

to the next conference," was the elder's reflection as he moved rapidly away and turned the first corner he came to.

But he was safe enough. The widow was not on his track, but was in her room, putting herself through a hysteric fit, at the same time cursing the elder in terms that gave reason to fear she had fallen from grace.

The Widow Fluskey's obituary, written twenty years later, was satisfactory on the score of piety and good behavior in general, and contained no allusion to that little episode; while the name on her tombstone showed clearly that her much desired fifth husband was still a prospective one, with no takers.

The Apple.

BY MRS. C. S. NOURSE.

"And by and by, when northern winds
are out,
Great fires will roar in chimneys huge at
night;
While chairs draw round, and pleasant
tales are told,
And nuts and apples will be passed
about,
Until the household, drowsy with delight,
Creeps off to bed a cold."

THERE is a very prevalent conviction among men, that the fruit which tempted our first mother was an apple, nor does it seem by any means an improbable idea, when we consider the description given of the fatal lure, "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Surely the apple answers accurately to the picture. But, though we would have supposed that its sad introduction into the world might have justly created a prejudice against it, we not only do not find it so, but on the contrary it is universally acknowledged to be the most popular of fruits, wherever its fragrant shining globes are found from Cancer to Capricorn, for above or below the tropics there are no apples worthy of the name.

But it is not in the page of sacred history alone that the apple is emblazoned—not only in the sad story of Paradise, or in Solomon's aphorism of apples of gold in pictures of silver—but in the classic myths it also is embalmed in immortal verse, as in fragrant amber. Who has forgotten the garden of Hesperides and the dragon-guarded fruit; or the apple of discord, thought worthy of the contention of immortal beauty; the bridal of Vertumnus and

Pomona, the bride bearing the name of the fruit which is related to have been that first cultivated in Italy; familiar fables all, which grace with their elegant legends the royal escutcheon of the king of fruits, the apple, quartered in *gules* and *argent*.

A king indeed, but of King Arthur's reign.

Preeminently it is the fruit of moderation and virtue; it is not a luscious evanescent luxury of an hour, but wears the dignity healthful food, and something of the commercial value of the cereals. It does not need the flaming suns of equatorial regions to foster its genial life; a life born amid the exquisite freshness of a spring unknown to the tropics; delicate, tender, and lovely as human infancy, like it, it early loses its soft attractions, and takes on a stouter, stronger vitality, which through successive stages of growth, assumes but homely aspects, until the discipline of nature, the cool buffeting of spring's winds, the warm kisses of summer suns begin to bring it to maturity. Slowly the round green fruits of various kinds, which hang side by side in

as their name denotes, like a lady's finger. Some trees bend under the weight of enormous pippins, that hang like bells of gold from every limb, while others are studded thickly with clusters of tiny shining fruit, not larger than a walnut. These are the "lady apples," so dear to children, yellow and red and burnished like fine gold. Nor must we forget the pretty strawberry apple, showing such whimsical mimicry of early strawberries, rosy colored and quaintly marked with specks resembling the skins of the fragrant berry.

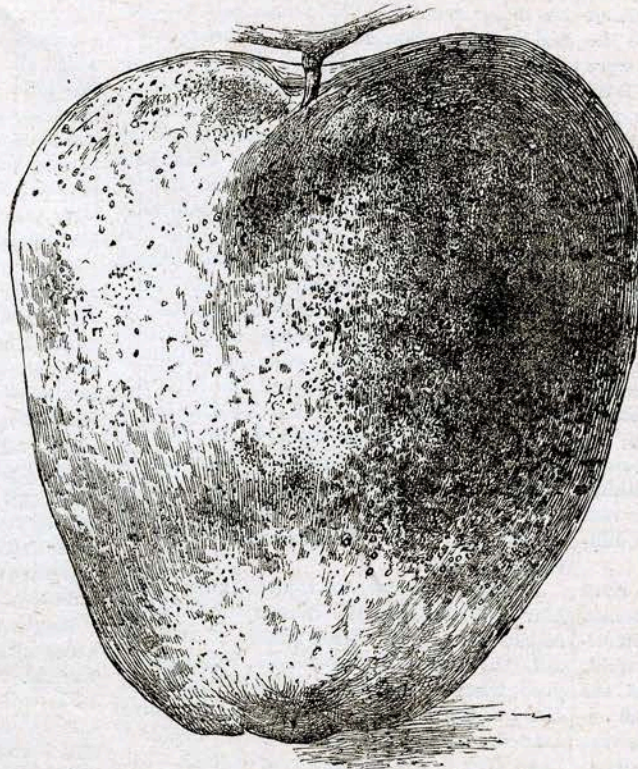
We have spoken of the beauty of form and color, but we have said nothing of that indescribable aroma which is the crowning gift of perfectness. It is laden with associations, with dreams of spring, and showers of falling blossoms, of old homesteads nestled among the broad spreading trees, of the laughter and song of happy childhood—a story and a poem, and withal, for it touches humanity very nearly, not without a dash of sadness in it for the blossoms that have fallen, and the childhood that shall never return.

November boasts no other fruit, but the early days of the month are generally devoted to the ingathering of the late apples for winter keep, for though every summer month has a share, it is the winter that has the largest portion of the crop, solid, reliable and nourishing like grain; feeding the brain and the nerves, for it contains more phosphorus than any other fruit, and so ministers to the highest needs of man's nature as well as to his healthful appetite.

As in form, color, and size they are diverse, so, in flesh and flavor, they are equally so. Some are sweet, some sour, and some so graciously blend both qualities that they produce a piquant union of delights. Others seem to have stolen a flavor or a scent from neighboring fruits like the strawberry or the peach.

"There is," says Hawthorne, "so much individuality of character among apple-trees that it gives them an additional claim to be objects of human interest. One is harsh and crabbed in its manifestations; another gives us fruit as mild as charity. One is churlish and illiberal, evidently grudging the few apples that it bears; another exhausts itself in free-hearted benevolence."

The knowledge and the use of the apple is so ancient that it is difficult to say where it originated; but, like most things whose origin is enveloped in mystery, they are generally referred to China. Mr. Darwin's theories ought to find confirmation in its history, for undoubtedly our splendid golden pippins have been developed, through innumerable generations, from some primitive crab-tree, with gnarled and twisted limbs and deliciously fragrant and beautiful blossoms, but sour and acrid fruit; for the whole family have cer-



GOLDEN FALL PIPPIN.

the orchard, take on gradually, almost imperceptibly, a distinct individuality. This assumes the hue of pale gold, that of russet bronze; yonder one, that seemed a while ago no larger than the russet, has swelled to twice its size and wears a robe of scarlet, while beyond is one that shows a flush of rose over gold upon its under side, while the ripe, round cheek turned toward the sun glows crimson, like a girl's under her lover's first kiss. Nor is the diversity all in color; in shape and size it is as great, though not as striking.

Some are as round and smooth as if turned in a lathe, while others are long and tapering,

tainly sprung from half a dozen natural varieties of crabs with long scientific names but no practical merits of their own to speak of, but, like some parents of the present day, an excellent use has been found for them in furnishing a reliable support for their more respectable and worthier descendants. Though all the important improvement of the character of the fruit has been through the multiplication of the seedlings and their cross-fertilization, it is found that the tree is greatly stronger and of better quality if grafted upon the stock of the crab (*Pyrus malus*). This fact was found out long ago, and the crab-trees of different kinds were used for this purpose heretofore, for, indeed, some of the finest varieties we have are very old, and have been in use for centuries. But of late years the increased knowledge of scientific botany has greatly advanced the character of cultivation, and there is every reason to believe that in this country it will reach its highest perfection. Nowhere in the world does the apple flourish as in the United States, and nowhere has it so improved as in some of our Western States, notably in Illinois, where the writer has seen pippins the actual dimensions of which would hardly be believed this side the Alleghanies. The better kinds of apples were originally brought over to this country from Europe, some of the finest from France, and propagated for a century and more by seed, without grafting.

European horticulturists attribute the excellence of our apples to the cross-fertilization of such numbers of varieties, the admixture of the pollen being so great, the virtues of many being often blended in one, and reproduced, under improved cultivation and by judicious grafting, in still greater perfection. In England the fruit is fair, but lacks richness of flavor; and in Germany, though they succeed in obtaining good apples, they are got by petting and training, and the tree has none of the healthful thrift which it shows on American soil, where it seems to have caught something of Yankee "faculty," and takes deeper root and bears better fruit for a tussle with difficulties and a touch of hardships.

It is calculated that the number of trees planted in the United States has increased within the century one thousand fold, American orchards being the largest in the world. There has been a great increase within the last few years, and it is feared that such extended planting will lead to careless culture and a depreciation of the quality of fruit. Undoubtedly this will be the case unless a spirit of commercial emulation is sustained by the opening of new fields. Such a one is now being found in Texas, where it has hitherto been considered impossible to raise good apples; but a correspondent of the *Country Gentleman* writes from the vicinity of Austin that he has complete success with his orchards, and finds the crop excellent and profitable.

The Northern States will, however, always have the advantage in this matter, as the long, dry summers of the South are very trying to the trees, close planting and mulching being necessary to protect the roots from being injured by drought.

To say what are the leading varieties in cultivation would be a difficult task where varieties are numbered by the thousand, and no two people agree as to the standard of merit. Still there are the old standards which everybody knows, and which still hold their own in the market notwithstanding the introduction of many new and admirable varieties; such are the Baldwins and the Rhode Island Greenings, which no housewife will willingly be without; the Pearmain and the whole Pippin family, which has an unrivaled reputation for excellence in all its branches, from the "King of the Pippins," belonging to the Isle of Wight, down to democratic Jersey pippins, which can challenge any scion of royalty under the sun to surpass them in brilliant or solid qualities. Twenty-two varieties only were known to the luxurious Roman, but four hundred are now cultivated in England, and hundreds more are familiar to American farmers, who themselves have had the honor of naming, with characteristic aptness, the "Seek No Further," one of the richest and most delicately flavored apples in the world.

The apple, like all good things in this world, has many enemies, which attack both the tree and its fruit. Sometimes it is an insect, sometimes a fungus; but, though they greatly injure, they seldom are able entirely to destroy. The tree is sturdy and will resist much, but one of its worst and most successful foes is the woolly Aphis, a disgusting creature which puts on a white robe, as old Bunyan has it, "to serve the devil in." He covers his deformity and his depredations by weaving over the tender twigs a soft white veil of gossamer texture which is filled within with grubs, but, without, appears much like a white blossom among the green leaves; the alburnum or sap-wood, being wounded by them, swells out in the unsightly nodes which disfigure the limb and finally deprive it of life. I give a drawing of one of the nests of the Aphis below, that his cunning wiles may be made public, and his "whited sepulchre" be understood for what it is. The limits of this article prevent even a mention of other injurious insects which attack these trees.

American housewives would hardly know how to do without the treasury of the apple cellar, for no other fruit admits of so many different uses in the household, being always good, whether used fresh, dried, or preserved. Many of the summer varieties are delightful canned, and by this method it is possible to have, even in winter, that most exquisite dish, the pride of the Southern dinner-table during June and July, "Sea-Foam." For this dish the fruit is gathered when entirely hard and before it has begun to ripen; it is stewed until quite soft, and then rubbed through a colander. When it cools it is like a smooth green jelly, which is whipped with the whites of eggs until quite stiff, when it can be piled upon the dish in heaps, over which is scattered lightly white of egg sweetened and flavored and beaten to a froth.

Is it to be regretted that apples are not more used for jellies, since they make a beautiful amber jelly, and if acid fruit is used it is much more healthful than that made from most other fruits.

The improved methods of preparing dried apples have introduced them in an entirely new form. Instead of the old-fashioned brown, leathery looking bits, of which our grandmothers fashioned that execrable thing, a dried-apple pie, we have pale delicate slices of fruit, which preserve both color and flavor in some degree of freshness.

But after all it is in the winter evening that apples are best appreciated, when they are brought in shining heaps from the cellar, and the "pitcher brimming with pearls," filled with their gracious juices, stands upon the board, flanked with nuts whose spicy odor fills the room, when rows of martyrs roast and sputter before the blazing logs, and chestnuts keep up a scattering fire from out of the hot ashes. Ah then, if there be a wild storm raging outside and bright faces within, is the time to estimate the value of the royal fruit.

The uses of the apple tree do not end with the yield of fruit. Its charity is truly apostolic, for it not only bestows its all to feed poor humanity, but it gives its body to be burned, with great appearance of good will, for it makes a capital fire, crackling and blazing with rolicking good humor, and radiating a substantial heat, which warms the limbs, while the dancing flames cheer the hearts. One more benefit it has to offer to the hand that reared it. The wood is fine and dense, and is used for many purposes, where it is important to have a close grain and firm quality that will not warp, such as tool-handles, shoelasts, etc.; it is also used for rules, drawing-boards and the like.

Some of the natural varieties of crab, are cultivated as ornamental shrubs, on account of their lovely and fragrant flowers, the scent of which is more exquisite than that of almost any blossom of the garden, combining the rare freshness of the sweet-briar rose, with the luscious quality of honeysuckle.

We commend the crab-apple tree to all who fancy a picturesque hedge. Keep it well cut back, and plant honeysuckles and sweet-briar among it, and you will have an impenetrable fence and a nestling place for birds and flowers, a picture of beauty, which will be new every morning, and fresh every evening.

Bees will visit it, and butterflies will hover about it, violets will hide under its protecting warmth in the early spring, and humming-birds will come to feast there all the summer, and in winter many a houseless robin will find it a screen from the cold northern blasts, while every snow-storm will transform it into a garden of lilies.



A BRANCH OF WOOLLY APPLES.