

FLOWERS OF THE OBERLAND.

AMONG the many charms which Switzerland offers to the tourist in summer, one of the greatest perhaps is the variety of flowers to be found both in the valleys and the high pastures. Without going beyond the beaten route of the ordinary pedestrian, the bright flowers which adorn the meadows and clothe the mountain sides not only enhance the intense beauty of the scenery, but offer great attractions to the nature-loving holiday-maker.

Surely the sight of the flower-decked lower Alps must inspire even the least enthusiastic with a desire to pluck some of the bright blossoms, and carry them away as a memento, and in the long dreary winter recall the sunny days spent in that ever-beautiful country! On the well-trodden paths of the Bernese Oberland a great variety of flowers may be found, some specimens being entirely unknown in England.

In a talk on the flowers of Switzerland accessible to everyone, the far-famed Alpine rose seems to claim the first attention. Coming down from the Wengern Alp in the direction of Grindelwald, on a lovely July morning under a cloudless sky, the sight of the sloping pastures thickly covered with the low shrubs of the *Rhododendron hirsutum* is a sight never to be forgotten. The glorious background formed by those three gigantic mountains which bound the valley on the one side, with their precipitous grey rocks and peaks capped with eternal snow, contrasted well with the bright pink flowers glowing in the brilliant sunshine. The *Rhododendron hirsutum* differs from the *Rhododendron ferrugineum*; the leaves are hairy, and the undersides are covered with scattered but not coalescent resinous rusty-brown glands. The funnel-shaped corolla of the flowers is also dotted on the outside with resinous glands. In summer the mountainsides are quite carpeted with these beautiful rose-coloured flowery plants, with their bright myrtle-green leaves, and are among the loveliest adornments of the Alps. The Alpine rose is so associated with mountainous districts that the Swiss peasants are almost as much affected by the sight of them as they are on hearing the sounds of the Rang des Vaches.

Another beautiful flower which grows abundantly in Alpine pastures is the *Astrantia major*, or as the Swiss call it, the Grosse Sterndolde. The florets are a delicate whitey-green in colour, sometimes also a delicate violet, tipped with deeper green; the undersides are so tenderly and minutely marked as to look almost like a tiny green leaf lying on a larger white leaf. The stamens are very numerous, and of a violet colour, and the anthers shoot out smaller and shorter stamens. The abundance of these stamens massed together in the centre of the florets produces a feathery appearance, and is very striking.



EDELWEISS AND OTHER ALPINE FLOWERS.

There is something very charming in the blending of the colours of the *Trifolium agrarium*, the bright gold-coloured blossoms fading into brown. The Swiss call it "Gold Klee," and it is found in abundance in mountainous pastures. The anemone, *Alpen Windröschen*, had flowered and withered by July, and only the feathery heads of the seeds remained. But it looked very quaint and pretty, although the bloom was over. The anemone sends out a shoot, a little distance off the last, each year, and by thus annually moving its position, and being long-lived, it makes a long journey during its existence. It blooms from May to July.

Winding round one of the mountains near Andermatt, and gradually ascending, a glacier can be reached where there is quite a nest of the cotton plant, with large, soft, and satiny heads. The cotton plant is almost invariably found in high marshy pastures. In that region also you are sure to come across the Grass of Parnassus (*Sumpt Herzblatt*), which grows in such profusion in Switzerland. The cream-coloured flowers are delicately and beautifully veined; the corolla has a curious appearance from the fan-shaped scales, which are fringed with white hairs and lie around the centre; these are its necessities; and yellow, wax-like glands terminate each tip. The name Grass of Parnassus is supposed to be derived from the abundant growth of this flower on Mount Parnassus, where it is as common as grass.

Then, too, in marshy ground on the high elevations of the Alpine pastures, the lovely blue gentians spring up. On the top of the Furca Pass, where the cold is so intense that no trees can grow, the ground in some parts is quite blue with these lovely flowers. Directly the snow has melted, the gentian raises its beautiful head. The *Gentiana Bavarica*, which resembles in many ways the *Gentiana verna*, differs from it in the number of small obtuse egg-shaped leaves which grow up the stem; while the colour of its blossoms is of a still deeper shade of blue. Gentians are very rare in England, but have been found in hilly pastures in the county of Durham and in Ireland.

Growing on sunny banks where the soil is thin, over rocks and stones, the *Anthericum ramosum* is to be found. The flower of this *Aestige Zaunlilie* is exceedingly delicate and pretty, but so few blossoms come out at a time that the plant has always a bare appearance. The transparent petals have three delicate veins marked down the centre, and somewhat resemble tissue paper.

Perched on a high rock by the wayside, in the full blaze of sunshine, stood erect some specimens of the Alpine aster or starwort; their light violet petals, with the feathery yellow centres, looking very pretty with the sun gleaming upon them.

The pale lilac flowers of the ivy-leaved toadflax creep lovingly over the old stone walls, enlivening the dull grey of the stone; here, too, is to be found the *Linaria Alpina*, with its linear leaves growing thickly up the stalk, and deep purple-coloured flowers, shaped

somewhat like those of the snapdragon, but spurred at the base.

Though so common, the yellow mountain violet is very pretty, with its pale yellow flowers growing singly on angular stems. This flower grows abundantly on the mountain pastures, and is very variable in its size. Some of the flowers are of a rich purple colour.

The *Epipactis atrorubens* (*Braunrothe Sumpfwurz*) seems to be rare in the Oberland, but is to be found on the mountain slopes coming from the Wengern Alp down to Grindelwald. It belongs to the orchideous tribe, but is not to be found in England. Both the brown-red stem and flowers have the appearance of being profusely sprinkled over with sand. The name is derived from the Greek word *ἐπιπύρρον*, meaning to coagulate, from the effect of the plant on milk.

The *Tormentilla officinalis* is to be found all over the mountain pastures, and attracts the eye by the bright yellow flowers of four petals, growing on slender stems. The roots are large, and being astringent in their nature are used medicinally. It is said that in Lapland these roots are much valued, as they furnish a red dye for leather. In some specimens the leaves and stalks are covered with small hairs. The tormentilla is so closely allied with the potentilla, which also grows abundantly on the pastures, that the two flowers are with difficulty distinguished.

The *Polygala vulgaris* of the milkwort tribe is also supposed to possess valuable remedial virtues, and serves as a nutritious food for cattle. This pretty little plant is frequently found on dry hilly pastures from May to July, its crested blossoms forming patches of deep blue or purple; sometimes the blossoms are of a pink hue. It was called the Rogation flower by older writers.

Specimens of the *Gymnaderia conopsea*, which belongs to the orchid tribe, flourish both on the Alpine and sub-Alpine pastures and meadows, as well as on lower altitudes. Its perianth is usually purple or various shades of violet, and it has a slight scent of vanilla. On the high pastures is found the *Dryas octopetala minor*, resembling a small wild dog-rose, with large showy white petals; the stamens, which have yellow anthers, are very numerous, and form a dense tuft. The leaves are shiny above, white and downy underneath. The generic name has been applied to this plant from the resemblance of the leaves to those of the oak, which are sacred to the Dryads.

The Weidenröschen is a pretty delicate plant with pale rose-coloured blossoms, with darker centres; the leaves are very narrow and linear, and grow profusely up the stem of the plant. It grows on the precipices of the stony Alps, and where apparently it can get no nourishment. It flowers in July and August, and is a much more frail-looking plant than the English willow-herb.

The common Schotenklee is a remarkable-looking plant, which creeps along the ground, the stems bearing a single primrose-coloured blossom. It grows on damp or clayey banks in sunny situations. The blossoms resemble a pod.

The polygonum or snakeweed is a very showy plant, growing about eighteen inches high, and bears a spike of small pink flowers at the top of the stem. Many high pastures are pink with it. It has very strong astringent properties, and contains both gallic acid and tannin. It is said that the tannin is twice as strong as that of the oak bark used in leather. When the tannin has been exhausted, a starch remains, which can be used for food, and in Russia is made into bread. It was formerly prized as an antidote to poison, and was used as medicine in the time of the plague.

The mountain everlasting is a herb with downy leaves; it grows abundantly in mountain turf. The male flower is round, and sometimes of a beautiful rose-pink colour; the female flower is long-shaped.

The perforated St. John's wort flowers in July in thickets and hedges; the blossom, flower cup and leaves are often tipped with minute black dots; the leaves are especially remarkable for being copiously sprinkled with small pellucid dots, which are most evident when the plant is held against the light. This plant was formerly worn in Scotland to preserve the wearer against witches and enchantments; and in several continental countries the superstition lingers yet that it is a charm against thunder and lightning, and the machinations of evil spirits. In parts of France and Germany the peasantry still gather its golden bloom with much ceremony on St. John's Day, and hang it up in their windows and doorways to avert evil.

The little blossoms of the common eyebright are sprinkled over the sides of chalky cliffs, or studded over the short grass of mountains or open plains, or hidden among the taller herbage of the pasture land. The plant is often only an inch in height, and bears but a single flower; but in situations where it thrives well it becomes branched and taller, and many blossoms are scattered amongst its leaves. The foliage is bright green, and deeply notched, and the blossoms either white or pale lilac, streaked with purple.

And then, leaving the lower Alps and ascending higher, ever higher, till the white snow dazzles the eye as it wraps the majestic mountains with the pure mantle of eternal whiteness, the edelweiss, the most precious of all the flowers of Switzerland, because most difficult to find, pushes it white and woolly head through the snow, and seems to rejoice in the stillness and beauty of the surrounding scenery. This plant seems to lose half its beauty when uprooted from its native soil and transplanted to an English soil, but in spite of this it has been deemed necessary by the Swiss Government to place a notice up forbidding anyone to uproot the edelweiss, which bids fair to become extinct if no restraining hand is laid on the ruthless tourists.

There are many, many other flowers to be found in Switzerland, but let us leave them now as we have ascended to the snowy heights to gather the flower so dear to all Swiss hearts, the sight of which must ever recall the snowy regions where it grows.

A. M. G.

A CALIFORNIAN STORY.

CHAPTER III.

THE cannery was a long, low building, where in the fruit season a great deal of business went on. Cherries, apricots, peaches, pears, tomatoes, each in turn were gathered in the neighbouring orchards and gardens, brought in, and prepared for use and export. After the fruit was picked it was weighed, and each picker received credit for his box, and a cheque for each dozen, as the pay is so much

per dozen boxes. In the cannery it is then assorted into first and second class and "pie" fruit—anyone who has been in America will have become acquainted with that indigestible compound, "fruit pie." A blemish on a peach mars its value for glass jar fruit, while not hurting it for tin cans, and that which is too small for first-class glass or tins is put in large cans and labelled "pie fruit." After being weighed the fruit is peeled by machinery,

if necessary, then halved, and placed in the receptacle intended to hold it, the jar or can being covered or soldered down after the syrup has been poured in, when it is placed on the range to be cooked, afterwards returned to the solderer for the final operation, when the labels are fastened on and the packers take things in hand.

In addition to this industry, Mr. Aytoun was in the habit of drying large quantities of