The collection is intended to embrace every accessible independent version of every ballad, with the important variations of copies which appear to be of the same proximate derivation. The first part of this magnificent work (there will be about eight parts in all) contains twenty-eight ballads, most of which appear in several forms, "Lord Randal" reaching fifteen and "The Twa Sisters" as many as twenty-one. The essays introductory to the several ballads, setting forth the sources and comparing the variations, are most learned and luminous, and to all appearance exhaustive. The variations are traced through every country of Europe where the ballads are known; and the discussion of "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight," perhaps the most widely-circulated of all ballads, presents a learned and detailed analysis that might well appal the boldest of German investigators. There are eleven Danish, twenty-six German, and about forty Polish versions of this ballad, to say nothing of the versions that come less numerously from every other European country.

Making every allowance for strong situations, vivid strokes of characterisation, and the frequent expression of intense passion, it is not improbable that "the general reader" would experience some disappointment with these ballads. If undeterred by the initial difficulty of language, he might still, on a cursory view, find a considerable proportion of them rugged, abrupt, sadly defective in rhyme and even in assonance, full of repetitions, and simple even to insipidity. Still, the effect of it may be indefinitely modified if one take care to place oneself in the positions of minstrels and auditors; for here, as ever, and indeed in a peculiar degree, not to sympathise is not to understand. The recitation must be accompanied and animated with the appropriate music of instrument or of voice, or of the sympathetic mind. Perhaps nowhere does simpler language express a more mournful pathos alternated with the unmitigated savagery of revengeful satisfaction than in the intense lines of "Fair Helen," but how much depends on the imaginative realisation of the reader! The appreciation of knightly exploits rose high in the famous fellowship of fearless souls assembled around the blazing logs of the hall fire; the softer episodes—

> "The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
> And the free maids that wove their thread with bones,
> Did use to chant;"

are certainly not without alternation. One must endeavour to throw oneself into the situation. Minstrel and reader must come "with naked hearts together." It was thus that "the old song of Percy and Douglas," although it was "sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style, evil apparelled in the dust and cobwebs of an uncivil age," nevertheless was potent to move the gallant heart of Sir Philip Sidney "more than a trumpet." And so it is when a large-hearted, if humble, singer spontaneously croons a pathetic ballad, as her hands mechanically follow her knitting or her spinning-wheel, while her mind is far away with the forlorn damsel or the fated hero of her song. Certainly no one that understands the value of our ballad literature will fail to join in the chorus of gratitude and admiration that ought to greet the laborious and faithful work of Professor Child.

JAN MAYEN.

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WEDDING FLOWERS.

FROM the earliest times flowers have always held a prominent place in the religious and social ceremonies of most countries. Apart from their emblematical use, they seem to have been specially designed by their graceful beauty and varied character to represent the sympathy of nature in the sorrows and joys of human life. Referring to their festive associations, there are few events in life in which their presence has been more conspicuous than at weddings. Indeed, it would be no easy task to exhaust the list of flowers which have, at different times, entered into the marriage customs of our own and other countries, not to mention the many pretty bridal emblems of which they have been made symbolical. As far back as the time of Juno's nuptials we find, according to Homer's graphic account, how in honour of the occasion—

> "Glad Earth perceives, and from her bosom pours
> Unbidden herbs and voluntary flowers:
> Thick new-born violets a soft carpet spread
> And clust'ring swell'd the rising bed;
> And sudden hyacinths the turf bestow,
> And flamy crocus made the mountain glow."

Among some of the chief uses to which flowers were applied at weddings, was the nuptial garland with which the bride and bridegroom were crowned. It was generally composed of sweet-scented flowers arranged in the most artistic manner. Due prominence was given to the myrtle because, as Dryden says, "Sacred to Venus is the myrtle shade."

This plant is still worn by brides on the Continent, and with us it is in high repute, for, according to a Somersetshire saying, "The myrtle is the luckiest plant to have in your window. Water it every morning and be proud of it." Another flower to which a foremost place was often allotted in the wedding crown was

the rosemary, perhaps for no better reason than that assigned in an old ballad :—

> " Rosemary is for remembrance
> Between us day and night,
> Wishing that I may always have
> You present in my sight."

Dr. Roger Hacket, in a quaint sermon, entitled " A Marriage Present " (1607), speaking of the rosemary says, " It overtoppeth all the flowers in the garden, boasting man's rule ; it helpeth the brain, strengtheneth the memory, and is very medicinal for the head. Another property is, it affects the heart."

The rosemary, too, used at weddings was previously dipped, it would seem, in scented water, an allusion to which we find in Beaumont and Fletcher's " Scornful Lady," where it is asked, " Were the rosemary branches dipped ?" A writer in the sixteenth century tells us how " in some countries the bride is crowned with a garland of prickles, that he (the bridegroom) might know he hath tied himself to a thorny pleasure." Of the many other flowers which were entwined in the bridal garland was the lily—emblematical of the purity and simplicity which should ever characterise marriage. Ben Jonson, it may be remembered, on the marriage of his friend Mr. Weston with the Lady Frances Stewart, wrote :—

> " See how with roses and with lilies shine,
> Lilies and roses (flowers of either sex),
> The bright bride's paths."

Equally too in demand was the rose, whose unrivalled beauty and lovely fragrance mingled with the other flowers shed a rich perfume around the bride's presence. What floral ornament could be more suitable for a place in the bridal wreath, considering that from time immemorial the rose-bud has been considered typical of youthful beauty ?—a sentiment thus expressed by the Poet Laureate :—

> " Rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
> And sweet as English air could make her."

The rose, moreover, as sacred to love—having been extensively used by the Greeks in the composition of their love-philtres—has deservedly occupied an important position in the marriage ceremony, in reference to which we find a pretty allusion in Dibden's " Lord of the Manor ":—

> " Young Love flew to the Paphian bower,
> And gather'd sweets from many a flower :
> From roses and sweet jesamine,
> The lily and the eglantine,
> The Graces there were culling posies
> And found young Love among the roses."

It was also customary to plant a rose-bush at the head of the grave of a deceased lover, should either of them die before the wedding. Again, sprigs of bay were often introduced into the bridal wreath ; the reason being that the plant was supposed to possess certain magical qualities, " protecting," according to Sir Thomas Browne, " from the mischief of thunder and lightning." It was also employed in love divinations, its leaves when crushed in the hollow of the hand telling the constancy of the lover by making a crackling sound. Once more, ears of corn were also inserted, symbolical of the plenty which might always crown the married couple—a custom which has its survival in the bride-cake. Moffet, in his " Health's Improvement," informs us that the friends, " when the bride comes from church, are wont to cast wheat upon her head ; and when the bride and bridegroom return home, one presents them with a pot of butter, as presaging plenty and abundance of all good things."

Leaving our own country, it appears that the Roman bridal wreath was of verbena, plucked by the bride herself. Holly-wreaths were sent as tokens of congratulations, and wreaths of parsley and rue were given under a belief that they were effectual preservatives against evil spirits. The hawthorn was the flower which formed the wreath of Athenian brides. At the present day, in our own country, the bridal wreath is almost entirely composed of orange-blossoms, on a background of maiden-hair fern, a sprig here and there of stephanotis blending its exquisite fragrance. Much uncertainty exists as to why this blossom has been so much worn by brides, but the general opinion seems to be that it was adopted as an emblem of fruitfulness. According to a correspondent of " Notes and Queries," the practice has been derived from the Saracens, amongst whom the orange-blossom was regarded as a symbol of a prosperous marriage, a circumstance which is partly to be accounted for by the fact that, in the East, the orange-tree bears ripe fruit and blossom at the same time. It has also been suggested that this flower was introduced into our wedding customs by French milliners, having been selected for its beauty rather than for any symbolical reason.

Another important use to which flowers have been devoted in our marriage ceremonies is the bridal bouquet; which, however, is now a very different thing from what it was in days gone by. Instead of being composed, as now-a-days, of costly flowers, and arranged in the most elaborate manner by means of moss and wire, it was a simple nosegay of sweet country flowers, some of the favourite ones, says Herrick, being pansy, rose, ladysmock, prickmadam, gentle-heart, and maiden's blush. Of course, these varied according to the season of the year, those in summer time being far more varied and numerous than at other seasons. In spring, we are told, violets and primroses were much in request, but these flowers were probably selected not so much from choice as necessity, since the violet and primrose have generally been associated with early death.

A spray of gorse was formerly put into the bridal nosegay, in allusion probably to the old adage, " When the furze is out of bloom, kissing is out of fashion." The bridal " nosegay," too, as it was commonly called, was termed by many of our country folk a " posy."

Another floral custom, which was once observed with far more enthusiasm than in modern times, consisted in strewing flowers before the bride and bridegroom on their way to church. In Browne's " British Pastorals" we are told how—

"Full many maids, clad in their best array,
In honour of the bride come with their flaskets
Fill'd full with flowers; others, in wicker baskets
Bring from the marsh rushes to overspread
The ground whereon to church the lovers tread."

Shakespeare, too, in "Romeo and Juliet," makes Capulet say, referring to Juliet's supposed untimely death—

"Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse."

Indeed, most of our old poets and dramatists have introduced this custom, giving special prominence to it.

In these bridal strewings, it was customary to use such flowers as had an emblematical meaning suitable to the occasion; and should the bride, as occasionally happened, be not popular, she often encountered on her way to the church flowers of a not very complimentary meaning. The practice was not confined to this country, and we are told how in Holland the threshold of the newly-married couple was strewn with flowers, the laurel being generally most conspicuous among the festoons, denoting that the wedding-day is one of triumph. A survival of this custom is still kept up at Knutsford, in Cheshire. As soon as the bride has set out for the church, a relative spreads on the pavement before her house a quantity of silver-sand, called "greet," in the form of wreaths

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of flowers, and writes with the same material wishes for her happiness. This is soon copied by others, and if the bride and bridegroom be favourites, there may be seen before most of the houses numerous flowers in sand.

In some country villages it is customary on the occasion of a wedding for the young people to make a floral rope, which they fix across the road, demanding a toll from every one of the bridal party who passes over it.

Lastly, among the wedding flowers which have been associated with a strong symbolical meaning may be noticed the willow, worn in days of old by those who were forsaken in love. There is a touching allusion to this practice in "Othello," where Desdemona, anticipating her death, says—

"My mother had a maid called Barbara;
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad,
And did forsake her. She had a song of willow,
An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune,
And she died singing it: that song to-night
Will not go from my mind."

"This tree," says Douce in his "Illustrations of Shakspeare," "might have been chosen as the symbol of sadness from the 137th Psalm, 'we hanged our harps upon the willows,' or else from a coincidence between the weeping willow and falling tears." Lavender, on the other hand, was sent by lovers as a special sign of affection, and was, too, occasionally worn to denote their engagement. Thus Drayton, in one of his "Eclogues," tells us how—

"He for his lass him lavender hath sent,
Showing his love, and doth requital crave."

Then, of course, there is the forget-me-not with its many romantic associations, which, as Goethe wrote, is

"—— still the loveliest flower,
The fairest of the fair,
Of all that deck my lady's bower,
Or bind her floating hair."

The lime has generally been regarded as the symbol of wedded love, and the peach-blosssm is the popular emblem of a bride with the Chinese, while with the Swiss maiden the beautiful edelweiss is much prized as a mark of her lover's devotion, because, as it often grows in dangerous and almost inaccessible places, it is considered an act of courage to gather it. The sunflower is in many parts of this country valued by lovers as a mark of constancy, in allusion to its always turning to the sun, for as Moore says—

"The sunflower turns on her god when he sets
The same look that she turned when he rose."

Without multiplying further illustrations, we have quoted sufficient to show how richly indebted our bridal lore is to the floral world, these lovely productions lending a grace and charm to that momentous event in life, which should ever be adorned by the beauty and purity which they possess.

T. F. THISELTON DYER.

CO-HEIRS.

A CORNISH STORY.

By JOHN BERWICK HARWOOD, Author of "Lady Flavia," "The Tenth Earl," &c.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

WHAT MISS KRANE HEARD.

"POOR Lucy! poor sad thing! Papa, I must go to her—I must go out to Brinsmead at once,' I said earnestly.

"My father seldom demurred to anything upon which my heart was set, so he readily consented—and in a hired carriage I went over to my poor friend's house. I was in the habit of visiting there, and I knew this time that I should be doubly welcome, for Lucy was neither strong in health nor used to nursing, whereas I was both. It was a wretched home which I found there, and sadly changed from the pleasant, happy Brinsmead that I knew so well. It had not been contrived to keep their father's condition a secret from the children, and the little ones were weeping wildly, while the young wife, haggard with terror, seemed as if distracted by the agony of the moment.

"I was very glad indeed when Dr. Morton arrived. He stayed long with his patient, who lay in a dull stupor, groaning at intervals, but never uttering an articulate phrase, and seeming quite unconscious of the tender words which his sobbing wife lavished upon him.

"'It is, as I told you, Miss Katty, a bad case,' said the wise old doctor apart to me; 'and I am afraid there are injuries done the extent of which it is less easy to estimate than it was to set a fractured arm or to bandage a cut forehead. I tell you frankly—though we must both of us seem as cheerful as we can before the poor wife—that the symptoms are most alarming. Ice applied to the head does seem to do a little good, but—— I shall be over here again the first thing in the morning.'

"I could not think of deserting my friend in the hour of trouble, so, sending back by the driver of the carriage that had brought me to Brinsmead a message to my father and sister, I did my best to aid in nursing