

Lancelot seemed to take Ethel's speech as a dismissal; at all events, he declined the proffered tea, and said good-bye. As soon as the garden door closed behind him, Ethel took Sylvia seriously to task.

"I do think, Sylvia, you might take a little more pains with your dress and manners, especially when strangers are here."

"You don't suppose I'm going to change my dress, and put on pretty company manners, for that boy!" said Sylvia, with decision. "If our every-day clothes and behaviour aren't good enough for him, he can just stay at the Manor. By the way, Ethel: he never once alluded this afternoon to that unfortunate silk dress. He has some tact, after all, you see."

END OF CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE ROSE GARDEN IN DECEMBER.



NELLY.

**LD** Mr. Singleton, of Hollybush Manor, was undeniably a very particular and precise head of the household. Yet, with it all, no one was afraid of him, unless perhaps the question in dispute turned upon gardening matters.

It was, therefore, rather a satisfaction last month when, upon the return of the expedition that had gone into the woods in quest of rose stocks, George strolled

into the conservatory, carrying with him the results of their labour in the shape of twelve good assortments of stocks, which met with his uncle's warm approval.

"Bravo, my boy!" said he; "nothing could be better than the selection you have made, and plenty of good roots, too! I see you have gone thoroughly well about your work; perhaps to-morrow some of you will give me a helping hand again."

Soon after twelve o'clock the next day, George and Tom, after labouring through a mathematical paper at Mr. Haredale's, found themselves slowly walking up the drive on their way back to the Manor, and were accordingly waylaid by their uncle as they neared the house, where their services were forthwith enlisted in the arrangement and planting of the stocks.

"Where's Nelly?" said the old gentleman, without looking up from the stake to which he was carefully securing one of the newly-planted stocks. "Ask her, Tom, to give you the tin box that has the garden nails, twine, and wire in. I told her the other day to get it replenished."

"Nelly!" shouted Tom, as he ran round the corner of the house, and a renewed shout of "Nelly!" at the bottom of the staircase and in the hall brought no response whatever. "Can't make her hear, uncle," said Tom, as he turned into the garden again.

"Find her at once, Amy, my dear," said her uncle; "she's probably up to some mischief."

"But what was *that*?" said Amy, and in the midst of a pause of intense expectancy, the smothered but unmistakable laugh of Nelly Singleton was heard in the loft of one of the stables. Half a minute more, and both George and Tom were up the perpendicular ladder, and there, like a very Ophelia, with hay intertwined with her fair hair, was the missing culprit.

"You naughty girl! what have you been doing up there—and with rabbits? How could you venture up?"

"What have I done Amy, dear? I merely took them up in the loft to have a game, and then it felt so warm in the hay, I went asleep."

And not a little foolish did the young damsel appear in the presence of this December garden party, before which she presently appeared, accompanied by her sister and Miss Haredale. Luncheon had almost got cold, and by way of a diversion, George proposed that a hasty refreshment should be had in the conservatory.

This was speedily got over, and as the gardening

operations had been all thrown back by Nelly's adventure, the whole party at once joined Mr. Singleton and Bailey. The newly-acquired rose stocks, a few more of which had just been contributed by Dobbin, were naturally the first subject of discussion.

"These," said Bailey, "we must plant in rows, the stocks quite eighteen inches apart from each other, with nearly four feet of space between the rows." Some were secured to stakes, but one long row of stocks were well supported by tying each stock to a rail, the rail itself being firmly held in its place by a stake at each end, and one strong stake in the centre. "This," added Bailey "is a good plan where many new rose stocks are put in at one time." As soon as planted, the stocks were well trodden in to prevent their swaying about in the gales, while Nelly's tin box, which had now been found, was most useful for its string and wire contents, when the stocks came to be secured to their supports. Mr. Singleton then rapidly explained the next stages of progress: how that in the spring the two best buds upon the upper part of the stock must be the only ones retained, and all that shoot out below these be rubbed off so as to throw the whole strength of the growth into the two that remain, and upon which, in the following July, the interesting process of budding will be made. "The stocks," he continued, "will sometimes die down a little way after planting, but at any future time the dead part can be cut away fairly close to the two healthy buds on which your hopes depend."

"Now, my lads," said their uncle, who had not as yet quite recovered from the annoyance that his truant niece had caused him, and who was still disposed to snub her for the afternoon, "see how gay our beds look now." The old gentleman, in fact, had, since the excitement of the morning, diverted himself by plunging a number of gay evergreens in various parts of the garden and in conspicuous places. Variegated holly, box, arbutus, the aucuba japonica, laurustinus, the Portugal and common laurel, with several other evergreens, all found a place in the beds, and their presence everyone agreed greatly relieved the dull monotony of a winter garden.

"I say, Nelly," said George, after they had gone, "how fierce you looked this afternoon at Haredale when he called you 'the thorn' of the party; but look here, pussy cat, I'm sorry I called you names to-day up in the loft," and he began to fondle the spoilt sister, whose mind was evidently dwelling upon what George had first said.

"Oh, he went on like that the other day, when we were stock-taking in the woods."

"Like what?" asked Tom.

"Oh, about roses and thorns, and I don't know what all"—and a very rose she became as she spoke.

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"All the same," said George afterwards to Tom, "I don't believe she cares a fig for poor Haredale, but I am not so sure about *him*."



## THE YEAR'S JEWELS.

BY M. C. GILLINGTON.

TURQUOISE: DECEMBER.

*Success in Love.*

SHINE fair, thou fading sun!  
Shine fair, thou frosty blue!  
For though the year's long tale be done,  
Another and a lovelier one  
Begins anew!

Red, red against the sky,  
The clustered berries glow,  
Along the path the snowflakes lie,  
Just as we saw them, you and I,  
A year ago.

But while the Christmas chime  
Rings out by east and west,  
Here in the frozen winter-time  
My thoughts run in a true-love rhyme  
Within my breast.

I clasp with tenderest care  
My treasure safe and fast,  
My radiant gem, my jewel rare,  
My darling precious, past compare—  
Mine own at last!

