounded by a black veil which concealed her hair, was of a pure oval. She had deep dark eyes, an open brow, a certain melancholy tranquility in her glance, and even in her smile."

From all around her she won the tenderest regard, and it was a source of much grief when the fatal nature of her illness was known. After lingering in a gradual decline for a few years, she passed away on the 8th December, 1809. So peaceful was her end that the nun who was kneeling beside her knew not when she ceased to breathe. Prascovie was gone, but she left behind her the remembrance of filial tenderness, steadfast courage, that will endure.

LILY WATSON.

THE END.

TOWN GARDENS.

By DORA HOPE.



WHAT a damp, dreary-looking place a town garden generally is! There is a smell of mouldiness and soot pervading it, instead of the sweet odours of flowers, and a chill seems to strike through one from the overgrown paths

and deserted beds.

Let us imagine a little garden of the kind familiar to most of our town readers. It

is an oblong space, as wide as the house, and about twice as long, and surrounded by tolerably high walls. At the bottom of the garden, piled against the wall, is a dirty black heap of brick or stone, called the rockery. Down each side there is a bed two to three feet wide. A strip of grass fills up the middle, and between it and the beds there is a path covered with asphalt or gravel, more or less overgrown with grass, and the whole place is chiefly useful as a playground for cats, and, in poorer neighbourhoods, also as a drying ground for clothes.

And yet there are many little gardens in the midst of the soot and smoke of our great towns, and with everything against them in the matter of position and soil, that are not only a pride and pleasure to their owners, but that would absolutely put to shame some of their country relatives which have good soil and sunshine in abundance.

These little gardens thrive partly on account of their very smallness, which makes almost every inch valuable and worth attention, and partly, too, because their owners are really fond of flowers, and having no woods or lanes within reach, do not mind a

little trouble in order to have the delights and beauties of the country in their own small domains.

Still, it is seldom one sees as much done with these little back gardens as might be attempted, and I should like to excite some who so far have neglected their little plot to make it this year a thing of beauty, and if it is wished, of use too.

Let me say, to begin with, that it is not at all a matter of course, because one wishes to make one's garden pretty, that expensive plants should be grown in it. Very beautiful flowers can be bought if money is no object, but if circumstances do not allow of this, the garden can still be made bright and cheerful at a very small cost.

There is a grave in Kensal Green Cemetery, the little garden belonging to which is planted entirely with wild flowers, so-called weeds. It is carefully planted and tended, but there is not a single flower in it which could not be got by anyone from the fields and lanes in the country. It is the grave of Captain Mayne Reid, and on the stone are inscribed the words from one of his own books:—

“This is the weed prairie. It is misnamed; it is the garden of God.”

Wild flowers are despised because they cost nothing, but if only they were expensive to buy what would be thought more effective for a border, if well kept, than the bright flower of the common dandelion, for instance? Or if we wanted clumps of bushes, what could we buy, with all our money, handsomer in leaf, flower, or fruit, than the wild blackberry?

But without doing anything so unorthodox as to plant our little garden with wild flowers, let us see what can be done to improve it without spending much money.

There are a few tools which we must have—a spade of some sort, a watering-can, rake, and trowel; these are real necessities, but will not cost much money.

Probably the soil will want digging all over first, and if there is no man about the house who can do it, we must get a gardener, and at the same time he can make any new beds we want, or alter the shape of those already there. If possible, a little new soil should be added to the beds. A heavy, clay soil will want lightening, or a poor one will perhaps require enriching with manure; but if this is not convenient, the digging itself will do a great deal of good.

The same may be said of the paths; a fresh load of gravel is always a great improvement, but if the expense is objected to, the weeds and grass growing over it can be killed by sprinkling with coarse refuse salt after the ground has been broken up a little by raking.

This should all be done early in the year—in February or the beginning of March, which is also the best time for pruning any trees or bushes the garden may contain. If pruning is found necessary, it should be done with good and sharp instruments, whether handsaw or steel knife, so as to ensure a clean cut and as little wounded surface as possible.

Next comes the planting. There are some flowers which refuse to grow in smoky places, whilst others seem rather to appreciate soot and smoke, so we must be careful in our choice. We must remember, too, that in most small gardens one side gets a good deal of sun, while the other half only has sunshine in the early morning, and none during the rest of the day.

Now we want something to make a show at once, so we will buy a few roots, in flower, of cowslips, primroses, and polyanthes, and plant these in little clumps on the shady side of the garden. They will continue in flower for some time, but care is needed in buying, for the men who carry large baskets of them

through the streets for sale care nothing for the country they are so quickly spoiling round all our large towns, nor for the people who buy their so-called “roots.” Thinking only of the money they can get, they slice through the root just below the leaves, so that it will not grow again, and the leaves and flowers very quickly die. If you buy from these men, look for yourself that the plants have good roots, with, if possible, a little of their native earth with each.

A little later in the year, we can make a great show with very little trouble by buying a few “bedding-out” plants, such as geraniums and calceolarias.

It is better to plant the long beds in clumps and not to attempt to follow the lines of the edges. Some people, however, like straight lines, and they will find that sage, parsley, and thyme all make very pretty and extremely useful borders, while those who want ornamental gardens have the choice of thrift, feverfew, or London pride. All these do well in smoky towns.

The best parsley is the double curly variety; the seed should be sown at intervals from early spring till the end of May. When the young plants first begin to show above ground, they should be watered night and morning, and watched to see that they are not being attacked by insects. The most convenient plan is to sow the seeds in shallow wooden boxes, which can be obtained from any grocer for a trifle; and when the young plants are strong enough, they should be moved into the border where they are to grow, with a little leaf manure to each root; or, if this cannot be obtained, a pinch of one of the patent “fertilisers” so much advertised would help to strengthen the young plants.

Thyme will grow very well on the rockery, indeed it will be stronger and hardier growing there amongst the stones than if used for a border; the only difficulty about growing thyme is that it must have a sunny situation. The seed should be sown in April or May, and little bunches transplanted together, when strong enough.

Sage must be treated in the same way as thyme; when used as edging both are inclined to become rather straggling and untidy, and to make the garden look nice quickly, it is better to buy young plants, instead of seeds; they grow more quickly, and make a good show at once.

There is one plant—lavender—which we always associate with the country and cottage gardens, with the hum of bees, or drawers full of snowy linen; but it really grows very well in town gardens. It likes a sunny situation, and flourishes best in a sandy soil, but it will grow almost anywhere.

Carnations and pinks are among the most successful of town flowers. Young plants can be bought cheaply in the spring, and should be tied up to stakes when they grow long enough; and if a little fresh loam is added to their roots every year there will be little doubt about them succeeding, however smoky their situation may be. There are a great many different varieties, and nearly all do well. They are sometimes used very effectively for borders, and for this purpose the “tree” carnation is generally considered the best. The only difficulty in the cultivation of this class of plants is that they fall an easy prey to green fly; they should be watched, and if the fly is detected the plant must be washed with tobacco water.

Creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) is a very inexpensive plant, which grows rapidly, and is useful for covering bare spaces. It has the great additional advantage, too, that it will flourish on the shady side of the garden; but it dies very quickly if not kept watered. It is hardly necessary to mention musk, for everyone knows how easily it grows in spite

of soot and smoke; but, like creeping jenny, it requires plenty of water.

Sunflowers do very well in towns, and make a fine show; the seeds should be planted where they are to grow, and sufficiently far apart to give room for the plants to develop. The same may be said of the evening primrose, both the pure white and the yellow varieties; indeed, these flourish rather too well, for if they like their situation they spread so rapidly that it is very difficult to get rid of them again.

Strange to say, lilies of the valley sometimes do remarkably well, and throw up their pure white bells, in spite of grime and dirt. They should properly be planted in autumn; but pots of them can be bought in the spring, and planted to flower this year. They must have a shady situation, and if the place happens to suit them, they will grow and spread in spite of every drawback. They generally flower best in a loose sandy soil.

Stocks and wall-flowers should be sown in April, or early in May, and when the young plants are large enough they must be moved into a warm, sunny place. If any of the wall-flower plants turn out specially well, cuttings should be taken from them while in flower, and struck under a hand-glass. Ten-week-stock must be sown in the house, in shallow boxes, and gradually hardened before planting out in the garden.

The different narcissi, or daffodils, grow almost as well in smoky towns as in the country. The bulbs should be planted in autumn; but as they can be quite well transplanted while in flower, the garden can be made to look gay by planting a few now.

The list of hardy annuals would be too long to enumerate. Amongst the easiest to grow are nasturtiums—both the dwarf and climbing varieties, which thrive better in poor than in rich soil—candytuft, cornflower, and sweet William. They can be sown close round the daffodils, as these will have ceased to flower before the annuals come up.

If the garden is not too small, peonies make a fine show. They will grow almost anywhere as long as they get a little sun; and as they will form handsome clumps if left to grow at their own sweet will, they are particularly suited for lazy gardeners, who do not care to re-arrange their beds often.

It always appears to strike English people as a very preposterous idea to use rhubarb as an ornamental plant; yet in the public gardens of continental cities one constantly sees the post of honour in the centre of a flower-bed filled by the large, handsome leaves and bright stalks of the despised rhubarb. It is very easy to grow, and its fine foliage would add greatly to the beauty of our gardens, if planted in suitable situations where it would have room to expand; and even if its appearance does not give satisfaction, one can always revenge oneself by eating it. It would do well and look handsome at the four corners of the lawn or in the middle of a round bed. It should be transplanted into the garden just as it is beginning to shoot in the spring, and will grow more vigorously if watered with soap-suds in the summer.

In some places it seems almost impossible to have a lawn; for under certain conditions grass cannot be induced to grow without infinite trouble. In gardens where this is the case a patch of green may be contrived by planting the ground it is desired to cover with ivy or creeping jenny. The ground should be first levelled, and the plants or slips of ivy set all over it about a foot apart. Both plants require well watering at first, and the shoots must be carefully pegged down till the whole ground is covered. They both spread quickly and look bright and green, while giving very little trouble. If ivy is used it must be trimmed once a year, in the spring.

Some gardens which have been planted in this way with ivy or creeping jenny have been made so pretty as to be the envy of all the neighbourhood. In one of them the owner had achieved a triumph by planting his substitute for a lawn with clusters of bulbs of various kinds. Snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils, and other hardy bulbs in turn showed their bright flowers amongst the dark ivy leaves, and all with no trouble to the owner, except the first labour of planting them.

But however much care is expended on the lawn and the beds, the garden will never look really nice until the ugly brick walls are covered, and here again we must consider the question whether we are cultivating it for use or simply for ornament.

If for use, nothing is so successful as a row

of scarlet runners. They grow quickly, and are very pretty, and will yield a plentiful crop even in the heart of a city.

Amongst the plants suitable to cover the wall permanently, the best are hops, and the common virginian creeper, with, of course, the many different varieties of ivy. Be careful to choose the red-stalked virginian creeper; this variety turns a lovely colour in the autumn, while the leaves with green stalks only wither and fall off. There are several kinds of this creeper, besides this familiar one, which needs training and fastening up to the wall; there is one with small close leaves, which also takes a beautiful colour in autumn, and does not need any nailing up, the stalks clinging to the wall with their curious suckers, but it does not cover a wall so quickly as the

large-leaved variety, and does not grow so readily in unfavourable circumstances.

Some of the varieties of clematis will grow in towns too, and I have seen a town wall covered with an old-fashioned jasmine, which scented the air with the perfume of its star-like flowers.

It is impossible to give anything like a complete list of the flowers which will flourish in towns: the few named here are only intended just to suggest what may be done by a little industry and determination to make the best of the ground at our disposal, for the fact that it has been done over and over again proves that very pretty gardens can be made even in the midst of soot and fogs, and with every disadvantage of poor soil and confined space.

VARIETIES.

IN GOOD COMPANY.

I do not think I am going far wrong, says a Sussex minister, in claiming a high degree of moral instinct for a piece of advice which a poor man told me he had from his father before he died. I had come up with the man on the high road, and after talking awhile about things in general he began to speak about himself, and said:—

“Ah, sir, it would have been a good thing for me if I had minded the last words that ever my father said to me. He called me to him and said, ‘Now, mind, George,’ he said, ‘that you always keep better company than you be yourself.’”

AN IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT.—Most important of all a woman's accomplishments is the ability to maintain an intelligent, vivacious conversation with family, friends, and guests. A woman who is a good talker, and who can talk equally well whatever may be the character of her guests, is a blessing to the world. By Nature all women are fitted to acquire this accomplishment. All women talk much; that all of them do not talk well is mainly the fault of those who have educated them. They have not been provided with subjects of conversation, and their minds have not been trained to that alertness and that catholicity of intellectual sympathy which are necessary conditions of conversational success in varied company. This need can and should be provided for in the education of girls.

WRONG THOUGHTS.—What we ought not to do we should not even think of doing.—*Epictetus.*

DOING ONE'S DUTY.

Duty of every kind has in it the elements of pleasure, and, if we do not discover and appropriate them, it is our own fault. If we study the principles of our life-work, dwell upon its details, and strive to perfect it as much as possible, we shall insensibly learn to love it, and to feel no sacrifice for it a burden.

A FOOLISH COMPLAINT.—It is most painful not to meet with the kindness and affection you feel you have deserved, but it is a mistake to complain of it; you cannot extort friendship with a cocked pistol.

INSTRUCTIVE HALFPENCE.—Instead of repeating on every penny and halfpenny the name of the reigning monarch of Great Britain and Ireland, Benjamin Franklin thought it would be a good plan to put some important proverb of Solomon, some pious,

moral, prudential, or economical precept. Seeing such a piece of advice every time one receives a piece of money might, he believed, make an impression on the mind, especially of young persons, and tend to regulate the conduct. On some coins he would put “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” on others, “Honesty is the best policy;” on others, “He that by the plough would thrive himself must either hold or drive;” on others, “A penny saved is a penny got;” on others, “Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee;” on others, “He that buys what he has no need of will soon be forced to sell his necessities;” on others, “Early to bed and early to rise will make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise;” and so on to a great variety.

TEA IN THE OLDEN TIME.

The earliest authentic announcement we have yet met with of the public sale in England of the famous beverage, tea, is the following:—

“That excellent and by all Physicians approved China drink called by the *Chineans Tcha*, by other nations *Tay* alias *Tee* is sold at the *Sultans Head Cophee-House* in *Sweetings Rents* by the Royal Exchange, *London.*”—*Mercurius Politicus*, September 30th, 1658.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

An immense number of musical instruments have been invented and used from time to time. There are three hundred and forty different kinds mentioned in a list given in a standard German work, sixty-seven of these being given as in use at the present day.

ILLUSTRIOUS FRIENDS OF CATS.—Instances are frequent of illustrious persons who have been attached to cats, and of cats who have merited such attachment. Mohammed would seem to have been very fond of cats, for it is said that he once cut off the sleeve of his robe rather than disturb his favourite while sleeping on it. Petrarch was so fond of his cat that when it died he had it embalmed, and placed in a niche in his apartment; and cat-haters should read what Rousseau has said about pussy.

BRIGHT AND SWEET.—It is with flowers as with moral qualities: the bright are sometimes poisonous, but, I believe, never the sweet.—*Guesses at Truth.*

ARGUING FROM DIFFERENT PREMISES.—Sydney Smith was once passing through a by-street behind St. Paul's and heard two

women abusing each other from opposite houses. “They will never agree,” said the wit; “they argue from different premises.”

A TALE OF A LOST RING.—There have been some curious instances of rings being lost and afterwards recovered from fish that had swallowed them. Take, for example, the following:—In the year 1559, as Mr. Anderson, a merchant and alderman of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was leaning over the bridge at that place and handling his ring it fell into the river. Some time afterwards his servant bought in the market a salmon, in which, on being cut open, the lost ring was found, and it was thus most unexpectedly restored to its owner. The ring, in recognition of the singular incident, had a fish engraved under the signet, and for long time it remained in possession of the descendants of Mr. Anderson.

A LESSON IN CRITICISM.—We have still much to learn in the old country. In the new world this is how they criticise a prima donna—“From her clear bird-like upper notes she canters down to the base racket, and then cushions back to a sort of spiritual treble that makes every one of the audience imagine that every hair on his head is the golden string of a celestial harp over which angelic fingers are straying.”

A NOVEL COURTSHIP.—An interesting instance of love arising from reported virtues is related of the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, who was so charmed with the *writings* of Miss Ann Taylor, and the eulogium of her personal merits pronounced by those acquainted with her, that, without having seen her, he addressed a letter to the young lady, inquiring whether any peremptory reasons existed which might lead him to conclude that a journey undertaken with the purpose of soliciting her heart and hand could not possibly be successful. After a little correspondence the journey was permitted, and an interview was obtained which ripened into happy wedded life.

A LEGEND OF THE CUCKOO.—The cuckoo once had a crown on her head, till at a wedding among the birds, at which the hoopoo was bridegroom, she lent it, and has never been able to get it back. She is always crying out “Kluko!” which means “You rascal!” to which the other replies, “Idu! Idu!” “I come! I come!” but comes not.—*Bohemian Legend.*

VANITY AND PRIDE.—Ladies of fashion starve their happiness to feed their vanity, and their love to feed their pride.—*Colt.n.*