

becoming covered with pictures, or pieces of china meet our gaze at every turn, it is quite time to make a clearance. The room may be an excellent show-room, or museum, but as a room dedicated to the uses for which a drawing-room is pre-eminently required, it is a failure.

The doctrine of value, as applied to decoration, is simple enough. In order to appreciate properly any given object, it must be separated from others by what may be termed a neutral zone. For instance, we all know the charming effect of a single old Nankin vase, if it be deftly placed on a shelf or table, in a position wherein the eye is not distracted by other objects, whether similar or competing with it in vividness or force of effect. But fill a whole shelf with such objects in close array, as in a china shop, and it will be found impossible to realise the actual decorative and artistic value of any one of them without removing it, and thereby artificially isolating it from its rivals in attractiveness. Of course it is to be understood that a *pair*, or a group of even three or five pieces intended to form a set, count only as one in this proposition, as they have been specially designed with the view of their combined effect. A piece of jade, brasswork, Satsuma, soapstone, bronze, or any other object differing largely in colour and texture will not, however, injuriously affect the proper appreciation of the Nankin. So much for the effect of over-crowding on the objects shown. In considering its effect on the *ensemble* of the room it is

still more to be deprecated. A well-furnished and decorated room should present on all sides such an harmonious arrangement of colours and lines as would be pleasing and delightful in a picture. Now any artist will tell us that it is impossible to obtain that repose and harmony without a quality which is called breadth; the eye must not be distracted by a multiplicity of objects of nearly equal intensity in various parts of the picture, but should be led gradually on from one beautiful detail to another in easy succession; and especially that repose—that most valuable quality in art—is to be obtained only by broad and simple lines and masses.

Those, therefore, who are the happy possessors of a large collection of any sort of objects of *vertu* will do well, if they wish their treasures to receive their due meed of appreciation, to exhibit them somewhat sparsely, distributing them cunningly in little groups in different parts of the room. The surplus articles would then be kept in store-rooms or closed cabinets, and the exhibited collection varied from time to time with selections from the reserve, so that something fresh is always on view. So with engravings; the bulk of them might be well kept in portfolios, and a few only framed and hung on the walls. There is room for contrivance in designing a frame so as to avoid the necessity of pasting the backs over with strips of brown paper; one frame would then serve for several prints of the same size, and a fresh interest given to the walls at each re-arrangement.

C. W. DEMPSEY.



OUR COTTAGE GARDENING SOCIETY.



THE village was astir at an early hour on Tuesday, July 27th, for it was the day of the Flower Show, and the members of the Cottage Gardening Society had to get their flowers, fruit, and vegetables ready for exhibition. The previous day had been cloudy, and the night very wet, and many a girl looked out anxiously that morning, to see whether it would be fine enough for her to wear her new dress or hat. The sky was clear, and as the sun rose higher in the heavens,

the steaming earth began to dry. The flowers that had made the cottage windows so gay for a month past, were being removed by eager hands, and carried out to the street, where here and there donkey-carts stood ready to receive them.

Mary Jamison had been up at three o'clock, while it was still raining heavily, to make some pea-soup, for the Secretary of the Society offered prizes to any member who should make soup and bring it to the show to be judged. Mary had attended the cooking-lesson three weeks before, had watched every step of the process, and had since then made the soup for her family, so she hoped to succeed in winning a good prize. But the pea-soup required three hours to make, and therefore she had had to take time by the forelock and get up early, as she wished to be present in the tent at the placing of her flowers. Eight o'clock was approaching, and her double scarlet geraniums, the delight of her eyes, must be carried out to the cart, and put beside her rival's dark pelargonium.

Annie Kearney was her rival and next-door neighbour, who had gained first prize for clean house and well-stocked garden on two former occasions. Mary feared she would do so this year also; but surely, she

thought, her own house had been as clean as soap and water and white-wash could make it, when the judges visited it three weeks before. Her garden, too, had certainly improved since last year, and every spot in it was filled with some useful vegetable or gay flower. But when she saw Annie Kearney's beautiful peleragonium, and her bunches of carrots, parsley, thyme, and mint, her heart sank, and she felt a jealous pang.

"Wait a wee minute, Joe, till I get digging my potatoes," she cried to the boy who was standing at the donkey's head.

"You needna be hurrying yoursel', Mary," he replied, "for James Neely and Ned Gourlay has to bring their flowers yet."

Thus comforted, Mary drew breath, and ran out to her garden once more. It was a long, narrow strip of ground, sloping down from the back of her house to the river, a narrow branch of the Foyle, that flowed between wooded banks fringed with meadow-sweet, willow-herb, and forget-me-not. As Mary dug her potatoes, glancing with fond pride over her little domain made tidy and productive by her own industry, her jealous feelings subsided, and she almost wished that Annie Kearney might win prizes—good prizes, but not the best.

"I say, Mary, will I tak' my peas and beans to the show?" asked little James Neely, the lame boy, speaking across the hedge.

"Would you allow (*i.e.*, advise) me to show my

onions, James?" called Ned Gourlay at the same moment from the further garden.

Mary left off digging, and went to her boundary, and Ned advanced to his, and an earnest conclave was held.

Mary, as the eldest and hitherto most successful of the three, gave her opinion.

"Ay, you'll tak' peas an' beans an' onions, both of you. You made Miss M—— put them down in her list, so you canna draw them back, an' who knows what'll win a prize?"

"Hurry!" cried Annie Kearney from her garden, "there's Miss M—— away to the field."

Miss M——, the Secretary, glanced with approval at the flowers, which were being carried along the street. One man was staggering under the weight of a gigantic fuchsia, covered thickly with pale rose-coloured bells. He had come from a village at the furthest end of the parish. His hopes of a first prize were great, and he would not imperil them by trusting his fuchsia to any other hand. A bright crimson flag floated from the mill-corner, another waved at the head of the village, where the high-road turned off from the village towards the field of the show; and gay flags of yellow, white, and red marked the way at intervals.

Two tents were erected in the field, one for flowers in pots and boxes, the other for cut flowers—glasses of garden flowers, and bouquets of wild flowers grown in the parish.



"WAIT A WEE MINUTE, JOE, TILL I GET DIGGING MY POTATOES."



"PLEASE, MISS, HENRY GILDEA SEEN A BOY TAKING HIS GOOSEBERRIES."

The Secretary smiled as she took a bouquet of wild flowers, almost as large as the child who carried it.

"Who would think there was such a variety of wild flowers in Donegal? Did you gather them all yourself, Biddy?"

"Ay, miss, me an' Jim."

"Is your number fastened to it?"

"Ay, daddy wrote it an' tied it on."

The Society consisted of thirty or forty honorary members, chiefly substantial farmers in the neighbourhood, who contributed five shillings each to the fund for providing prizes; and sixty members, each of whom had paid a shilling for his ticket. Thirty-seven of these shilling members had competed for the prizes offered for clean houses and well-stocked gardens; and a card with the numbers of the prize-winners, and amount of their prizes, would be fastened to the outside of the tent, at two o'clock, when the doors were to be thrown open to the public.

The larger tent was being filled with flowers—geraniums, pink, white, and scarlet, pelargoniums, fuchsias, dark and light, pots of mignonette, musk, and nasturtiums; and three or four carts had already discharged their burdens in the field. Saucers of strawberries, currants, raspberries, gooseberries, and

early apples which would not have disgraced Covent Garden, were arranged on a low platform in the open field. Near them were placed fine potatoes, turnips, carrots, peas, beans, lettuce, rhubarb, cabbages, parsley, mint, and thyme, each group or bundle with the exhibitor's number firmly attached to it.

Collections of annuals, tasteful and pretty nosegays of garden flowers, and children's bunches of wild flowers were arriving every moment, and the Secretary was placing them to the best of her ability in the smaller tent, when a messenger accosted her.

"Please, miss, Henry Gildea seen a boy taking his gooseberries."

"Do you know which boy took them?" asked the harassed Secretary, hastening to the platform, now surrounded by a crowd of members and their friends, who were arranging their fruit and vegetables.

"Ay, miss, I know him rightly."

"Very well, tell me his name," glancing sternly at a group of urchins who were trying to shrink out of sight, "and I shall complain to his parents."

Henry Gildea hesitated, looking uncomfortable.

"I'd sooner not say anything. I'd be feared of getting ill-will if I'd speak," he replied at length.

"Please, Miss M——," whispered a man, "there's

many could certify that Maurice McBride's big fuchsia is na his own."

"Who says so?"

"Oh, I will na just say; but plenty says it was brung to his house last night from Colonel F——'s greenhouse."

"Will you lodge a complaint against McBride then? and I shall draw the judges' attention to it."

The informant shuffled. No, he would not confront McBride, he was afraid of gaining ill-will.

Miss M—— spoke to the wind. Her efforts to inculcate a little courage were all in vain. The words "there's plenty could certify it," were once more followed by "but I won't speak, for fear of getting ill-will."

The lady and gentleman who had kindly undertaken the arduous task of judging now arrived, and their eyes were at once attracted by the beautiful fuchsia, the most prominent object in the tent.

"Can this plant possibly have been grown in any cottage window?" they asked.

One of the judges had visited the cottages and gardens three weeks previously, and to him the Secretary applied: "Has McBride a frame in his garden?"

"No."

"Has he a window large enough to have grown this plant?"

"No."

"See how beautifully it is trained, and how the flowers hang all round the plant. It is impossible that it could have been grown anywhere but in a greenhouse."

"What do you say to this pelargonium?" said another of the judges, displaying a grape which he had found on the pot under the leaves.

"Come," cried the others, "we know where that has been!"

Both fuchsia and pelargonium were marked "disqualified," and they moved on. The Secretary followed rather sorrowfully. She grieved that two of her members should have been found to have behaved dishonestly, but gradually cheered up as she saw that no doubt was thrown upon the uprightness of the remaining fifty-eight.

Mary Jamison's double geranium won first prize—so did Annie Kearney's pelargonium, and Ned Gourlay and James Neely took several second and third prizes. Before the judging was concluded each member had won at least one prize, and most of the members had won several; but as no member could get more than three prizes at each show many second and third prizes had to be struck off, the winner being allowed to retain his three highest prizes.

The hour for judging the soup arrived, and fourteen women members, who were to compete for the Secretary's prizes, were found by the judges seated on a bench near the larger tent, each holding a little jug carefully wrapped up in a cloth. Much interest being excited by this competition—a novelty in the proceedings—all the members of the Society crowded round the tent to see the competitors, headed by Mary Jamison and Annie Kearney, set down their jugs in

a row upon the shelf that had been cleared for them. But neither soup-makers nor public were permitted to be present at the judging.

"You'll gie *me* a gude prize, miss, dear?" whispered one of the women.

"But I have nothing to say to it, Nancy," replied Miss M—— in the same tone. "I am your teacher, so it would never do for me to be your judge."

"Well, miss, I hope I'll get as gude a prize as my neighbour."

"The judging will be quite fair, Nancy, I can promise that. Is your number pasted on your jug? Yes, I see it is. You must leave us now, and the judging will begin."

Nancy left the tent reluctantly, followed by her neighbour and rival, a neat-looking, middle-aged woman. The two younger rivals, Mary and Annie, had brought sippets of toast, a refinement unthought of by the rest.

The pea-soup, flavoured with bacon, and thickened with onions boiled until they were as tender as marrow, was pronounced excellent—so good that the judges found it difficult to decide upon the relative merits of the fourteen jugs; but five were a little the best, and received the Secretary's prizes; the remaining nine received each a shilling as consolation prize.

The judging being now over, the field was cleared of members and their friends, the band arrived, and a table and chair were brought from the village for the accommodation of the ticket-receiver at the gate. As the parish is situated within the County Donegal where it borders upon Londonderry, visitors from both counties came in crowds. It was a gay scene. All the new hats and pretty dresses were worn, and many a rosebud or spray of scarlet geranium, plucked from the wearer's own garden, enlivened the costumes. Much interest was shown in the card hung upon the outside of the tent, where each member might see his number and the amount of prizes he had won. The prizes were not given in money, but in useful articles to the value of the sum marked upon the card.

"I'm at the head of the houses and gardens, but I've only a shilling for my soup," Mary Jamison was overheard saying.

"My flowers were the best, and my parsnips got first prize," said Annie Kearney.

"My neighbour got first prize for her soup, miss," complained Nancy, meeting Miss M——.

"So I believe; but you got second prize for soup and first prize for your house and potatoes. You have seventeen shillings, and your neighbour only sixteen. I think you are both very well off."

"Ay, I'm satisfied enough."

"And will you often make that soup for Tom?"

"Deed, will I!"

To describe the races, jumps, and other athletic sports which gave so much amusement during the evening would take up too much space; but the visitors enjoyed themselves greatly, and felt more and more convinced that our Cottage Gardening Society merits their continued patronage.

LETITIA MCCLINTOCK.