

wedding, but had been too busy to accept the invitation, although they sent most warm and loving messages to their little friend.

Duke was very much to the front on the happy day, with a large white favour pinned on his sailor suit. But he was left under a cloud of tears on the doorstep when the actual moment of parting came, smarting at the same time under a sense of injury at not being allowed to drive to the station with Dulce and Jack.

When Dr. and Mrs. Mordaunt had lost sight of

the old home in the trees, and had waved their last farewells to their friends, Jack leaned forward to kiss away his wife's tears.

"Don't cry, my darling," he said tenderly. "Our new life is going to be so bright and full of happiness, please God—

'My wife, my life, oh! we will walk this world,  
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,  
And then thro' those dark gates across the wild  
That no man knows. . . . .  
Lay thy sweet hands in mine, and trust to me!'

THE END.

## MY SUMMER IN A LONDON GARDEN.



O begin with, my country friends say it is not a garden at all. But this is only the proverbial dulness of the rural mind. Certainly, my garden has none of your wide expanses of lazy lawns, stretching out to meet the horizon, or great spaces of flower-beds leading their "gay orgies," as Mr. Browning has it, of "yellows and whites and reds"—like so many patches of colour on a Turkey carpet. It is much more select and unique than that. It is very much shut in and confined—between walls and leads; but is it any the worse for that, when even Solomon's mystical bride was "a garden enclosed"? It is in the very Londoniest part of London. It is damp. It is dirty. It is overshadowed by neighbouring trees. It measures, perhaps, ten feet by twenty. To walk about it is indeed, so to speak, a *voyage autour de ma chambre*. The soot and smoke increase around it year by year, but Nature is no respecter of places, and still, year by year, the leaves come out fresh and green, without any necessity (strange as this should seem to London housewives) for spring cleaning. Houses are painted and re-painted with endless care and pains, but for the "pavilions of tender green" in Hyde Park or Russell Square no re-touching is necessary. The "daughters of the year" pass through my garden one by one, as they do in any sunny country parsonage—perhaps they may not care to extend their stay quite so long, but we do not as a rule make such long visits in London as in the country. In February the snowdrops and crocuses begin to show their green spears; later on, the "naiad-like lily of vale" pushes up her slender spires through the dank mould. Then, there are the primroses. Of course, the London sparrows nibble at most of the flowers, but, at any rate, they do not butcher them wholesale, root and all, to "make a primrose holiday." Roses—well, my garden is not strong in roses. But then "the

year of the rose is so brief." I am a great admirer of "staying" power in plants, and my London garden is great in ivies, Virginian creepers, many hardy ferns, the plant vulgarly called "creeping Jenny," whose pretty yellow blossom welcomes you from nearly every house in Seven Dials, scarlet



THE GIANT HEMLOCK AND THE "DEATH-TRAP."

runners, wall-flowers, pyrethrum, or golden feather, angelica, and more especially the giant hemlock, which, in the darkest spot, grows to a wonderful height and breadth.

But it must not be supposed that my garden grows only plants. It grows all sorts of things besides—in fact, there seems hardly anything that it does *not* grow. I might label it “Aux 1,000 Articles,” as the Swiss do their mountain bazaars. Let me enumerate some of my rarer products: sardine-tins (many and various), old pipes, knives, old tea-kettles, jaw-bones, shells, old jugs of the Etruscan type (said to be so numerously manufactured at the tombs near Orvieto), and latterly even a printing press, have all been grown in my garden. “London mysteries” I once heard an old servant call these flowers of my rearing; and mysteries they are indeed. I often puzzle my brain as to who was once the fortunate possessor of the printing press. What little boy did it once make happy on Christmas Day, in the long-vanished years? and how did he manage surreptitiously to bury it in my garden? Where is he now, and where, too, are the quondam possessors of the buck-handled knives, rusty with age, which I still occasionally disinter?—

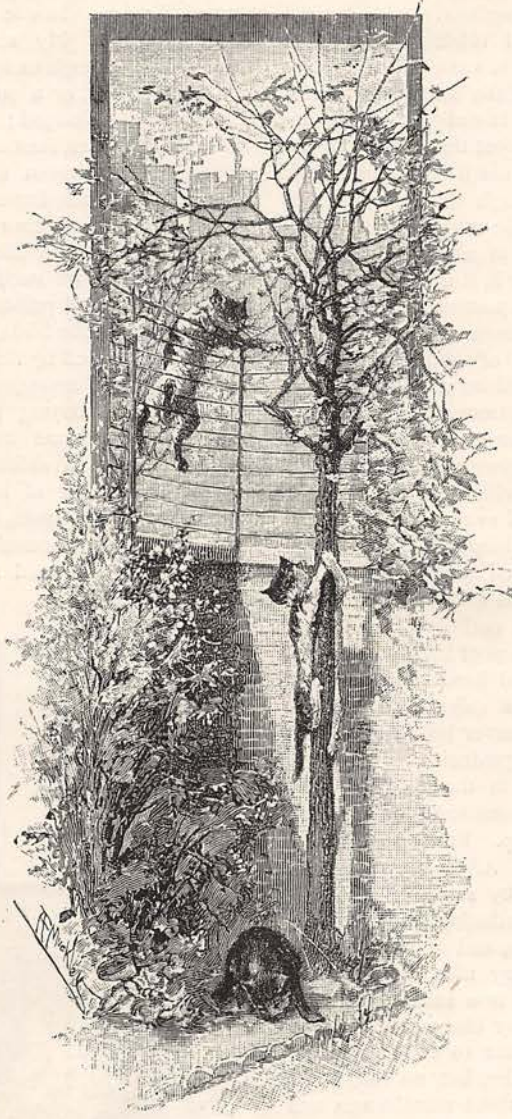
“Gone, like the snows of yesteryear.”

Gardening, I find, is productive of such melancholy reflections as the foregoing. It is like digging in the tombs of the past. But, in spite of retrospection, and the excitement entailed by every fresh discovery, I bear these prehistoric small boys some grudge for making my garden into a rubbish-heap. But what does the average boy care about plants? He only wants a place big enough to shoot a catapult in. Catapults, I feel, if directed at cats, are pardonable. But, in any other capacity, they should on no account be tolerated. Cats are the bane of London gardens. It is impossible, by any cleverly contrived system of wire-netting, or barricading, to keep them out. I have sometimes spent half the day in devising some impregnable defence, and the next time a cat

walks along, he takes it as easily as if it were a promenade arranged entirely for his edification. Really, there should be a London cat-tax. This, and this alone, would prevent the incursions of howling hordes of hungry animals, making day as well as night hideous

by their cries. The London cat cannot be happy. It is not in the nature of things that he should be so. It is often a kindness to put him out of his misery. He has—I am speaking now of the common or garden-wall cat—a hunted, slinking look, and his poor mangy coat shows, alas! traces of the brutality of London street arabs.

But I have again wandered from my garden. (The fact is, it is so very small that it is next to impossible not to transgress its borders.) To begin, however, at the beginning. What I find the greatest difficulty in obtaining is *mould*. Earth in London is a most expensive commodity; it is almost worth its weight in gold, or, to say the least of it, in copper. On occasions when I have been hard put to it, I have often, like Wolsey, gone about asking people to “grant me a little earth for charity.” Of course, what we ought to have is clean country mould, undefiled by London soot. When mould has been stationary for some years—say for three—in a London back garden, it requires renewing if you would have your plants flourish. It has become three parts soot to one part earth. My little country maid persisted in calling it “dirt” instead of mould, and, indeed, it hardly deserves a better name. Mr. Ruskin may talk about the “artistic value of



NOT ENCOURAGING.

dirt,” but there is the greatest difference in the world between the value of London dirt and the dirt of country turf, which was well described by a little Board-school girl who had never been out of London as “grass and clean dirt stuck together by God.”

At first I used to buy mould out of “the square.” The square gardener is a person of strict morality. He at first signified that it was as much as his place was worth to let me have a basket of earth from the

sacred enclosure ; but on payment of 1s. per basket (a very small basket) it became quite a simple affair. There is a silver key to most ethical problems. But soon I discovered that the square mould was almost as prone to soot as that of my own garden. So I ordered a load from the country. There is a remarkable fact connected with buying a load of earth, which the owners of London gardens would do well to take into consideration. I think it was Alice in Wonderland who found that it was cheaper to buy two eggs than one—only that if she bought them, she would have to eat them both. It was just so with my mould. A whole load was cheaper than half—only as I bought it all, I was obliged to use it all. And it took me quite a year to get through that cart-load of mould. I had it deposited in the middle of my back-yard (which it nearly filled) in a vast heap, and though I dug diligently away at it, it never seemed to grow any less in its gigantic proportions. If it rained, everything became splashed from the mould-heap, and the garden became a sea of mud. But it *did* vanish in time. All the mould on the Isola Bella, they say, was originally brought from a distance ; and, though my garden can hardly be said to emulate the "fairy grottoes" on Lago Maggiore, yet my plants too showed such renewed energy with new earth, that I did not grudge the trouble, for I sympathise with the poor, anæmic, sun-debarred things, as though they were my own children. Indeed, they are just like badly fed slum children. All the care and the tonics that I bestow on them will not entirely make up for want of sun and pure air. One poor little polyanthus, I am sure, did its best ; it tried hard to flower, but only succeeded in producing a calyx crowned with five tiny green leaves. I have never before seen anything so pathetic in the way of gardening as this poor little polyanthus, persevering in the face of difficulties, and producing such a monstrosity of a flower. It was enough to make one weep. But I have had a sadder instance even than this. Adjoining my garden is a little conservatory, built by someone who evidently had no knowledge of gardening. It is placed so as to command no ray of sun, and is besides in a thorough draught. It is a very nice conservatory, with this one drawback—that it is a sure and certain death-trap for any plant you may like to put into it. The hardiest can perhaps contrive to support nature there for the space of six months, but no longer. I bought a nice little hardy plant three months ago, and placed it in this catacomb of a conservatory. It made no complaint, but like Keble's trees in autumn, it "unmurmuring parted" with its leaves one by one. They dropped off, beginning at the bottom, at the rate of about two per week, till now it presents a ludicrous spectacle—an immensely tall stalk with a baby leaf on its very apex. I am afraid that it is past praying for, even if I should now remove it from its sepulchre. My country visitors laugh at this poor little plant. But, indeed, they are rather contemptuous, as I have said, about my garden generally—and one of them even goes so far as to call it "a misery." But country visitors are always so un-

pleasantly outspoken. I only wish one of them would try gardening under *my* difficulties.

But, after all, the difficulties make the charm of many things. In proportion to the difficulty of growing plants, is the ease and rapidity with which one grows beetles, bugs, centipedes, wood-lice, green flies, and all other objectionable parasites. Their name is Legion. In one day they increase to a formidable army. My small back-yard alone would furnish forth enough to stock a Zoological Garden. If you move a box, or a pot, an army of centipedes is immediately dislodged ; and even my conservatory, which kills all else, seems to be a health resort to the spider and the green fly. Although the birds do occasionally eat the flowers, yet I am thankful to say that they eat these insect-plagues too ; and, indeed, the birds are the only thieves I tolerate, for they sing so sweetly that we need hardly grudge them a few meals of musk and primroses. The garden owes half its sweetness to the birds, and the birds, on the other hand, are attracted by the plants, so that it is a sort of "give and take" arrangement.

Then, as to buying plants. Unless one always buys from the same man, buying plants from a barrow is often a delusion and a snare. I once bought a number of lovely chrysanthemums, and found they had no roots, but were simply flowers, with their long stalks squeezed tightly into the pot. On that occasion only I blamed the death-trap unjustly when they died within a week. But still, and in spite of sundry failings of his—sweeter to me than the voice of the lark to the dwellers in the country, is the



F. R. Skelton "HOW MUCH!"

voice of the man crying, "Flowers all a-blow—ing and a-grow—ing." He is a dreadful humbug, that man. I know it all the while, and all the while I can't help being taken in by him. He so constantly assures me that he doesn't make a penny by selling to me, that I wonder why he should be so anxious for my custom. I suppose he would go on the principle of the apple-woman, who told the schoolboy that she sold each apple under cost price, and when he asked how then she made it pay, replied, "By selling a many of them." But whatever his arithmetic may be, my hawk is terribly seductive. I go to the door steeling my heart, and determining not to buy a single plant, and he cajoles me into spending all my ready-money—all the money laid aside to pay the butcher's bill. I sometimes think that no class understands human nature so well as London flower-sellers. They have made a study of it for years. When they find your desire to buy flagging, they stimulate it by asking "if you have any old clothes." I don't know what connection there should be between old clothes and flowers—but so it is. I once had a friend, who was a novice at London gardening, and the flower-man was an Old Costermongering Hand. Incautiously she gave him a pair of her husband's boots in exchange for two sickly specimens of the fern tribe. Her husband complained when he came home that they were "the only boots he could wear;" but what was that to the flower-seller? He had got the boots, and possession is nine points of the law. But there is, at any rate, one comfort in dealing with the barrow-men. They are not like doctors who fix their fees according

to the house-rents of their patients, or Italian shopkeepers who have an esoteric and an exoteric tariff. The London plant-seller tries at all times to get out of everyone as much as he can. He haggles with his own class as remorselessly as with any other. I once saw a cabman pull up his empty cab before a barrow of plants in a slum, and, pointing to a seedy white geranium, say—

"How much?"

"Four - and - a - half," replied the barrow-woman laconically.

The man demurred; he wanted it for his missus, he said, but he would not pay so much. The woman would only abate one halfpenny.

"Four d's the price of it; you may take it or you may leave it," she answered sturdily.

And with that he could resist no longer: the white geranium was handed up to him, and he drove away, its proud possessor.

But, indeed, the fact is that London gardening is more popular with the poor than with the comparatively well-to-do. In Seven Dials on a hot July day, you will hardly find a window that does not boast of a pot or two. It may be only (as Hood has it) "a weakly monthly rose that don't blow, or a tea-plant with five black leaves and one green;" but to its owners it is more than Mr. Chamberlain's choicest orchid. And why should it not be so? We poor Londoners live, after all, imprisoned in brick. Is it strange that, like the Italian captive in the pretty story of "Picciola," we should grow our prison flower?

E. C. C.



## DISHES IN WAITING.



It does sound odd, but it exactly expresses my meaning. Don't tell me to exert myself, and exercise my inventive faculties. I have none, I fear; at any rate, originality is not my strong point."

The speaker was Mrs. Leebank, the wife of a young country surgeon, and she found it difficult to serve their modest little dinners with the nicety she desired, partly owing to previous inexperience, and partly to her husband's necessarily irregular appearance at dinner, as to be home within half an hour of the time fixed was the most he could manage.

Mrs. Crutchlow, her friend, expressed her usual willingness to help her out of her difficulty, for she had been a friend in every sense of the word, from the day of the home-coming of their popular doctor and his bride.

"First, my dear, you are at a disadvantage in common with your fellow-residents, so far as good catering is concerned, our nearest town being far away; you must think out your meals well beforehand; our choice of joints is but limited, as you know, and as for fish, we are thankful for anything we are fortunate enough to get. Some day we will have a chat about an 'emergency cupboard'; mine is one of my greatest boons, and without it I should often get stranded, with