

most useful in binding the easily drifted sand together by its long, creeping roots. In Holland it is actually planted for this purpose; and there is little question that it has frequently served that industrious nation in good stead, by preserving the sandbank on which it grows. In the north of England this grass is used for making table-mats, and the seats for the common "rush"-bottomed chairs. The Sea Lyme Grass (*Elymus*) is nearly as effective as the Marram for binding and holding blown sand together; and we frequently find it growing in abundance along our level coast-line. The most remarkable of our native grasses, which affects habits just the reverse of these sand-loving species, is the Manna-

grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), whose common as well as botanical names are derived from the sugary sweetness of the foliage. It may be seen on the surfaces of most pools and ditches, sometimes completely covering their surfaces; although not if cattle can get at it, for they will wade into great depths of water after it, and remain there on summer days, cooling and enjoying themselves, and feeding on perhaps the most succulent of all British herbage. It is in this enjoyable position that Sidney Cooper has drawn some of his best cattle, although few people are aware of the dainty vegetable morsels which were the primary cause of their placing themselves in such picturesque and self-complacent attitudes.

OUR WINDOW GARDENS, AND HOW THEY THRIVED.



IT is sufficiently common-place to observe that "half a loaf is better than no bread," and it was with this philosophical reflection on the part of my good sister Maggie, that one hot afternoon we determined to make the best of things as

they were. Our case was not an uncommon one. Early years had been passed amid the innocent delights and never-wearing beauties and occupations of country life: all our associations had been with "seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter." But changes had come. Those who had been our support in the hour of our thoughtlessness had gone to their long home, and circumstances had driven us, for the sake of a livelihood, very considerably within the ten-miles radius from St. Paul's. With our very limited private means, a City clerkship was a necessity to maintain with any degree of "appearances" our exceedingly modest suburban villa.

"Don't you think, Tom," said Maggie, as I walked into our little patch of gravel and green—I cannot call it garden—upon my return from the City by the usual five o'clock train, on the afternoon aforesaid, "that in addition to the few flowers we have here, something might be done by us on these summer evenings in the way of floral decoration of the windows? Though we have no longer the garden of the old home, half a loaf is better than no bread."

Fortunately I was just in the good-tempered sort of mood to catch at almost any suggestion of Maggie's,

and that very evening we set to work. Recollections of the gay floral display that we had seen in the windows of Belgravia during the season, on the one hand, and of the flower shows and prizes for the London poor later on in the summer, upon the other, served greatly to stimulate our zeal in this our newly formed project of window gardening. My bed-room was immediately over our diminutive drawing-room; the aspect was nearly due south, and the size of the two windows was unusually large—out of proportion, in fact, with that of the house. All this again was in our favour. Upon either window-sill there was ample room for a good-sized long box, and Maggie's proposal was that we should have one upon each: yet we mutually decided that to go in for anything half so expensive as those ready-made handsome and ornamental ones was quite beyond our power. Besides, was it not "half the fun" to "do it ourselves?"

Impatient, however, as we immediately were for flowers, and a gay and green window display, we felt sure there was a good deal of preliminary preparation necessary. The question was, should I forthwith turn painter and carpenter myself, and knock up the boxes as well as I could, or should we call in "professional" aid? This last idea was too suggestive of a long bill; nevertheless *some* outlay was necessary. We agreed to discuss the matter on a walk, and to ask a few questions of an amiable nurseryman two miles off, who had supplied us previously with a few seeds and bulbs. On this occasion he made us a present of a box which—for we had first taken careful measurements before leaving home—I saw at a glance was the very thing for us; and the other—for I had a good many tools of my own—I was resolved to make myself, taking the good florist's present as my model, and purchasing the necessary wood at a timber yard on our way home. In two or three evenings my box was completed, and the old one which the florist had given us touched up in one or two places. Then there was some green paint to buy, and while I was working away over the ledgers in the dusty office in the City, Maggie was to be the painter, and admirably I told her afterwards she had done her work. Triumph in-

deed was dancing in her eyes when, the next evening, the two boxes were elevated to their respective positions. A little observation and ingenuity soon told us there was yet some room for a good many flowers in pots on either window-sill, but Maggie was in ecstasies at a further idea of mine. I had bought a quantity of strong wire, and was now on a ladder, with hammer and strong nails, beginning to fasten the wire to the wall immediately round the windows. Up and all over this we intended to train some hardy creepers. It was the glorious month of June, in which almost anything will grow, and already that evening in a flower-pot at either end of our boxes we had planted sweet peas and convolvulus.

Maggie, too, had three good-sized baskets of ferns, and these we resolved to suspend by means of wire from the upper window, so as to let them hang gracefully down midway between the two windows. A little experience, however, showed us that ferns cannot well stand much exposure to the full blaze of the sun; placed as ours now were, we found they needed a prodigious amount of water. Ferns like moist heat, but little sunshine, so that we were obliged to contrive some shelter for them at times. As for the two boxes, though they were very heavy with the fine mould we had obtained from our friend the florist, yet it was necessary that they should at least be portable, as it might be important afterwards, in winter time, to move them inside during severe weather.

From our garden we had already carefully taken up the hyacinth and tulip bulbs, hoping, when the time came in the following October, to plant them again in our boxes for our spring show. Several varieties of scarlet geraniums were soon also introduced into our boxes, by shifting them at once from the pots in which we formerly had them. Mignonette, too, and the small blue lobelia soon became plentiful with us as the summer advanced. In process of time we hoped also to try our luck with some camellias, considering the fortunate south aspect of our house. These are half hardy, and will even stand a degree or two of frost much better than they will a roaring fire in the greenhouse. In the latter alternative, indeed, the buds will in all probability fall off. They must not be exposed to the midday sun—so the florist told us—until they have thoroughly completed their growth, and they should also be kept quite cool by copious

waterings. Maggie, indeed, got several lessons and useful hints from the florist.

One thing more than any other seemed of the greatest importance for window-gardening, and that was *general* copious watering. Care, however, should be taken during this process not to send an ugly and almost muddy stream all down the side of the house, and probably on to the head of some luckless itinerant below. Not to say more of waterings, myrtles and evergreens of that description should have plenty of air and light. This keeps them from growing weakly. How often, from the very want of this, will you see some tall sickly evergreen on some elaborate drawing-room stand merely placed *near* the window, and showing that it possesses little more than the inherent principle of life that is so dear to us all! Shade begonias as they are coming into flower, and fuchsias

likewise, from the heat of the sun. The latter will require careful staking; this should be done neatly also, and recollect in the process that the arm of the fuchsia is very brittle and is easily snapped off, simultaneously with the mortified exclamation—"There!"

Roses that are in flower must all be shaded when the heat of the sun is excessive, and fading leaves and flowers removed. As July advances, syringe the foliage of your flowers generally and keep them clear from dust. Camellias that have completed their growth should now, however, have less water. A little manure water will do the fuchsias



good occasionally, and as they advance in growth they will require regulating. Those that you have in pots should be shifted into larger-sized ones if the pots get full of roots. If you have violets planted out for potting in autumn, water them well in dry weather, and for the purpose of encouraging a vigorous growth, let the earth be well stirred amongst them; let no weeds appear either.

There is nothing so effective as the Virginia creeper for training up and around your wire-work. The nasturtium, too, though a little vulgar and obtrusive—for its propensity is to run wild over everything—is admirably adapted to gratify the impatience of a beginner in window-gardening. It will probably remain in flower till November.

A very few weeks' labour at this productive season of the year rewarded us for our pains, and the general effect of our window-gardening was universally admired.