

going in and out of the State House gate, dressed ostentatiously in a suit of Confederate gray. He had worn nothing else since the war, I was told. But of course the State of Florida was not to be judged by the freak of one man, and he only a member of the "third house." And even when I went into the governor's office, and saw the original "ordinance of secession" hanging in a conspicuous place on the wall, as if it were an heirloom to be proud of, I felt no stirring of sectional animosity, thoroughbred Massachusetts Yankee and old-fashioned abolitionist as I am. A brave peo-

ple can hardly be expected or desired to forget its history, especially when that history has to do with sacrifices and heroic deeds. But these things, taken together, did no doubt prepare me to look upon it as a happy coincidence when, one morning, I heard the familiar cry of the red-headed woodpecker, for the first time in Florida, and looked up to see him flying the national colors from the ridgepole of the State House. I did not break out with "Three cheers for the red, white, and blue!" I am naturally undemonstrative; but I thought that *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* was a very handsome bird.

Bradford Torrey.

NIBBLINGS AND BROWSINGS.

In a neighboring botanic garden, the other day, I saw a spicebush, with its early gold buds, opening into tiny blossoms, clustered in bunches along the fragrant brown twigs. The mere sight of the bush left a pleasant taste in my mouth. Its smell and flavor both suggest the Orient. Then, too, the appearance of the entire shrub or of a single flowery branch is like a Japanese flower picture. I remember that my grandfather, himself an old pioneer, told me, at the time when he first made me acquainted with the shrub, that in his childhood the pioneers in West Virginia and eastern Ohio said that when the spicewood began to put forth leaves a sharp lookout must be kept for the Indians, or, as he called them, "the redskins," whose approach could from that time on be partly hidden by the increasing foliage, and therefore made more sudden and more dangerous to the white settlers. To my childish mind there seemed something conscious in the silent signal of the woodland sentinels, and the impression then received always revives when I meet this old favorite. I longed to break

off a twig from the bush in the well-kept garden, and to nibble at its spice-flavored bark, both for its own sake and for old times' sake; but I doubt if, after all, the delicious flavor which memory recalls would have come back.

Every one whose early life was spent in the country can remember many flavors and tangs with which, in childhood, he became familiar by nibbling at scores of edibles of the woods and pastures that never found their way to any table. We can hardly call them edibles, either, for we did not seek them for real food, but rather as something to be tried, to be tested, and to be enjoyed. Children do not philosophize much, I suppose, but they are quick to see, and, with a sort of savage practicality, like to invent some uses for their finds. For children, as for other animals, one of the most obvious uses to make of growing things is to eat them. If, however, one could revisit the very spot where this or that wild tidbit grew, and could find the very same clusters, branches, roots, or what not, I fear the old relish would not be found; for one could not bring back

youth with its divine glamour, and the external environment is not all. Nevertheless, one still likes these piquant, wilding flavors because one used to like them.

The sassafras, a tree so beautiful at every season, whether with the greenish-yellow little blossoms that in April put forth on the leafless branches, or when clad with the wonderful scarlet and yellow leaves and brilliant fruits of autumn, that I wonder it is not planted more in parks and cultivated grounds, offers twigs clothed in tender bark with a very aromatic flavor. Not only is this delicious green bark chewed both by children and adults, but the young leaves are eaten by children, and the white pith is often removed from the stems, now to bite, sometimes again to play with. Above all, there is the pleasure of getting out unbroken, clean, pliable little pith cylinders of as many inches in length as possible. The use of the bark of sassafras roots for making tea, which farm and village housewives in various parts of the country advise as a healthful drink in early spring, is well known. This ruddy bark of the roots is also a valued ingredient of home-made "bitters," the villainous concoctions still widely used as spring tonics. A good old man, half self-made doctor, half lay preacher, whom I met in western Massachusetts some years ago, and who had doubtless wrought a deal of harm by his well-intentioned dabbling in herb-doctoring, told me that half a lifetime of observation and practice had made him certain that in the spring of the year the human system required "the bitter principle." It apparently mattered little what root, twig, leaf, or fruit supplied it, so long as this quality of bitterness was obtained. The sassafras root is probably added to the proverbial "bitters" for its aromatic quality, and it may be for the pungent astringency that gives an ameliorating tang to these remedial mixtures.

In regions where the black birch grows, its young branchlets and their bark are

chewed just as is the sassafras. Then, again, children obtain a more delicate morsel by scraping off the sweet, moist cambium layer found between the inner bark and the wood. By what subtle alchemy of nature have both this species of birch and the bright little checkerberry, plants in no way related, managed to produce from earth, air, and water the essential oil that gives to them a flavor and scent so like each other as to be almost indistinguishable? We find, too, a trace of the same flavor in the dainty white fruit of the exquisitely beautiful creeping snowberry (*Chiogenes hispidula*), a plant of less geographical range than its scarlet-fruited relative, the checkerberry. We have few indigenous plants with more popular names than this last-mentioned member of the heath family, whose shining green leaves and red berries gleam out in early spring, in woods and pastures, from underneath late-melting snows, and are gathered and eaten in various places all the way from Canada to Kentucky. Familiar as the checkerberry or wintergreen of New England, farther north, in New Brunswick and even in parts of Maine, it is popularly known as ivory, and it is the mountain tea of the beautiful hills of southeastern Ohio. The young plants, whose brown-green leaves are especially liked by children, are called in different parts of New England by the various names of youngsters, jinks, pippins, and drunkards.

Alongside of the familiar small fruits, berries for the most part, that are regularly gathered to be served, either raw or cooked, at table, there is a whole world of fruits known to country children, for which they forage and in which they revel. They have, happily, not yet become either too civilized or too busy to have outgrown simple tastes and instincts which take them close to nature, and would seem a universal heritage of mankind, but which, alas, both races and individuals too often barter for a mess

of the huskiest pottage; though, sad enough to tell, even our children in the older settled parts of the country are losing much of the primitive knowledge of woodcraft, and of the natural child's delighted love of gathering and garnering the hundred nameless delicacies of every pasture, woodland, or fence-row. Teaching natural science in our schools can never restore this priceless gift, if once lost, any more than a scientific study of the poetry, the mythology, and the every-day arts of the ancient Greeks, or of the legends of our American Indians, can give the student their intimacy with nature, or change him into a genuine worshiper at the shrine of Pan. The teaching of science can do much, for it can help to open the eyes and hearts of the children whom an unhappy artificial civilization has robbed and blinded; but such teaching, though of the best, can never quite make up for the loss of the traditionary lore that is part of the inheritance of the country-bred child, though he cannot tell you how and when he obtained his initiation into sweet secrets concerning all manner of growing things.

Often neighboring with the checker-berry is the partridge berry, with equal grace creeping about the aromatic pine pastures of New England, or spreading a bit of green carpet in chosen spots in Western woods. Insipid and flavorless as are its pretty scarlet berries, the children seek them, and pronounce them "good to eat." Far less flavor than is demanded by the adult palate satisfies the unexact requirements of children; at least so it would seem from the comparative tastelessness of various fruits that they universally appear to enjoy. The ground cherries (*Physalis*), queer little globes showing myriads of seeds through their translucent amber coats, are plucked and devoured by the boy, as he straggles through the orchard to fill his basket with apples, or darts here and there as he cuts through some cornfield

on his way to the cow pasture. Then the great May apples, which follow the waxen blossoms on the stems of the "parasols" that little girls carry over their dolls, are eagerly watched in their growth, and, despite their sickish odor and taste, gathered with great care at the right time, and hidden in the haymow to ripen. "Eaten by pigs and boys," says Dr. Gray, with quaint cynicism, in the older editions of the Manual of Botany, in his description of the May apple. The hard, acid, wild crab apples, too, are often hidden in the hay to mellow, though it must be that their exquisite fragrance has something to do with their favor among children. This fragrance of the fruit suggests that of the lovely pink blossoms, and he who has never, in a gentle, warm May shower, crouched beneath the low-growing branches of the scraggy wild crab apple trees when they are abloom, and been deluged with the ineffable perfume, has not yet been all the way through Arcady.

Children perhaps, as a rule, take little cognizance of odors, but must unconsciously be more or less influenced by them; for in later years a whiff of some wild perfume recalls more vividly than can aught else happy scenes and experiences of one's early years. As you walk or drive to-day between the tangled thickets that line some picturesque by-road which dreamily winds in and out, up and down, and pause to breathe the subtlest, most evanescent of all sweet odors, that of the wild-grape bloom, are you not at once back on the outskirts of your own old woods, clambering after tendrils and crisp young shoots from the wild vine that draped the fence or made a natural arbor over some little oak, before you entered the mysterious shadows of the great trees to call together the straying cows and drive them home for milking? The dewy fragrance, the soft afterglow in the west, the gathering twilight, the sweet sounds from all the unheeded busy little people of grass and

trees, — what fullness of life did they not all promise to youth and health!

Such hips and haws as deck every English hedgerow, if less abundant in our own country, still are scattered here and there. The wild-rose hips in Nebraska are chewed by the children under the name of rose-balls. Wherever in this incredulous land the fairy's own tree, the whitethorn, dares to grow, it calls the children round about to come and nibble at the high-flavored yellow meat of its scarlet fruit. Nor do they scorn the puckery choke-cherry, or the almost flavorless drupes of the prim little dwarf cornel, known in some of its habitats as bunch-plums, elsewhere as bunch-berries or cracker-berries.

Then there is the multitude of nuts and seeds, and of fruits commonly known as seeds, from the insignificant little morsel attached to its gauzy encircling wing, thousands of which are shaken to earth every spring from the swaying elm branches, to the great kernel within the beautiful brown sculptured peach-stone, which children watch for and gather, each in its season.

Children have a happy facility in naming their flowers and fruits, — sometimes with visible reason, often without. In eastern Massachusetts they call the spikes of fruit of the sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*) critch-crotches, probably from the zigzag lines which mark the division between each member of the spike and its neighbors. But why Boston school children should call the round fruits of the linden monkey-nuts I cannot guess.

With us, the bitter meat of the pig-nut, the insipid achenia of the sunflower, the mildly sickening pumpkin and squash seeds, retain their hold only on the untamed appetite of the child; but in less civilized regions, as among the Cossacks of the Don, the grown-up young people while away the solitude of their long evenings by eating sunflower and melon seeds, as they sit around or on their great oven-like stoves.

But daintiest of all the multitudes of dainties of pasture, woods, or meadow is the nectar of flowers. The curved spur of the columbine, the delicate trumpet of the honeysuckle, and the slender tubular flowers of the red clover and thistle all yield their treasured drops to young red lips that part for the lilliputian draught. The oppressively sweet locust flowers and the smaller blossoms of the redbud also tempt children as well as the winged creatures to seek their nectar; but the shape of these blossoms makes them less popular than tubular flowers. I remember how, when a child, if I wished an Olympian feast, I sought the purplish flowers of the queer, ungraceful old "matrimony vine," which for some unknown reason obtained so much favor with housewives, who carefully trained it over porch or trellis, or against the side of the house, and yet were always complaining at the litter of the leaves so constantly shed, which they diligently swept away. By squeezing the short tube of a freshly opened flower — the faded buff ones were passed by — a generous sweet drop was secured.

Numberless are the relishes offered by vine and shrub, plant and tree, to the boy or girl foraging afield. Among them are the tender stems of the much-loved sweet-brier, stripped of their bark, or similar shoots of the wild blackberry or raspberry; the refreshing acid leaves of the oxalis and of the little rumex, both generally known to children as sorrel, — though in Pennsylvania I hear they call the oxalis sour grass; beech-buds and young sprouting beech-trees; while they still consist mostly of the thick seed-leaves, the buds both of spruce and of linden trees.

On Cape Ann and in other parts of eastern New England, children eat both the leaves and the young shoots of *Smilax rotundifolia*, which they call biscuit leaf or biscuit plant. Men reared in quiet old Concord tell me how, in boy-

hood, they regaled themselves, in early springtime, with the immature fronds of the great cinnamon fern, which they now remember as delicious. The cambium layer of the white pine affords a delectable mouthful to the children of evergreen woodlands. Where the spice-odored pink azalea, or rhododendron, as the botanists would now have us call it, sweetens pasture or swamp, children eagerly gather and eat the fungoid growths abundant on its foliage. Sometimes these pseudo-fruits are called swamp apples, again sweet-galls.

The dainty pouches or chalices, poised upon their beautifully colored hairlike stalks, which hold the spores of certain mosses, such as the bryums and polytrichums, are harvested under a dozen pretty names by browsing children here and there. No brookside bed of mint, no wayfaring plant of ragged hedge mustard, no glossy-leaved pipsissewa growing in however deep woodland shadows, will be passed unnoticed; and even the keenly biting smartweed is often nipped, half in daring, half to tickle the palate. With the cooling draught of slippery-elm water a fevered patient often quaffs refreshment which the physician wots not of, for every sip recalls glimpses of glad noontimes when, with lithe-limbed school-fellows, he rambled off to the woods to collect strips of the clean, pliant bark with its indescribable fresh odor, which, readily yielding to the jack-knife, could be cut into bits and stored away in pockets for sly chewing in school hours. The "cheeses" of various mallows and the creamy column of united pistil and stamens of the dooryard hollyhocks are other mucilaginous delicacies.

Children show their remote kinship with the ruminants by their fondness for chewing all manner of things, apparently often for the mere sake of chewing, for one cud is dropped when a new one presents itself. Simple-mannered or old-fashioned ladies sometimes keep up a trace of this earlier taste for

chewing. In some little white country church one may still catch a breath from the spray of coriander seed or sprig of southernwood or sweet fennel or bergamot in the hand of a pew neighbor. Besides the familiar resins of the spruce and larch, the beautiful translucent gum that frequently exudes from an injury on the trunk of cherry and plum trees is gathered by farmers' children. Country children in the Western States greatly enjoy chewing into a pulp the purple bloom of the thistle. They also chew wheat kernels until a sticky dough is formed. The wheat is generally winnowed out in the palm of the hand, from heads plucked directly from the unreaped grain field; and this without doubt has a sweet flavor not possessed by the riper grain on the barn floor which a boy may grab in threshing-time from the great heap that he is helping to measure and store away.

As numerous as the hidden hoards of the old fairy tales, buried at the foot of some forest tree by beast or elf or troll, and kept for the enchanted prince, are the underground treasures known to the real country boy or girl. From the first turning of the sod by the ploughshare in early spring till the ground is frozen in late autumn, young foragers are stirring the mould with fingers, knife, or improvised wooden trowel, to unearth some treasure trove. There are the sweet cicely roots in the garden, the tiny bulbs of the timothy in the surrounding fields, the wild potatoes, — as children, in some places, call the deeply buried tubers of the spring beauty, — the hot pepper root, *Dentaria*, the little tubers of the nut-grass, *Cyperus*, and even the ill smelling and worse tasting little wild onions, and, in coast regions, the roots of the beloved marsh rosemary. Will any East India preserve ever make your mouth water in older years as did the wild-ginger root-stocks that you dug with your own hands from the black woods loam in early days? Expeditions are planned to go for gin-

seng, sweet flag, goldthread, or Indian turnip. To be sure, all these, and more beside, are somewhat valued as medicines by mother or grandmother, and, when washed and dried, are often added to the store of roots and herbs kept in the attic; but I suspect the real reasons for the enthusiastic searching for them and their like are the love of strolling and the natural passion for digging. Thoreau remarks that agriculture, in its most primitive state, belongs alongside of the venerable arts of hunting and fishing, which, he says, "are as ancient and honorable trades as the sun and moon and winds pursue, coeval with the faculties of man, and invented when these were invented." The very smell of newly upturned soil arouses instincts and impulses that doubtless are heritages from our most primitive ancestors. Is it not the unconscious delight of sniff-

ing in the nameless, revivifying odor of the fresh brown earth that leads children to the fields, to follow the furrows as happily as their companions, the cheerfully talking blackbirds, which come to seize the food providentially thrown up for them by the gliding plough?

Children fortunately often keep enough sweet savagery, so that if turned out of doors they go straight to their own. With little knowledge of names save those of their own coining or the popular ones of their neighborhood, many a time they could lead the scientist to the chosen retreats of rare local plants, and point out nest or lair of shy wild creatures. If anything could justify the common assumption that in childhood we relive the golden age of the race, it is the possibility of this unconscious but profound childish sympathy with Nature's heart.

Fanny D. Bergen.

THE ISOLATION OF LIFE ON PRAIRIE FARMS.

IN no civilized country have the cultivators of the soil adapted their home life so badly to the conditions of nature as have the people of our great Northwestern prairies. This is a strong statement, but I am led to the conclusion by ten years of observation in our plains region. The European farmer lives in a village, where considerable social enjoyment is possible. The women gossip at the village well, and visit frequently at one another's houses; the children find playmates close at hand; there is a school, and, if the village be not a very small one, a church. The post wagon, with its uniformed postilion merrily blowing his horn, rattles through the street every day, and makes an event that draws people to the doors and windows. The old men gather of summer evenings to smoke their pipes and talk of

the crops; the young men pitch quoits and play ball on the village green. Now and then a detachment of soldiers from some garrison town halts to rest. A peddler makes his rounds. A black-frocked priest tarries to join in the chat of the elder people, and to ask after the health of the children. In a word, something takes place to break the monotony of daily life. The dwellings, if small and meagrely furnished, have thick walls of brick or stone that keep out the summer's heat and the winter's chill.

Now contrast this life of the European peasant, to which there is a joyous side that lightens labor and privation, with the life of a poor settler on a homestead claim in one of the Dakotas or Nebraska. Every homesteader must live upon his claim for five years to perfect his title and get his patent; so that if there were