

I knew that John had judged aright, and I promised him that I would never try to exercise that strange power any more.

It was only last week that John had a sharp attack of neuralgia, and I observed how I wished I could bear the pain for him.

He laughed triumphantly, in spite of the pain.

"You couldn't bear it now if you were to try."

"May I?" I asked.

He stretched out his hand to me in answer; but when I looked at his confident eyes, I felt the task was a hopeless one.

I held his hand in mine, I threw my whole soul into my task, but my power had departed, and I could do nothing.

"I told you so," said John; "you may be sure I was certain of your failure before I let you try. It is

worth a touch of neuralgia, Mary, to have positive proof that you are cured."

"Cured?" I echoed in amazement.

"My dear girl," replied John, "yours was simply one of the most striking cases of hysteria I ever met with. You had a certain mesmeric power, which is not uncommon, and were able by that means to send your patients to sleep. Mesmerism is exhausting to any operator, and especially to a delicate girl like yourself. Having a lively imagination, you supposed the pains you relieved were transferred in some supernatural way to yourself; all the pains you felt were simply the result of that impression, working upon a disordered nervous system."

"Why did you never tell me this before?" I asked.

"You would not have believed it."

I am not sure that I believe it now.

MUSTARD AND CRESS.



WHY do we always associate mustard and cress together?

Because they both belong to the same genus: *Sinapis*, of the *Cruciferae* order.

This is an order of plants which inhabits most of the temperate countries, and which embraces some remarkable members, as we shall presently see. Botanically, they are characterised by their essential deviation from the ordinary symmetry observable

in the relative arrangement of the parts of fructification. Linnæus divided the order into two, and more recent further divisions have been made. But we shall not concern ourselves with details which any ordinary student of botany knows, or can readily learn. We are not going to write a botanical article, but one explanatory of some of the little-known lore of these exceedingly familiar plants. Let it just be noted *passim*, that all the *Cruciferae* possess antiscorbutic and stimulating properties, combined with an acrid flavour, and that the order includes—besides mustard and cress—turnip, sea-kale, radish, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, as well as the stock, wall-flower, honesty, and candy-tuft.

Mustard belongs to the *Sinapis* family of the *Cruciferae*. The mustard-pot of the dinner-table is replenished by *Sinapis nigra* (Black Mustard of Europe), a plant which grows to a height of two or three feet, which has a bright yellow flower, and the powdered seeds of which form our familiar condiment. The pungent properties of the mustard of commerce are not observable in the seeds before

crushing, but are developed by fermentation in the process of mixing. The ferment *myrosin* exists in the seed, and is converted into *myronic acid* by the mixture with water. This it is which gives the "heat" to mustard. The Black Mustard plant grows to a much larger size in warm climates than in Europe, and thus it is supposed to be the mustard-tree referred to in the New Testament. But as to this, authorities differ, and the point does not affect our present purpose.

It is the *Sinapis alba*, or white mustard, which is grown along with cress for salad-making. Its seeds, also, when powdered, will produce *myronic acid* by fermentation with water, and are used for that purpose to some extent. But it is chiefly grown for its leaves, which are familiar in every kitchen-garden of the land, and more or less all over Europe.

One of the first references to the use of mustard in cookery in England occurs in Venner's "Via Recta ad Vitam Longam," published in 1650. It is there stated, by the way, that "oysters are usually eaten a little before meate," a gastronomic custom which most people have probably believed to be quite modern. But as to mustard, Venner names it as "a sauce in common use with sundry meats, both flesh and fish." Muffet, who wrote a book called "Health's Improvement," in 1655, also says: "I commend the use of mustard with biefe, and all kinds of salted flesh and fish." Venner says that "radishes are used as sauce with meat;" and Muffet that "most men eat radishes before meat, to procure appetite, and help digestion."

According to an old edition of M'Culloch's "Dictionary of Commerce," it would seem that mustard was not known at table in this country as we now use it until the year 1720. Previous to that, the seed had been rudely pounded in a mortar, and the integuments roughly separated. But about the year 1720 a happy

thought occurred to a good woman of Durham city, by name Clements. She thought it would be worth while grinding the seed in a mill, and treating the meal as carefully and tenderly as flour. She did so, and her mustard rose rapidly to fame, securing the special approval of His Majesty King George I. It was thus that Durham mustard came into fashion; and Durham mustard remained a monopoly for a long time, for the simple reason that shrewd Mrs. Clements refused to part with the secret which was making her fortune.

There are several references to mustard in Shakespeare, which have been carefully collated by Mr. Ellacombe in his well-known book. For instance, Falstaff says in *Henry IV.*, "He a good wit? hang him, baboon! his wit's as thick as Tewkesbury mustard; there is no more conceit in him than in a mallet." In explanation of this, we gather from an old writer, Coles, that "in Gloucestershire, about Teuxbury, they grind mustard and make it into balls, which are brought to London and other remote places, as being the best that the world affords."

This was before Mother Clements' day, and it is supposed that in Shakespeare's time mustard was used dry, as we now use pepper. There is, moreover, a passage in an Anglo-Saxon "Leech-book" which seems to indicate that Mrs. Clements' discovery had been anticipated by some centuries. Thus it runs, in directing how to compound an appetiser:—"Triturate all together; eke out with vinegar as may seem fit to thee, so that it may be wrought into the form in which mustard is tempered for flavouring; put it then into a glass vessel, and then with bread, or with whatever meat thou chose, lap it with a spoon."

To turn now to Cress.

It is very curious, sometimes, to hunt up the origin of common sayings; one meets with so many surprises. Everyone can understand what is meant by laying up a thing or a resolution "in lavender," but not everybody knows that an expression in the South of England, "as dear as saffron," has reference to an old belief in saffron as an infallible remedy for consumption. Again, who would suppose that the very common and very forcible phrase about anything being "not worth a curse" has an intimate connection with the humble herb with which the Londoner delights to furnish his tea-table?

It often happens, as that authority in flower-lore, the Rev. Hilderic Friend, remarks, that apparently vulgar sayings had their origin in something that was noble and expressive, but the meaning of which has by the corruption of language become obscured, or even totally altered. Thus in the case in point, the "curse" has, by a simple and quite common transposition of letters, taken the place of "kers," or "cress." Chaucer calls the cress "kers," and he uses the word in much the same sense as "curse" is used in the proverb or colloquialism: "Of paramours ne raught he not a kers." Not to "care a curse" for anything or anybody is, therefore, simply not to care a cress-leaf.

A name given to members of the cress family, nasturtium, has become corrupted almost everywhere in

the country to "stertion," and in the North of England we fancy it is more commonly "storshen." But the real name, nasturtium, was bestowed for a real reason. It means "the nose-twitcher," and is applied to those members of the cress family which have sharp, hot, biting qualities, which irresistibly produce a facial contortion. It was long ago discovered by Pliny that some kinds of cress would put the nose into convulsions. But it was of other kinds that the Greeks thought when they created the proverb, "Eat cress to learn more wit."

We shall see presently about the medicinal or health-giving properties of cress, but here is a curious thing worth noting, especially in connection with the Greek proverb. The shamrock, which is the national emblem of Ireland, was said by all the early writers to be the water-cress, although the trefoil clover has been more recently adopted in order to support the story that St. Patrick selected the flower to prove to the people the doctrine of the Trinity. Now, there is a three-leaved plant of the cress family which in Arabic is called *Shamrakh*, and which is held sacred by the Persians. This is apparently the same plant as that referred to in Pliny's "Natural History" as one upon which serpents are never seen, and which will prevail against the sting of snakes and scorpions. Note the Arabic name, and the peculiar feat ascribed to St. Patrick of driving all the reptiles out of Ireland, and then we shall find in the floral emblem of Ireland a good deal to think about.

To come back to the virtues of the cresses: it is remarkable that no family of plants has an older or a higher reputation. And another remarkable thing is that from the very earliest period of human history they have been esteemed alike by rich and poor, by ignorant and learned, for their agreeable characteristics and health-giving properties.

The best known of the tribe is the water-cress; and this is declared by the author of the "History of Cultivated Vegetables" to be really both the most agreeable and the most wholesome variety. And, as he somewhat magniloquently adds: "This aquatic plant waits not for the splendour of the warmer sun, which produces various vegetable offerings as numerous as the friends who crowd about those on whom prosperity shines. It visits us singly in a dreary season, without requiring a return of attention or manure. It rides the driven flood, regardless of the piercing blasts of Boreas, and offers its abstersive leaves through the congealed waters."

Another medical writer assures us that the presence of the common water-cress is sufficient evidence of the purity of the water, and that, on the other hand, the water of a stream in which duck-weed or lentil is found should be avoided.

The water-cress is easily cultivated, and it grows rapidly—so rapidly that some have supposed that the name cress is derived from *crescens* (growing) rather than from *crucifera*, but that is a moot point. Perhaps it is not generally known that the water-cress can be grown in an ordinary garden without water, if a moist place, such as an old tank or pond-

basin, can be utilised. All that is wanted is a gravelly soil, and the introduction of the garden-hose two or three times a day.

In this country the water-cress is chiefly eaten as a salad, or as a relish with breakfast or tea. But in France they use it largely—dipped in oil and vinegar—as a garnish for chicken, and also in soup. But it is excellent when cooked like spinach, and Dr. Kitchener also gives a very good recipe for stewed water-cress.

Its many excellent properties were well understood by the ancients. Pliny says that it “purges the head of ill-humour, and, taken in a vinegar, it staveth the brains of them that be troubled in mind ; and drunk in wine, or eaten with a fig, it is singular good for the spleen.” Xenophon recommended the Persians to feed their children on water-cresses, that they might grow in stature and have more active minds. Pliny also said that it would make the hair grow on bald pates, and prevent the hair from falling out ; but we have never tested it for this.

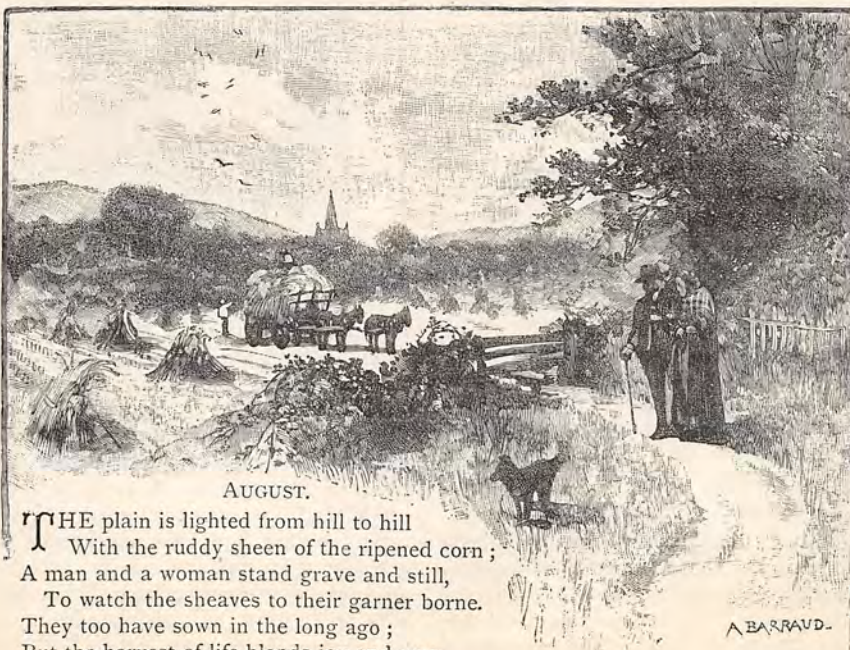
There is a large consumption of cress in Holland, where it is highly esteemed as an anti-scorbutic, and there is no doubt that it is a great preservative against scurvy ; only it is not procurable where scurvy is most prevalent—on ship-board, during a long voyage with salt meat. It is also a cure for indigestion, although very apt to produce indigestion when eaten raw in quantity. For flatulence and heart-

burn cress is much commended by French medicals ; and it is believed to have much virtue in disorders of the liver and kidneys. A French doctor says that emulsions made of the seed of garden-cress are efficacious in small-pox, and promote perspiration.

Pliny said that it cured coughs, eased those who were short-winded, and relieved pains of the chest. Perhaps this was how it came to be regarded as a cure for consumption ; but we fear that our readers must not attach much value to it on that head. Still, in some medical works we have seen the use of water-cress recommended as a palliative in the treatment of pulmonary disorders.

That the cress family are excellent purifiers of the blood is undoubted. They contain a volatile oil in combination with potash, phosphorus, iodine, and iron—the very elements which are needed for a healthy condition of the blood. The volatile oil, which is rich in sulphur, is called sulpho-cyanide of allyl. Mustard contains even a larger percentage of the same oil. Now, sulpho-cyanides are given out in the fluids and secretions of the human body, more or less according to the state of health. Mustard and cress supply the elements which pass off in natural waste, and which are necessary to a healthy condition. And this explains why the *Crucifera* plants have always been appreciated as food, even more than they have been understood as medicinal plants. Nature, after all, is the best mentor and guide.

PICTURES OF THE MONTHS.



AUGUST.

THE plain is lighted from hill to hill
 With the ruddy sheen of the ripened corn ;
 A man and a woman stand grave and still,
 To watch the sheaves to their garner borne.
 They too have sown in the long ago ;
 But the harvest of life blends joy and woe.

A. BARRAUD.