

the flowers standing out in brilliant array against the glaucous leaves. The best variety is Fireball, the flowers being a vivid crimson.

During recent years Cactuses have grown greatly in popularity, and they can be purchased cheaply. Eighteenpence will buy a splendid Phyllocactus, and there are many varieties, the flowers, as a rule, very large and of brilliant colours—carmine, crimson and rose, shot with a pellucid satiny lustre, a glorious sheen, characteristic of this fascinating class. Everyone has heard of the night-flowering *Cereus grandiflorus*, which has blooms fourteen inches across. A plant in perfection is a fairy vision, with its spotless white flowers developed in the darkness and creating, in the poet's words, "Worlds of light, we never see by day." Of short duration is this brilliant manifestation, the flower commencing to expand at seven o'clock p.m., gradually opening out its wealth of petals, until at midnight they are in full splendour. From thence until morning its glory dwindles, the scene to be again presented on the following evening by successional buds.

This month's talk is necessarily somewhat disjointed. The greenhouse and its inmates is a big subject for a comparatively brief article, but everything I have mentioned may be grown therein. A few more easily managed things are tuberous Begonias, which give all the colours of the rainbow, the blue-flowered *Agapanthus umbellatus*, the yellow *Cytisus*, winter-flowering Heaths, the Maiden's Wreath, Francoa, a lovely white flower in graceful spikes, the fine old Scarborough Lily (*Vallota*), which requires to be practically left alone, and the singular Blood-flower (*Hæmanthus*).

A plant of the showy *H. coccineus* may be grown to surprise friends. It requires as much warmth as the greenhouse affords when the leafless, curiously-marked stems appear, each crowned with a brush-like head of

scarlet flowers. When at rest only sufficient water is required to prevent them shrivelling. You may tell the wondering friend that the viscid, acrid juice of the Blood-flower bulbs was used by the Hottentots to poison their arrows.

One does not want all flowers, so I append the names of a few cheap and easily-grown foliage plants. The Parlour Palm (*Aspidistra*) has remarkably ornamental leaves variegated with creamy white. Then choose the graceful *Grevillea robusta*, the thick-leaved *Aralia Sieboldi*, and the Maidenhair fern, *Adiantum cuneatum*, *Pteris cretica*, and *P. tremula*.

I have refrained from mentioning orchids in general, but if a free-growing kind is desired select the Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium insigne*), which gives little trouble. It is, moreover, inexpensive, and needs a peaty soil, no heat whatever in summer, and the warmest corner of the greenhouse in winter, when its pretty flowers are borne in profusion. Of course, the house may be brightened with a few forced bulbs or plants as *Deutzia gracilis*, a white-flowered shrub that gives beauty to mountains and valleys in flowery Japan.

March is a busy month. Roll and sweep the grass lawn, finish all kinds of planting, and make the beds ready for seed-sowing. Sow now Sweet Peas, Virginian Stock, Poppies, Lupines, Calliopsis, Cornflowers, Clarkias, Larkspurs, *Convolvulus minor*, and Love-lies-bleeding. Half-hardy annuals sown under glass must not get drawn. Keep the growth as stocky as possible. Pot up bedders, and Carnations for summer-flowering kept over the winter in frames should be put out at once. See that the greenhouse plants are not infested with green-fly. A mild dose of tobacco smoke will settle these small marauders. Plant early potatoes on a warm border, sow carrots and cabbages for early in July. At the end of the month sow French beans and Exonian peas.

A FEW SAMPLES PER RAIL.



N old gardener of our acquaintance was sent up to town in charge of a horse. He received many directions from his master as to his route; his mistress went with him to the station, and bought for him a return ticket. The distance from London was only twenty miles, and William returned in safety in the evening.

The next morning, when accounts were being inspected, an item for "My train" attracted attention.

"What is this?" inquired the mistress.

"That be for my journey home, missus."

"But I gave you a 'return.' Did you lose it? Half of your ticket should have been given you in London."

"Lor-a-mussy, mum! be this it?" quoth William, pulling from his pocket the missing half. "I did wonder at he for giving of it back to I."

There are not many so untravelled nowadays as that William. A different company pass us by as we stand for a few minutes on the platform at Charing Cross or Victoria, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, to watch a few trains go out, laden with their human freight. By far the largest number of passengers are men. "Paterfamilias" may be labelled at once, from his habit of carrying to the nest some morsels for the fledglings, or for the mother bird—a basket of fish, some blue-enveloped fruit or dainty

vegetable, a long brown paper parcel from the draper's, a very bulky toy, and the like. Newspapers and books too, he invariably purveys. Young men in



"PATERFAMILIAS."

a violent hurry are numerous; they scrambled in the morning to catch the train, they rushed through their work all day, and now they dash along the platform as the guard holds the whistle in his hand. The slow ones are not missing; they have spotless shirts and collars, unspotted gaiters, and glossy hats. They are *never* in a hurry—it is "bad form"; and though they may be annoying to their quicker brethren, it is not

certain that they fail to get through a fair amount of work in the twenty-four hours. There are some youths (usually wearing spectacles) who carry parcels of books, and read all the way home, others who gossip incessantly, but most who smoke—and think. The ladies form a large contingent: they have been shopping, or lunching out, or servant-hunting, and are occasionally as



"WHO READ ALL THE WAY HOME."

fractious as children, with fatigue and the rush of the hours in town; generally however, they greet their Adolphus or Henry with a smiling face, having bought "bargains" or met pleasant friends, and go to the

suburban home with him, pouring their happy experiences into his attentive (?) ear.

"A day in town" is a more important part of life in the outskirts than most of us recognise. How anxiously materfamilias inquires about trains and distance from stations, before she will consent to look at the house in the suburbs pater declares to be the "very thing." Can she get up to her favourite shop? Will she be able to pay her calls on town friends? Can she go to the picture galleries? If not, it is useless to talk to her; a Paradise would not suit the mater.

But the travellers whose ways are most engaging are those bound on long journeys, and who take their places in club trains or Pullman express. One man will lounge carelessly down the platform to find his traps well placed by the porter who knows his ways, and before the engine has cleared the station he is ensconced with the latest paper well in hand, the



"HE HAS LOST HIS TICKET."

rug disposed comfortably, and "a few hours' quiet" the uppermost thought in his mind. Another will have a hundred questions to ask at the moment of starting; he wishes to show his ticket—he has lost it; he hunts in every pocket, his eye-glass falls on the window-rim and smashes, his cap tumbles off between the carriage and the platform, and as the train goes the final glimpse the porters have is of a bareheaded person wildly waving something in his hand, as the engine slows round the curve.

"My lady" is interesting to watch. John Thomas and Perkins have been on the platform some time, having come down in a cab with the luggage. Perkins will not quit her hold of the dressing-case until she can place it beneath the feet of her mistress; she forgets that her evident anxiety about the square leather-covered package labels it as containing valuables. My lady comes, with a tall daughter; perhaps, and takes

her place in the comfortable arm-chair: for her, travelling brings no annoyance, and very little fatigue. She has only to take her place, to quit it, to go into



“THE MUCH-TRAVELLED LADY.”

rooms at delightful hotels, to find all her accustomed knick-knacks in their usual places about her, to see the sights, admire the views, and come home again refreshed.

The young lady who is travelling on business starts in quite another fashion. She is dressed in a quiet ulster, with a hat to match; she looks rather sad and harassed; the friend who comes to see her off plagues her with inappropriate questions, perhaps; and the society of John Thomas and Perkins will not much amuse her. We wish her *bon voyage*, and a happy home in whatever situation she is going to undertake.

Then there is the much-travelled lady, who has patent contrivances for all kinds of “usefuls.” Not content with a “hold-all” like a mammoth bolster, she has a bottle of eucalyptus, another of eau-de-Cologne, a compressible bonnet, a writing-desk five inches square, a stylographic pen, a small case of homœopathic medicines, a filter, an enamelled tumbler, cases for scissors, needles, cottons, pincers, tweezers, tickets, stamps, passport and letter of credit, a candle in a silver tube, a luncheon basket, and a box of matches. These odds and ends she strings about her person or disposes in the carriage netting, to be “handy.” Small wonder is it that, when wanted, a special article is not to be found.

There is the talkative traveller, who, whether man or woman, is usually a woeful bore. To see his fellow-passengers is at once to make him long to know *all* about them; whence they came, whither they are bound, whether they have a family, and many other things, actually seem to interest this voyager. He tells his companions the name of every station, the history of every place of note within ten miles of either

side of the line, and his talk is generally in large capitals, interspersed with notes of admiration.

The silent traveller is another variety. The man who will go from London to Edinburgh without once letting his voice be heard is, perhaps, an extreme example, but there are many whose motto seems to be, “Be check’d for silence, but never taxed for speech.”

Then there are those as to whom one wonders why they travel. Nothing amuses or interests them. They gaze with vacant stare on renowned rivers, historic castles, glorious woods, town and country, as they pass by. They never know whereabouts they are, and the only thing of which they are sure is the name of the home they left. We once sat next a lady at a *table d’hôte*, of whom we asked “whether she had been at Bologna?”

“Oh no,” was the answer.

Her husband remarked, in an audible whisper—

“That is where we came from yesterday.”

“I forgot,” she amended; “we were there yesterday, and we are going to Turin to-morrow.”

This stopped the conversation, as we were in Turin at the moment!

We came up from Scotland one year with three ladies, who had joined company for “mutual help and comfort.” One of these was wearing a handsome silk dress, and a velvet mantle that was positively magnificent. Will she lean back? we thought, as Carlisle was passed, and she sat upright—immovable. At Lancaster the ladies descended in search of tea, and she of the gorgeous raiment was the last to return.

“Do you see how uprightly she sits?” inquired one



“WILL SHE LEAN BACK?”

of her friends of the other. “It makes one ache to see her. Why does she do it?”

“My dear,” was the reply, “can’t you see she is afraid of spoiling that mantle?”

IVOR MERLE.