

any close kinship with the dress in which, under happier circumstances, women are wont to be presented to Her Majesty. The name alone is the same. This "court dress" consists of just the very oldest clothes in which it is decent to appear in public. The wife repeats the old story of slackness of work, sickness, many children, and so on. The judge, if he believes her, makes no order. If, on the other hand, the judge believes that the defendant could have paid if he would, he orders a warrant to issue for the defendant's arrest and committal to prison. In making this order, the judge usually gives the defendant a few days' grace—a short time within which he may pay the

amount in question into court, and so keep out of prison. The common term of imprisonment ordered is ten days, and the oracular form of the usual order is—"Ten days; suspended for a fortnight." "Suspended," be it understood, refers to the warrant, and not to the luckless defendant.

If after taking all this trouble, spending his money as freely as a suitor must, experiencing in his own proper person some little of the law's delays and its glorious uncertainty, any of my readers, in technical phrase, "takes nothing by his action," why, I am not to blame. What did I advise at the beginning of this article?

HOW WE GOT OUR TENNIS LAWN.

BY AN AMATEUR GARDENER.



"TENNIS WAS AT LAST ESTABLISHED AT HOLLY-BUSH MANOR" (p. 594).

THOUGH we occasionally, perhaps, had our little differences, yet, on the other hand, we certainly could not be called a quarrelsome quartette. Our party—in so far as the juveniles were concerned—was made up of four brothers and sisters, all of them fairly good gardeners, under the able tuition of the head of the household, old Uncle John. But though kind at heart and somewhat indulgent in most things

to his nephews and nieces, he was a regular old Martinet in any matter concerning the garden: woe be unto poor gentle Amy, if she were caught by the old gentleman even gathering too many flowers from one particular spot! Alas for Tom and George when last week they were taken in cold blood racing with the mowing-machine, only an hour after the unhappy Nelly had been detected watering some plants in a boiling hot sun.

But it was this very mowing-machine disgrace which occasioned the next morning the following short discussion in the library, during the hour that uncle was in the greenhouse, making a minute inspection of everything inside, and, according to custom, humming all the while some snatches from *Il Trovatore*, for, be it observed, whenever this suppressed musical solo was heard, the occasion was always regarded as a favourable one for what the merry four used to call a council of war.

"I tell you, Amy, there's almost room enough as it is," said Tom, "all we have got to do is to sacrifice those two beds at the end of the lawn, for there are plenty of smaller ones near the house, while the farther from the house, the better for tennis, and the less risk of damaging flowers and perhaps windows."

"And I'm certain," put in Nelly here, "that only last Monday I heard uncle telling Bailey that the roses on those very beds were regularly worn-out old things, and that he would like something fresh in their place altogether."

"There we agree with him," said George, bringing his hand down smartly on poor Amy's back, and making her jump up, "and I vote that the new plant be called Tennis."

"Oh, I don't believe uncle will consent to it for a moment," said Amy, who generally took the timid view of most things, whether in discussions with uncle or with cook—for Amy was housekeeper, as uncle was a bachelor—or with Bailey, the gardener, or as to the prudence of crossing a field with cows in it.

"All the same, you've got to ask him presently, you know, Amy," said Tom; for Amy was so gentle, and her uncle was so fond of her, that she was always deputed by the other and more mischievous three, as advocate with the old gentleman.

Tom, George, and Nelly had so thoroughly "coached up" Amy in the line she was to take, that her gentle diplomacy carried the day, "for, of course," concluded Amy to her uncle, "we should not have thought of such a thing, if you had not already told Bailey, uncle, that all those roses were to come down."

"Something very like a fib, that last, was it not, Amy?" whispered Nelly, who chanced to come into the greenhouse, just at the conclusion of the interview.

The next day there was a general meeting on the lawn, in which Bailey, of course, was present, and we had better give at once the observations that the cautious old gardener had to offer.

"Now, you know, young genelum," began Bailey, "it's a good thing that most of this here lawn is pretty well drained, for you know, it would be quite useless to attempt to play tennis on land little better than a bog."

"That's true enough, Bailey," put in Tom, "for the court at the Rectory never seems dry, and the ground was awfully cut up the other day, after the tournament there."

"Do you mean, Tom," said Amy, "that the tournament cut it up?"

"No, baby, I don't; but——"

Bailey here intervened, for like all old gardeners, he was a little jealous of having his province interfered

with, even though the question but indirectly concerned gardening. "If Mr. Tom will excuse me, miss, I can tell you, I dare say, pretty well what he means; you see, Miss Amy, if you *will* play on the court when the ground's very soft after two or three days' rain, you sinks in a bit every step you take, and simply spoils the turf."

"Don't you see, Amy child," put in George, "and then as the ball won't play true, there's no fun in the game."

But as Tom did not like to have himself set down entirely by the old gardener, favourite though Bailey was with them all, he had his little revenge for being so silenced as he had just been, and added, "there's another thing, Bailey, that keeps the ball from playing true, and that is bad turfing."

"Right you are, sir," said Bailey at once, "for if I was not to put the turfs down quite level, or if I didn't press each close again the next, so that you couldn't see where the division was, you would find, especially after a drought, that the court would not only be full of cracks and unsightly, but that the ball would often kick back and start aside, and in fact quite spoil your game."

In less than no time, need it be added, the worn-out old standard roses were the same morning taken away, not, however, without a pang being visible on the face of poor Uncle John, who stood looking on. "Look sharp about it," whispered Tom to George, "in case uncle revokes the edict at the last moment." But it was a relief to them, all four, when their uncle turned round with a suppressed sigh, and entered the house.

"It's all right, now," said Nelly, whose eyes were dancing with delight at the thoughts of tennis in their own garden, and on a full-sized court, "but——"

Bailey once more intervened with, "And now you young gentlemen can give me a hand at taking away all this here top soil off the beds, for I musn't lose all this good stuff for the greenhouse potting."

Some of the party, however, flagged somewhat when the work got a little laborious, and old Bailey, with a most amused grin, found himself before long working alone. In two or three days' time, however, the court was complete, but a slight shower the following morning put the patience of the whole party sadly to the test.

"I ain't a bit sorry," said Bailey, however, to whom George and Tom had been grumbling at their bad luck, "we shall now be able to give the ground a good rolling, but you know, sir, if we was to roll the court immediately after a very heavy or a long rain, we should do more harm than good, and it ain't of no good at all rolling the grass in a drought."

Tennis, then, was at last established at "Holly-bush Manor," for such was Uncle John's pretty old country house called. Later on we may, perhaps, learn what it resulted in; but October was approaching, and as the old gentleman was intending to send some chrysanthemums to the flower-show in the adjoining town, it is of them that we shall first have to speak, and of all the excitement that their cultivation and preparation entailed.