

idea, a large portion of which are frequently wasted in the cooking.

Reforms of this kind require considerable tact, or the attempt will give great offence and do no good at all.

When I set about such an experiment I usually make it one of the rare occasions to give a small piece of meat or some bones, according to what I propose doing. I offer to provide material for that day's dinner on condition that the woman will let me show her how to cook it. This little scheme is nearly always successful; during the process I tell her how much everything has cost, and if she can read, I write down the recipe very clearly before leaving, so that she may try it again herself.

Generally their ideas of patching and mending are very vague, whilst of making clothes they are quite ignorant. It seems hopeless to begin to teach mothers with large families, as they really have not time to learn the art of cutting out; but where it is possible to instruct the girls and young women in such things, I think it is a work which should not be neglected.

Some years ago I began holding a class for this purpose on one evening a week, to which all girls over thirteen are admitted. They are eager to learn, and my class is always well attended, whilst the improved appearance of the scholars shows that the work has not been in vain.

The greatest difficulty I have encountered in my district has, of course, been the dreadful intemperance of the people. It is such a common evil and so difficult to overcome that at times one almost despairs. And yet if we can succeed in making even one family happy and one home peaceful, by the reclaiming of a drunken father or mother, the remembrance of that single work of salvation will serve to cheer and encourage through many days of weariness and disappointment.

Of course the first step is to take the pledge yourself. Nothing can be done without that, and your being able to say that you have been a teetotaler for so many years with no ill effects, but only good, will often have a considerable effect. At the same time, reasoning and persuasion are often not sufficient to work a permanent cure, and it is necessary in these cases to bring a counteracting influence to bear, which will be strong enough to overcome the longing for drink. I remember the case of a bricklayer, who was not often actually intoxicated, but was in a chronic state of semi-drunkenness. His wife was a poor, helpless drudge of a woman who, instead of trying to reclaim her husband, spent all her time in bemoaning her lot and the wretchedness of her home, until at last I really felt a good deal of sympathy for the man, and doubted whether I should not have sought refuge in the public-house if I had been in his position.

The first thing to do was to make her believe in the possibility of improvement. This was a difficult matter, as, though conscious of her husband's failing, she seemed to think it was the decree of fate, against which it would be useless to struggle. At last, however, she promised to try to make the home more clean and comfortable, to see whether that would have any effect on the husband. The ex-

periment was fixed to take place on a certain evening, and in the morning of the day I went in to see how she was getting on. I had fortunately taken a few implements with me, thinking they might be useful in repairing certain dilapidated articles of furniture, and between us we managed to patch up one or two chairs, the legs of which, by some strange chance, had *not* been used for firewood, and we also improved the condition of the table. I had taken an old short window curtain with me, which we put up, and whilst the woman was engaged in washing her scanty and miscellaneous collection of crockery and cooking utensils, I nailed up a few large coloured pictures which covered the most conspicuous of the cracks in the dirty walls, and made the room look quite bright and cheerful.



"I NAILED UP A FEW LARGE COLOURED PICTURES."

To induce the woman to make herself look neater was a more difficult matter, but with a considerable amount of argument and pleading I also succeeded in prevailing on her to mend some rents in her dress, and by plentiful application of soap and water improve her appearance very greatly.

Her husband was certainly struck by the change in his home, but drink had too decided a hold on him to be so easily shaken off. My next plan was for the woman to send her husband a can of coffee, hot and strong, just at the time for leaving off work, and to have his supper waiting by the time he reached home. This proved very efficacious; the coffee in a great measure stays the craving for alcohol, and has been found of great benefit in many cases. I lent him some illustrated papers, and promised to do so every week, and he seemed quite content to stay at home and show the pictures to his children. Happily, soon after this, a temperance club and reading

room was opened in the neighbourhood; my friend the bricklayer signed the pledge, became a frequent visitor at the reading-rooms, and now, several years after the change took place, is amongst the most staunch upholders of temperance.

I must not omit to mention a powerful agency for good which is at work in the part of London where my district lies. It is a society which offers prizes for a variety of objects—flowers, plants, needlework of all kinds, carpentering, window-gardening, neatly kept rooms, in fact, anything and everything for the improvement of the homes of the competitors. On payment of 2d. any one—man, woman, or child—receives a card of membership, and is entitled to compete and exhibit at the three shows which are held during the year in a school-room, borrowed for the purpose. We easily find friends willing to offer prizes for different objects, and also to undertake the arduous task of judging the competitions. Each district visitor in the neighbourhood persuades as many as she can to join the society, and gives any suggestions she is able as to what to make and how to make it. Special visitors have to be appointed to go at intervals to the homes of those who compete for the neat room and window gardening prizes, as, of course, the rooms are required to be *always* neat and the window-boxes always in good condition, and not merely just at the time of the show.

It is found that a society of this sort succeeds admirably in exciting amongst the poor a feeling of interest and pride in their homes. When this is obtained the public-house loses much of its fascination, and a blow is struck at the root of our great national sin.

In conclusion, let me add one caution, which will, perhaps, appear unnecessary to some workers. Do not let your thoughts and energies be so much engrossed by schemes for the improvement of the homes and way of life of your poor as to forget the higher claims of their immortal souls. The need for domestic and social reform is so glaring that it cannot fail to attract and occupy attention, and is sometimes apt to take up an undue share of care and time, to the neglect of the far more important question of eternal salvation. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." DORA HOPE.

OUR COUNTRY FLOWERS.

AUTUMN LEAVES—OCTOBER.

"The wind-flower and the violet, they perished long ago,
And the wild rose and the orchis died amidst the summer glow;
But on the hill the golden rod, and the aster in the wood,
And the yellow sunflower by the brook, in autumn beauty stood."

BRYANT.

THE month of October came with its chill, clear days and its fresh, bracing air. Some warmer clothes, and some brisker steps, made the breezy walks on the common, the rambles

by the seashore, and the strolls along the lanes quite as enjoyable as ever, for there was still much to admire and investigate. We gained a lesson from the nettle one day, for I taught the girls how to grasp it so that it would not hurt their fingers. The common nettle (*Urtica discica*) is well known for its sharp sting. The leaves are tapering at the end, broad and heart-shaped nearer the stem, and the flowers grow in clusters.

The stamens and pistils of this tribe are generally in separate flowers. If you look at the nettle leaves, with a magnifying glass you will see numbers of little stings over them, and over the stems also. There is a minute quantity of thin, burning, acrid juice in each of these stings, and this causes the pain when one comes in contact with them.

In some of the nettles that grow in hot climates the poison is very strong indeed. If the hand touches them it is as though a hot iron had scorched the skin, the whole arm swells, sometimes the body is affected also, and it takes even *days* before the pain passes away.

Still, there is beauty in the nettle. Each little sting is elegantly formed, and has a tiny cell at its base, where the poison is neatly packed away until the plant is disturbed.

The hop plant is one of the same tribe, and is, I suppose, rather an important member. In Kent the farmers look on the hop harvest as one of their chief sources of profit, and in good seasons, when there is a favourable sale, no doubt large sums of money are made. But the seasons fluctuate, and from various reasons the hop harvests of the present are not as remunerative as they formerly were. The stamens and pistils of the hop are on different plants, and it produces two kinds of flowers, unlike each other in appearance.

The barren flower has fine leaves and fine stamens, while the fertile flower looks like a drooping catkin, composed of pale green scales. At the base of each of these scales are to be found two styles, and one little seed.

The Kentish hop fields look very pretty when the hop is in blossom; its long twining stems are tied to high poles, and it spreads its clusters of flowers and its prettily-shaped leaves in wreaths of great beauty and luxuriance. When we reached the top of the next hill we looked down on a large extent of wooded country, and the autumn tints in the trees were becoming very marked; the trees were putting on their winter colours before they cast their garment of leaves altogether aside. Each tree had its own peculiar change of colour. The hazel put on yellow; the bramble a rich red tint, that they continue to wear until the young green leaves come again; the hawthorn had on tawny yellow; the ash a pale tint of the same colour; the elm a deep orange; the willow trees wore the hoary grey look of age.

This changing variety of foliage is beautiful, though mournful. It seems a gorgeous display of brilliant tints to honour the speedy departure of the leaves into their lowly graves beneath the branches.

"Are leaves of any use to trees, Aunt Carrie?"

"Yes, Fanny; they are the very lungs, or breathing organs, of all trees and plants. There are little pores, or openings or mouths, all over and under the leaves; and through them minute portions of air enter, sufficient to nourish the plant and form its wood, its juices, and its flowers. In the bright sunlight this wonderful process is always going on. A plant could no more live without air than a human being could."

"I thought trees received nourishment from the roots?" said Laura.

"So they do. The roots suck up moisture from the earth—feed the plants, as it were—

but the leaves perform the breathing part, and both are equally necessary. The leaves are hard at work all the summer; the tree or plant grows larger, and when winter draws near, and they have finished their appointed task, they change their colours and drop down on the earth. Even there they are not wasted. There is no such word as *waste* in the works of God. Things change their nature and uses, but still they carry out their part in the Divine economy. Leaves at the feet of the forest trees decay, and in this state, when mixed with earth, form the very manure that best nourishes the roots.

"There is a vast difference in the shapes of leaves. That of grass is long and narrow; the horse chestnut has a divided leaf; that of the cabbage is like a broad shield; while the primrose leaf is rough and puckered. Some leaves are hairy; some silky, like the silverweed; some prickly, like the holly; some glossy and polished, like the laurel.

"Then, again, the margins of leaves differ. That of the oak is slightly notched, that of the nettle is saw-toothed; the rose leaf is serrated, the holly is armed with sharp points. And now we will talk of the veins and ribs of leaves."

"Surely, Aunt Carrie, you are joking?" said Fanny.

"Nothing of the sort. See the line that goes from the stem to the end of the oak-leaf. That is the mid-rib; the other little lines that branch from it are the veins, through which the sap circulates. In most leaves they form a kind of network; but in grasses, lilies, orchis plants, &c., they form parallel stripes. By these various arrangements botanists can distinguish different plants. Those that have netted veins differ in their habits, stems, leaves, and flowers from those the veins of which are straight or parallel.

"Look at the oak-leaf again. The part next the stem is called the *base*, the end of the leaf is the *apex*, the part that joins the stem is the *axil*.

"Have you ever heard of the sleep of flowers?"

"Surely they do not sleep like animals," exclaimed Fanny.

"They certainly do sleep, and it is beautiful to watch them gradually closing up when the shades of evening come on. You may notice it in many flowers. The daisies, which seem to delight in sunshine, no sooner lose the heat than they gradually gather up their star-like rays into the form of a little tent, and thus they remain until the sun rises on the next morning. The bindweed closes up its leaves closely also; so do numbers of other blossoms, and the pimpinell is still more sensitive, for it refuses to open at all if the weather is gloomy. Some flowers droop on their stalks at night; others fold up their leaves, and retire to rest so suddenly that any poor insects that have crept inside the petals for a supper of honey find themselves caught in a trap, and are unable to get free again until the sun shines out and the petals open to the light. But now it is getting late, and we must retrace our steps homeward. I hope our next walk will be in the pine wood."

BITS ABOUT ANIMALS.

INJUSTICE PUNISHED.—A sparrow intruded into a swallow's nest. When its owner returned, the sparrow would not move, but kept possession of it. Poor hirondelle, finding she was not likely to regain her home, flew away to seek assistance. Soon she returned, accompanied by about ten swallows; but the sparrow with open beak, and well ensconced, as in a fortress, defied their attack, and main-

tained his place. I waited, curious to see what would next occur. The swallow and her friends flew away; presently, a largely increased number of them arrived, carrying small lumps of mud in their beaks—they immediately set to work to smear the opening of the nest, which they covered over so effectually that the sparrow would be unable to leave it—thus turning his ill-gotten nest into a prison.

ONE Sunday evening five choristers were walking on the banks of the river Mersey, in Cheshire; after some time, being tired with walking, they sat down on the grass, and began to sing an anthem. The field on which they sat was terminated at one extremity by a wood, out of which, as they were singing, they observed a hare to pass with great swiftness towards the place where they were sitting, and to stop at about twenty yards' distance from them. She appeared highly delighted with the harmony of the music, often turning up the side of her head to listen with more facility. As soon as the harmonious sound was over, the hare returned slowly towards the wood; when she had nearly reached the end of the field, the choristers began the same piece again; at which the hare stopped, turned round, and came swiftly back to about the same distance as before, where she seemed to listen with rapture and delight, till they had finished the anthem, when she returned again by a slow pace up the field, and entered the wood.

RARE HONESTY.—A mastiff dog, who owed more to the bounty of a neighbour than to his master, was once locked by mistake in the well-stored pantry of his benefactor for a whole day, where milk, butter, bread, and meat, within his reach, were in abundance. On the return of the servant to the pantry, seeing the dog come out, and knowing the time he had been confined, she trembled for the devastation which her negligence must have occasioned; but on close examination it was found that the honest creature had not tasted of anything, although, on coming out, he fell on a bone that was given to him with all the voraciousness of hunger.

DUTY BEFORE REVENGE.—A gentleman residing in the City of London was going one afternoon to his country cottage, accompanied by Cæsar, a favourite Newfoundland dog, when he recollected that he had the key of a cellaret which would be wanted at home during his absence. Having accustomed his dog to carry things, he sent him back with the key; the dog executed his commission, and afterwards rejoined his master, who discovered that he had been fighting, and was much torn about the head. The cause he afterwards learned, on his return to town in the evening. Cæsar, while passing with the key, was attacked by a ferocious butcher's dog, against whom he made no resistance, but tore himself away, without relinquishing his charge. After delivering the key in town, he returned the same way, and on reaching the butcher's shop, from which he had been so rudely assailed, he stopped and looked out for his antagonist; the dog sallied forth; Cæsar attacked him with a fury which nothing but revenge for past wrongs could have animated; nor did he quit the butcher's dog until he had laid him dead at his feet.

STRANGE MOUSER.—A gentleman near Exeter had in his possession a hen, which answered the purpose of a cat in destroying mice. She was constantly seen watching close to a corn rick, and the moment a mouse appeared, she seized it in her beak, and carried it to a meadow adjoining, where she would play with it like a young cat for some time, and then kill it. She has been known to catch four or five mice a day in this manner.