

NOTES BY AN ARTIST NATURALIST.

NOVEMBER



WE all remember how true and beautiful is the note Burns strikes in his great poem—

"November chill blows loud w' angry sough;
The shot'ning winter day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the plough;
The blackening trains o' craws to their repose."



These four lines are not spun out of a poet's inner consciousness; a mere sweet jangle of conceits. The picture limned in the mind's eye at the poet's touch is one that I can see any time this month, though November is not wholly given up to chill blasts. On the contrary, some most genial sunny days which bring out the rich luscious colour of the yellow-tinted elms, or orange-coloured beeches and golden-brown oaks, are given to us, and for beauty, in an artist's sense, I know of few things that fill one with sweet satisfaction like a warm day in November. The sunlight is soft; there is always an amount of mist which clothes the distance, if not in azure blue, as Campbell puts it, at least in those warm grey tints that the painter loves, and spends a lifetime learning how to render; and even the trees that have become leafless afford him passages of most subtle colour which we of the palette prefer to the wall of green of midsummer. It is as well to be more than usually receptive on such days as these in order that the recollection of them may keep in check that melancholy that so many seem only capable of feeling as the year draws to a close. As I grow older I find myself more disposed to look upon the humour, the comedy of life; to think of the warm sunny days in November rather than the bitter blasts that bring down "the one red leaf, the last of its clan," for this latter is the obvious side of the month—the seamy as opposed to the sunny side of November.

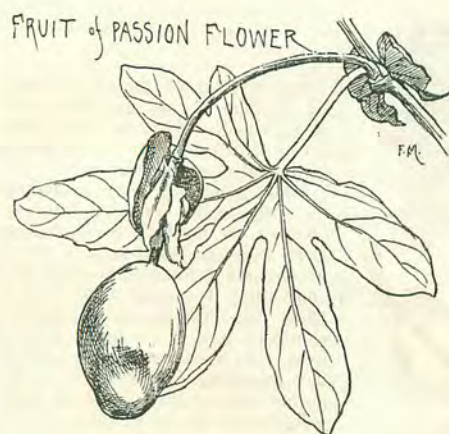
It depends upon the early frosts whether trees shed their leaves in October or

November, for by the end of the month all deciduous trees are bare save a few oaks which will often carry their dead leaves until pushed off by the new growth in the following Spring.

Last year was very remarkable for its early frosts. In the third week of October we had ten and a half degrees of frost, with the result that in one day the walnut tree at my gate dropped its leaves, amounting to a good many barrow loads, while the willows, ashes, poplars, and chestnuts were made nearly bare by this frost. As soon as the sun gets out the day following the first severe frost the leaves will begin to fall of their own weight, and by the evening the trees that a day ago were in full dress will be stripped to nakedness, as was the case with my walnut.

Quite early in October we had a frost which killed the dahlias, nasturtiums, marrows, and beans, and very melancholy is it to walk out into your garden the morning following the first sharp frost, for the ordinary white frosts we get in the autumn are not severe enough to do any harm to even such tender plants as dahlias. Did we go without a sharp frost till quite late in the year we should find that the half-hardy flowers like zinnias, phloxes, nasturtiums and dahlias would go on blooming, for when mine were cut down last year we were gathering quantities of flowers every day, and it is a great privation when you have been accustomed to having many vases always filled with flowers about your rooms to have to search diligently to find enough to fill so much as a specimen glass. Of course there are blooms still to be had. I gathered myself some eschscholtzias, scented candytuft, clarkias, gillias, Virginia stock, nemophila and mignonette from a bed of annuals I sowed in the spring. These were not killed by the frosts, and if we had had another spell of mild weather I should have had plenty of annuals for cutting, as those which bloomed early had

sown themselves, and their offspring were just showing for bloom. I should recommend all gardeners to have a bed of annuals, not only because of their free blooming in the summer, but also on account of their hardiness. Cut them freely all through the season, for by keeping all flowers from seeding you greatly prolong their flowering season, as they will keep throwing fresh blooms in endeavouring to fulfil the law of their being which is to produce seed. I have at this moment got Canterbury bells, which were quite a sight to see in June, covered with a third crop of flowers simply because we kept the seed-pods picked off, and we have been cutting sweet peas until the frost killed them, by not allowing them to seed. Poppies again are plants that if allowed to seed will only bear one lot of flowers; but some Shirley poppies (quite the best annual poppy you can grow, with their thin delicate petals of exquisite shades of pink, red, and white) are even now after these months giving us blooms, because we kept the seed-pods picked off, while some that were neglected have been over this last two months. This is the first season I have grown hardy annuals, having had a stupid prejudice against them, which, like many other prejudices, has been dispelled by knowledge. I drilled a whole patch of ground early in March with a five-shilling collection of annuals, and though they were sadly neglected and got very weedy through not keeping the hoe at work, produced a most excellent result from June till late autumn. The ones that did best with me were the crimson linum, one of



the showiest annuals grown, the red mallow, a tall-growing free-flowering plant, gillia, with its white and mauvish flowers, larkspur, Virginia stock (one of the quickest growing annuals and capital for borders), clarkia, eschscoltzia, Shirley poppy and dwarf convolvulus. Most annuals are sown too thickly, and then they choke each other and are very unsatisfactory. It is better to sow fairly thickly and then thin severely. It is astonishing how much ground an eschscoltzia for instance will occupy where plenty of space is given to each plant.

As the year wanes, out-door flowers necessarily grow scarce, but as each month has its own particular characteristics and delights which we should dwell upon and get what enjoyment one can out of, so there are plants coming into bloom every month of the year. For November one looks to chrysanthemums to relieve the bareness of the borders, and when grown in a sheltered spot they do very well out of doors, though, of course, you cannot get them as large or as fine as those one sees, say, at the Temple Gardens, where they are grown under glass. Asters of many colours and Michaelmas daisies are in flower now, and these brilliant coloured flowers are a striking object in the garden. There are many varieties, from the minute flowers no larger than a forget-me-not to those the size of a florin. Pansies again will yield blooms for a very long period, and plants raised in the early summer will flower freely in the late autumn, and in fact in mild seasons there is hardly a month when pansies cannot be picked. Just to see what flowers can be had in November I went the beginning of the month to the Oxford Botanic Garden, and noted that there were in bloom herbaceous asters, gaillardias, calendula officinalis or pot marigold, coreopsis, lupins, penstemons, scabious, and anemone japonica, and this did not exhaust the list, as I noticed that an Oriental poppy and an iris (*I. Cengialli*), and a tritoma or poker plant were sending up late blooms. The Oxford Botanic Garden is the oldest in England, as it was founded in 1632 on the site of a Jews' burying ground, and as it has a fair collection of hardy herbaceous plants it is a useful place for reference, as one can note down things worth growing. Kew Gardens contain the best collection of herbaceous plants in England, and my readers who wish to add to their collection of hardy plants should, if possible, make a pilgrimage there in the spring, summer, and autumn, and see what is in bloom. The object all gardeners should keep before them is to have as many plants in bloom as is possible every month in the twelve, and not merely have a gay time just for a brief summer season.

Wild flowers are certainly over in November,

but the beauty of dead river-side herbs and hedgerow plants with the berries of thorns, roses, bryony, and other shrubs are in their way quite as beautiful and even more decorative than flowers. I remember one November walk in particular which I took with two brother artists to look for a subject. It was a still grey day, though not cold, and the mist gave an air of mystery to all but the

nearest objects. We strolled along by some small tributary streams, and we were all much struck by the way the dead teasels, willow herb, meadowsweet, and other river-side plants picked themselves out from the sombre-tinted background, giving pencilled details to the scene, with the scarlet berries of the dog-rose for the touch of colour. Finer material for the decorative artist could not be found.





Vases can be kept filled with these November glories, and though the berries soon shrivel and drop, the seed-vessels of traveller's joy, like tufts of cotton, willow herb, teasel, wild hop, thistles and meadowsweet can be kept right through the winter. Everlasting flowers, too, should be dried for winter decoration, and with the seed-vessels of honesty (like oval rings stretched over with thin parchment), and winter cherry quite take the place of flowers. Dead hedgerow herbage affords the decorative artist a wealth of suggestion which he should not be slow to avail himself of. I painted a screen, using thistles, dock, and out-grass as the *motifs*, and I cannot do better than give a sketch of two of the panels to show how such material can be utilised. You can hardly fail to get the colouring harmonious, for the dead herbs are rich in subtle grey tones, and as decoration is a background to life it should never be obtrusive by calling undue attention to itself. Berries of the sloe, privet, buckthorn, and cotoneaster (a capital evergreen shrub for training against walls), Japanese briar, with its large decorative berries, the egg-like fruit of the passion-flower, bright orange in colour, and berries of the bryony, all make capital indoor decorations, and afford many suggestions to the decorative artist.

A good deal of wheat is planted in October, but drilling goes on all through November while other land is being ploughed and got ready for spring planting. Potato lifting is

carried on far into November in many localities, and very picturesque it is to see almost a whole village out in the fields gathering in the potato harvest; for while the men, and women too for that matter, lift, the children can pick up, sort, and put in bags. The figures of the men in their shirt-sleeves, of many colours, and the women in their cotton sun-bonnets and vari-coloured garments against the rich low-toned surroundings of freshly-turned earth and autumn-tinted herbage gives

the painter every opportunity, if he be equal to making use of such magnificent material. It only wants doing to be a masterpiece.

The latest time swallows are seen according to Gilbert White's calendar is Nov. 5, while Markwick gives it as late as the 16th; but both these dates are very late. White also gives in his calendar for November the primrose and hepatica as flowering, but many other plants may be seen in bloom if the autumn is a mild one. Hollyhocks, for instance, were in flower in November, and some that I raised from seed early in the year were just coming into bloom when the severe frost we had killed the flower-buds.

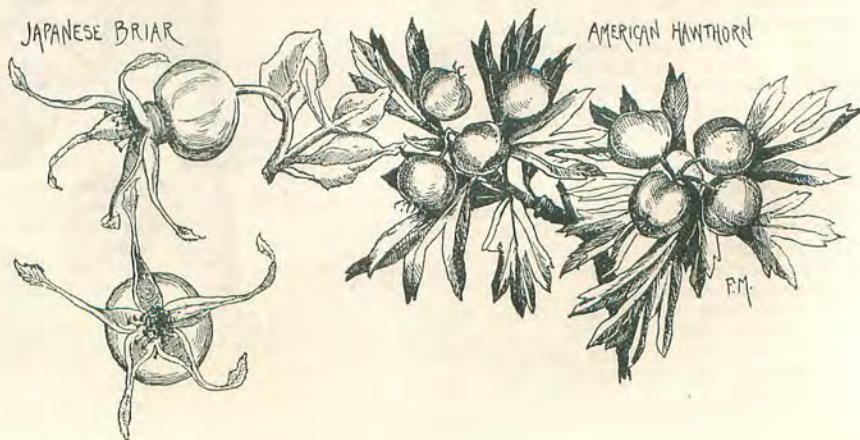
Many of us are like Genevieve, who liked best "the songs that made her grieve," and though I have just now said it is as well to look for the humour and comedy of life, poetry and pathos will, in our more exalted moods, steep us in a calm, sweet melancholy, and the feeling that must often assert itself at this time of the year must be one bordering on sadness. Man is never so lifted up as when moved to tears, and to walk through a wood in November, when the wind sighs through the trees, adding to the purple carpet of dead leaves the few that still kept heavenwards, one thinks of the lines written many years ago by the poet whose death came home to so many of us—

"The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours wreath their burden to the ground;
Man comes and tills the field, then lies beneath;
And after many a summer dies the swan."

So Tithonus spoke, and his words find an echo in our hearts as we see, when in such a mood, so much that we delight in going to dust. We see the dead stalks of what a few weeks ago were flowers, and we remember the words of the Hebrew poet, "Man's life is but as grass; he flourisheth as a flower of the field; the wind goeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." Such moods should come upon us, for in them we rise to the full height of our nature; but let us not sap our fibre by vain regrets.

"If there are thistles there are grapes;
If old things there are new;
Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,
Yet glimpses of the true."

Autumn has its joys, its beauties; let us see for ourselves what they are, and enjoy them when we find them, and not allow the thought of shortening days and the year's decay to weigh on our spirits, and bedim our eyes with tears of excessive sensibility so that we miss those sunny days in November, which by their rarity and unexpectedness are worth so much more than such days in midsummer.



JANUARY

NOTES BY AN ARTIST NATURALIST.

ON New Year's Day I had the "Mummers" round in the evening to amuse some friends I had staying with me. The young unmarried men in the village prepare for Christmas by going round to the different houses in the place during Christmas week, dressed up in a fantastic garb consisting chiefly of bright-coloured stuffs cut into strips and sewed on to their clothing. There is the look of a ham-frill about the arrangement. You are expected to invite them in, and then they go through their performance, each one taking a distinct part carefully rehearsed beforehand. I got one of the mummers to write down the words for me, for in their broad Oxfordshire I found it most difficult to understand what they said, especially as some of the performers suffered from nervousness and didn't speak up. The mummers range themselves against the wall, and then Father Christmas comes forward with his broom, and walking round and round the place chants the following lines—

"In comes old Father Christmas, welcome or welcome not;
I hope old Father Christmas will never be forgot.
Last Christmas-time when we came here
You never asked us to taste your beer;
So now I've come with bladder and broom
To sweep the cobwebs from your room."

Here Father Christmas uses his broom vigorously to sweep imaginary cobwebs out of the holes and corners, for of course in all well-ordered households such a thing as a cobweb does not exist.

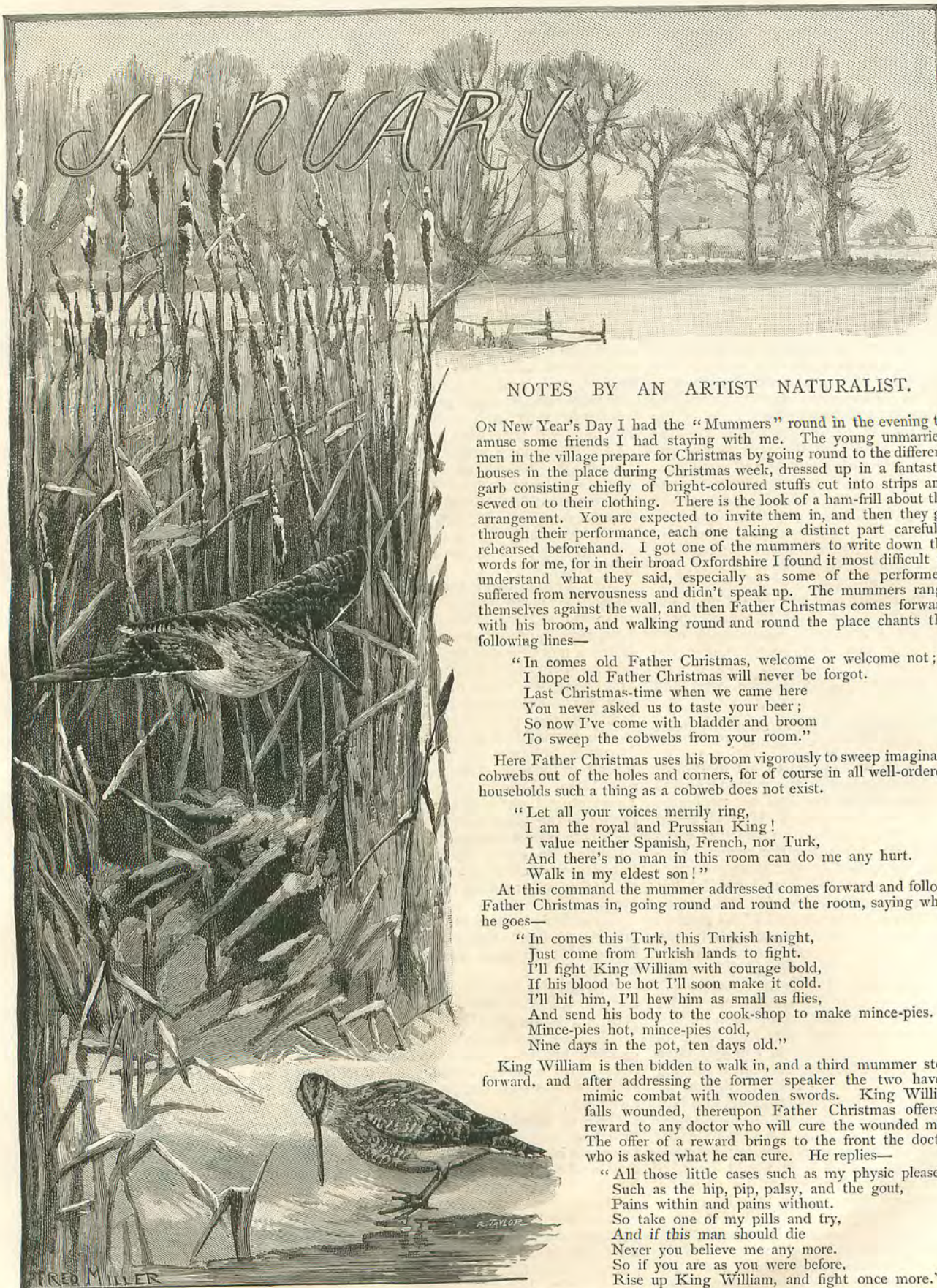
"Let all your voices merrily ring,
I am the royal and Prussian King!
I value neither Spanish, French, nor Turk,
And there's no man in this room can do me any hurt.
Walk in my eldest son!"

At this command the mummer addressed comes forward and follows Father Christmas in, going round and round the room, saying while he goes—

"In comes this Turk, this Turkish knight,
Just come from Turkish lands to fight.
I'll fight King William with courage bold,
If his blood be hot I'll soon make it cold.
I'll hit him, I'll hew him as small as flies,
And send his body to the cook-shop to make mince-pies.
Mince-pies hot, mince-pies cold,
Nine days in the pot, ten days old."

King William is then bidden to walk in, and a third mummer steps forward, and after addressing the former speaker the two have a mimic combat with wooden swords. King William falls wounded, thereupon Father Christmas offers a reward to any doctor who will cure the wounded man. The offer of a reward brings to the front the doctor, who is asked what he can cure. He replies—

"All those little cases such as my physic pleases,
Such as the hip, pip, palsy, and the gout,
Pains within and pains without.
So take one of my pills and try,
And if this man should die
Never you believe me any more.
So if you are as you were before,
Rise up King William, and fight once more."



However this doctor's physic does not produce the desired effect, so Father Christmas says—

"Walk in, Jack Finney."

"My name is not Jack Finney, nor John Finney, but Mr. Finney, a man of great fame, who can do more than what thee canst or any man again."

"What canst thou do then, Jack?"

"Cure a magpie with the toothache,
Or a jackdaw with the headache."

"How canst thou do that, Jack?"

"Cut his head off and throw his body in the ditch."

Father Christmas calls him Barabbas and rascal; but Jack Finney gives the wounded man, who has all this while been lying on the floor while the rest of the mummers marched round him, a pill which at once performs a cure. Father Hubbabub is asked to walk in, and he finishes the entertainment with these lines—

"In comes old Father Hubbabub,

On my shoulder I carry my club;

In my hand a dripping pan,

Don't you think I'm a gallant old man?

Green sleeves and yellow laces,

All pretty maidens take your places.

Make room for the fiddler this merry Christmas-time,

For Jack's gone to Ireland, and Sal's

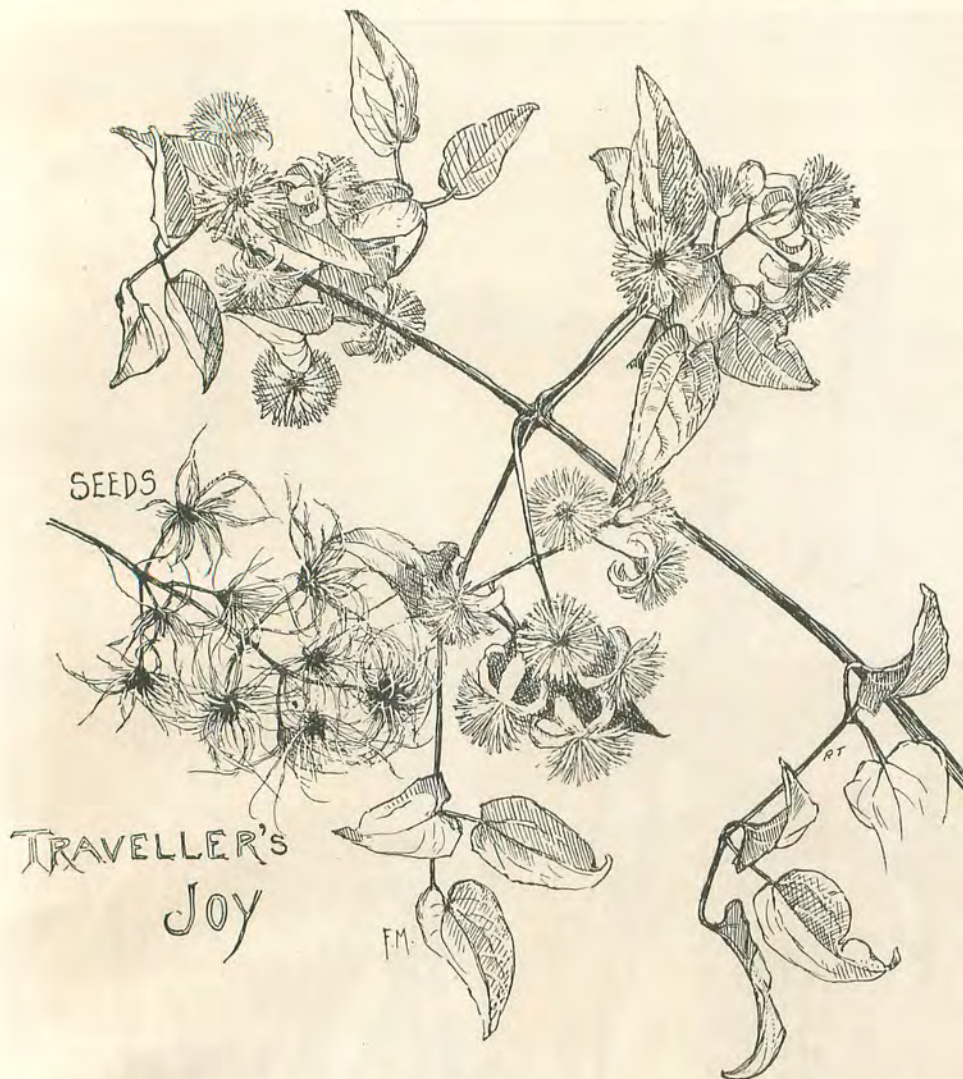
gone to France,

So we'll all rise up and have a merry dance."

So many of these old customs are yearly disappearing that one is glad to preserve what few still linger on. These mummers are evidently a survival of the ancient morris dancers, and in this village an old shepherd instructed the young fellows in the mystery of mumming, it having fallen into abeyance for some years. When the old generations are gathered to their fathers, traditions which have been preserved orally for centuries will be buried with them. The disposition abroad is to seek amusement far afield, and those



DEAD HEDGEROW HERBAGE.



literally as beautiful as anything I know, and from a painter's point of view more worth doing than the same scene in midsummer when everything is uniformly green. I was much struck by a mass of dead bulrushes while skating on a pond. These particular rushes are never cut, and the yellow-grey stems and purplish-brown flowers made a beautiful passage of colour in the landscape. My brother painted a small picture of this pond which is engraved in this number of the "G. O. P.," for it illustrates the material a painter has to his hand in January. The sunlight in the afternoon, falling on the pollarded willows with the elms beyond, making the willows quite warm by contrast, only wanted to be realised in paint to be a most beautiful passage in a picture. I suggested some lines from a poem by Myers as a title.

"She watched the glories fade in one,
The round moon rise while yet the sun
Was rosy on the snow."

Have you ever noticed how just a few days in every year stand out clearly against the background of the whole fifty-two weeks, and years after one can recall them. One such walk I took, when staying just after Christmas in the country, along by the Nene River some few miles from Peterborough. The day was sunny though cold, and in the shade the hoar-frost still silvered the leaves and herbage. The dead reeds were quite golden in colour in the sunlight, and in one hedgerow we came to the silvery silky seed vessels of the traveller's joy (Father Christmas' beard we might term it), "Parcel-bearded with the traveller's joy," in Tennyson's words, and the crimson four-sided seed vessels of the spindle

delights which amused our forefathers are voted slow by the restless spirits of to-day. The newer generations of farmers give little encouragement to their men to keep old country customs and festivities. There is only one farmer in my neighbourhood who still celebrates the harvest-home, and yet my mother tells me that in the village when she was a girl the taking home of the last load of corn was the occasion of much rejoicing. It was called in Cambridgeshire the orkey load, and was drawn through the village decorated with boughs and evergreens, and afterwards supper and merry-making finished the day, cakes and ale (ale was then always home-brewed) being an important item in the feast.

Plough Monday, the first Monday in January, is unknown in Oxfordshire, but was kept in the Eastern Counties, the plough-boys going through the village cracking their whips and getting largesse from the farmers. But years ago all farm hands were hired by the year at the neighbouring statute fair, and the plough-boys slept in the house and were fed by the farmers. A "mess of milk," as it was called, was given to each boy and man before going to plough.

The conditions of life change, we know, and this in itself should occasion no regret, but as time goes on we are losing more and more of the picturesque or decoration of life. The world is made beautiful, and not only supplies our wants, but gives us delight, *la joie de vivre* (the joy of life) as the French say. Surely man, taking nature as his guide, should do what he can to preserve those things which tend to prevent life becoming merely material and barrenly sordid.

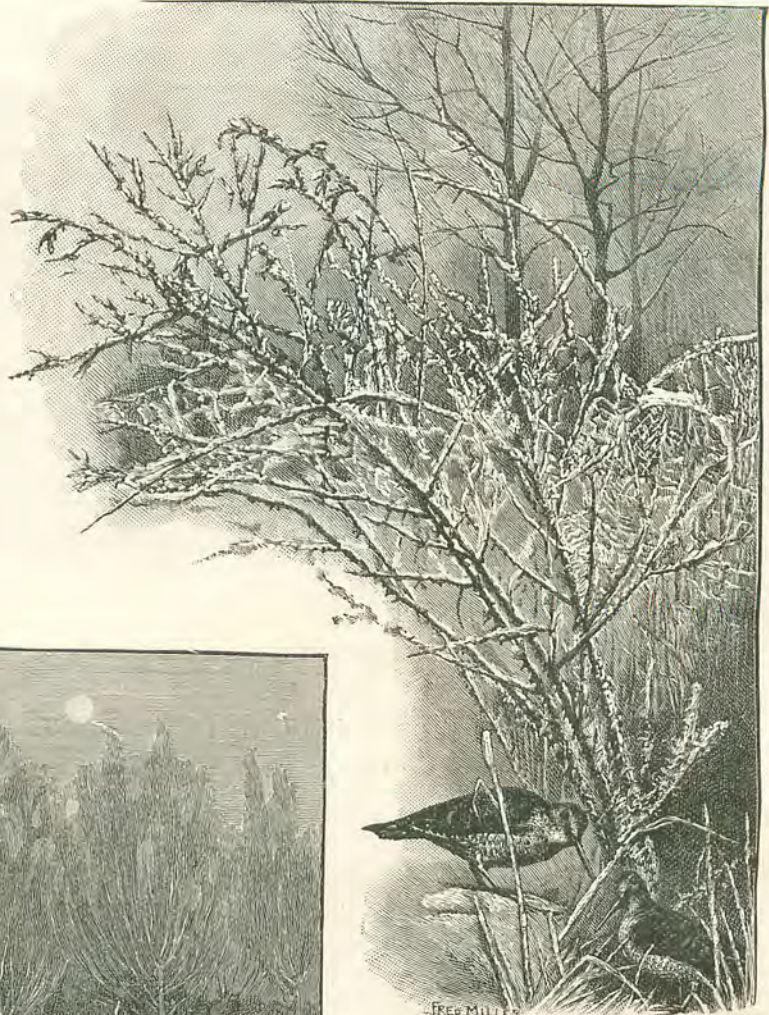
The dead reeds and herbage by the river are very beautiful either seen in the sunlight, which brings out their golden greys and russets, or when the rime frost has collected upon them for several hours and covered them with spinous icicles. There is much more colour in a landscape in January than many people imagine, and a sunny day now has for the artist more subtle beauties than one in midsummer. A bed of osiers or reeds, when the sunlight is on them, with the purplish greys of the distant elms as a background is



tree, which had split open and showed the bright orange seeds inside, were both striking and beautiful features in the landscape. These seeds of the spindle-tree being dry make most beautiful indoor decoration for winter, and we took advantage of the occasion to carry a quantity home to put in our empty vases.

I give a drawing of dead hedgerow herbage, which I used as the *motifs* in a screen I painted one year. The silvery greys of the dead thistles and the warm tones of the dock against a background of ploughed land made a capital harmony. The introduction of goldfinches and rabbits adds to the interest; and I commend this material to my decorative readers.

In addition to our summer visitors, like the swallows, we have those birds which, coming from the north, stay only the winter with us. The fieldfares, buntings and brumblings are among the most noticeable of these winter visitors, and then we have among the smaller birds the siskin and redpole, birds which easily reconcile themselves to captivity, and live for years in cages, growing exceedingly tame, as so many stories about them attest. In the winter in the Thames Valley, gulls, terns, and some of the rarer ducks like the golden eye and red-headed pochard, are yearly



HOAR-FROST.



A WINTER LANDSCAPE.

shot, while the common mallard and pintail in hard winters are comparatively common. Wild geese and an occasional swan also fall to keen sportsmen. One young farmer I know, out very early to have a chance shot at some wild ducks, stalked a pair very carefully for some time in the half-light, and finally got within range and secured both, only to find that he had shot a neighbour's tame Muscovy ducks. His bag that morning was an expensive one, as the birds he had secured were old and tough, and it cost him nearly a pound to buy another pair to replace those he had secured.

There is a strange feeling of loneliness about winter when one is out alone, walking over ice-bound fields or skating. The world puts on a disguise in winter, familiar landmarks are obliterated and changed beyond recognition, and there is little life stirring. Two painters I know spent the severe winter of 1891 in a house-boat on one of the Norfolk broads—ice-bound for six weeks. At night they could hear the pattering of rats over the ice as they came to steal any food they could find on board, and even an otter came and stole some fish they had caught and put aside for the next day's meal. Every little sound seemed magnified as it came over the ice. They told me that the feeling of loneliness was almost unbearable at times, as though they alone peopled the world. I can quite imagine it, as I have experienced the same thing when skating on the Thames alone in the gathering dark. The ice, as you skate over it, will give slightly and crack behind you as it splits

right across the river, and Tam O'Shanter could not have felt more scared than I have done once or twice when skating home on the river in the evening. The feeling is too awesome to be agreeable, and the sound is quite appalling and seems to run down the river for a long way.

Of flowers there are few so early in the year. In a garden near me some seedling anemones, with the rich ornate foliage, started flowering in November and kept in bloom till March. Christmas roses are the most beautiful, and if just protected by a handlight give much finer blooms. Iris reticulata, in a mild season, will be found in flower in the garden, and so will snowdrops and aconites. White, in his *Naturalist's Calendar*, gives as flowering in January, the polyanthus, double-daisy, daphne mezereum, red dead nettle, groundsel, hazel, hepatica, primrose, furze, wallflower, stock, white dead nettle, dandelion and crocus. Selborne being in the south, would be more forward than we are in the Thames Valley, which is notable for its extreme cold at times.

Birds are all getting active so soon as January is here, and the wren, robin and thrush make their voices heard in the gardens, while the beautiful coloured nut-hatch may be

seen running up the trunks of the trees after insects. These are the first birds to "chirp full choir," and they are soon followed by the whistle



HOAR-FROST.

of the blackbird, the songs of the larks and chaffinches, while the rooks may be seen visiting the elms to see what remains of last year's nests, and to prepare themselves for building operations in the next month.

With the break up of the frost the earth seems to grow into distinctness after being blurred by snow and ice, very much as a dissolving view, and few things are more exhilarating than to see the first flowers like the aconites thrust through the soil and open to the sun of the new year. On a warm day I can see swarms of insects dancing in the sun against any yew-hedge. One hears from travellers how striking is the growth of herbage after rain in India, and English people are astonished at the rapidity with which nature puts on her mantle green in America after the disappearance of the frost. Spring comes with leaps and bounds to our American cousins, and one is told that there you go from winter into spring with no interval to bridge the two together; but with us the seasons are much more uncertain. I have known January quite a warm month—too hot for fires, but later on, when we are taught by the calendar to expect fair weather, we find that "lingering winter chills the lap of May."

THREE CHRISTMASTIDES.

A TALE IN THREE CHAPTERS.

By B. HARPER-ASHWIN, Author of "Agnes Chisholm," etc.

CHAPTER I.

It was the week before Christmas, and Miss Ashford sat in her pleasant dining-room alone, save for the companionship of a small brown spaniel lying on the couch near her, ever and anon gazing into the face of his mistress with soft, wistful eyes, or thrusting his nose lovingly into her hand as if he guessed her thoughts and would sympathise in her loneliness. For Edith Ashford was indeed lonely. It was barely a year since she had followed to the grave her mother and an aunt (her father she scarcely remembered), both of whom she had loved and tended with unwearied care for many years—aye, till she herself had reached middle age. Her whole being had been bound up in them; their health, their needs, their happiness, had been her very world, and now it seemed as if no one wanted her.

But had she no other relations? Yes; one half-brother, a ne'er-do-weel, who had long ago emigrated to America, and had never since been heard of; so she was practically alone in the world, with a certain income, small, indeed, but sufficient for her modest requirements and those of the one maid who waited upon her. She looked round the room, on the heavy oak beams crossing the low ceiling, the large French window, making it light and cheerful, the old-fashioned, comfortable furniture on which a generous fire was casting its ruddy glow, and then on the empty chairs drawn up on either side of the hearth-rug, until the welling tears dimmed her eyes; and, hastily wiping them away, she picked up the work she had dropped and knitted fast, as if the movement of her fingers would banish thought. She was not destined, however, to remain long uninterrupted, for the servant entered, carrying her tea-tray with its solitary cup and saucer, and she roused herself to give some trifling order.

At that moment a knock came at the front-door, and into the room was ushered shortly a tall clergyman, who, though his hair was

grey, yet retained the alert movement of a man still in his prime.

"Mr. Barker! I am so glad to see you!" exclaimed Miss Ashford, with brightening face. "Mary, bring another cup, and—you will have an egg?" she continued, turning again to her guest.

"If you please," was the reply; "for I have walked from Eyreleigh and am rather tired. You have your usual fire, I see."

"Yes, our rooms are always warm," she answered. "But now tell me of Mrs. Barker and the children."

"My wife is very well and sends her love. Charlie and Beth will both be with us for Christmas, but Connie and her husband will postpone their visit for a time; they are afraid of the cold for the baby, and I really think we should enjoy their company more when there was less to do."

"Dear Connie! She appears very happy with her husband and child," remarked the lady.

"Yes, indeed; it was quite a love-match, notwithstanding Captain Lovell's money, and the boy is a real beauty."

"Of course, of course," agreed Miss Ashford smilingly; and the conversation flowed on with inquiries for, and tidings of, different friends, till the tea-things were removed, when the clergyman, taking one of the arm-chairs by the fire, and his hostess drawing her own low seat in front, there was a lull, broken at last by Mr. Barker.

"Effie and I have been thinking so much of you lately," he said, in sympathetic tones; "and we want you to spend Christmas Day with us. Will you come?"

"You are very kind," was the answer in a choked voice; "but I have invited my two lonely old people, John and Betsy, to dinner. I think they would like it. I can't get over my loss," she continued impetuously. "This time last year they were here, and now—" She stopped, totally unable to proceed, but the conclusion came from her visitor.

"Now they are in the Paradise of God you do not grudge them their rest?"

"No, not for them; but my life is very dreary."

"Yes, I know; but"—very gently—"is not your loneliness partly your own fault? Do you not think that, if you asked Him, Jesus Himself would walk with you along this solitary way, in as close and real a companionship as with the disciples going to Emmaus—aye, and sit with you, too, at your lonely table. He wanted to draw you closer to Himself, therefore he took your darlings; but, though His hand dealt the blow, His heart felt and still feels for the grief it caused. I do not think, however, that living alone is good for you. Have you no relation or friend?"

"None," was the reply; "my cousins are all married and far away, and my half-brother, as you know, went abroad years ago; we think he must be dead as no news ever comes."

"Can you then stay with us for a time; we should be delighted to have you."

"Thank you—if I may come in the spring. I have a little plan then," she continued. "Betsy's grandchild is my servant, you know, and Betsy herself is like me, lonely and very poor, so I have asked her to come and live here for nothing; she can do what work she likes, and keep house when I go out; but she cannot leave her cottage before March."

"Capital," rejoined the clergyman; "it is the very thing. But, as I said before, while you seek earthly companionship, do not trust too much to it; there is only one Friend who never changes and never dies. But now I must go; when shall we see you?"

"On Christmas Day, I hope, for one service at least. And," in a lower voice, "I will try to get rid of my loneliness, only pray for me still."

"We do always. Good-bye," was the sole response, as with a warm hand-clasp the



NOTES BY AN ARTIST NATURALIST

"Daffodils that come before
the swallows dare
To take the winds of March
with beauty."

TENNYSON'S epithet of
"The Roaring noon of Daffodil and Crocus," as applied
to March, is both literal and
poetical, for these two flowers are as characteristic of
the month as any found blowing. The wild daffodil, or
Lent-lily, is found in woods in certain localities, and
Wordsworth speaks of it as—

"Beside the lake, beneath trees;
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

The garden variety, which is a deeper-coloured double flower, is often naturalised in woods, for bulbous plants seem able to hold their own against those that are wild; whereas a good many cultivated plants, if not cared for, become choked and killed by the more sturdy-growing wild ones. I know an orchard in Norfolk, attached to an old vicarage, in which bulbs were planted many years ago, and have gone on increasing year by year, until now many thousands of blooms could be picked in the spring. The daffodil is a plant which has had a great deal of attention bestowed on it by florists, and by hybridising an immense number of varieties have been raised. Some of these florists' flowers are twice the size of the Lent-lily, though very similar in appearance, having the yellow cup and the whitish-yellow perianth, as the six petals which form a collar at the base of the cup are called.

Bulbous plants of grass-like foliage, like the daffodil and crocus, are much more beautiful when grown in grass than in borders, and in many of the London parks this plan has been adopted the last few years with most excellent effect, and in lawns in private gardens it is well worth planting snowdrops, crocuses, and daffodils. When the flowers are over, the leaves must not be cut down for a month or more, as the bulb is ripened through the leaves; whereas, if these are cut off too soon, the chances are that the plants will fail to bloom the next year. Having to leave portions of the lawn unmown is a drawback, but under trees and at the edges of lawns this is less of an eyesore than might be imagined.

The crocus is said to be naturalised at Saffron Walden, in Essex, where the stigmas of the flower are used for making the dye called saffron. The flowers are purple, the leaves appearing after the bloom; but it is a doubtful native, while the meadow-saffron, or mauve autumn crocus which I have seen growing in large patches in meadows in Norfolk, is truly a wild flower. *Narcissus biflorus*, with its two creamy white flowers and pale-yellow eye, grows in some orchards here, and, if given a chance, would soon increase.

"Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out over the grassy lea.

* * *
Now blooms the lily of the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae."



are familiar lines of Burns, and they could only have been written by one very intimate with Nature. There is no generalisation here, but the particular which comes of observation, though only a poet could get the very spirit of early spring—the soul of the matter—as Burns has done. To go out, note-book in hand, to Nature in the spirit of an auctioneer, as though all you had to do were to divide her into lots, seems to me the fault of much naturalistic writing of the present day. I agree with Biglow, when he asks—

“But I don’t love your
cat’logue style—do
you?
Ez ef to sell off Na-
ture by vendoo.”

It is the happy mean between the particular, as seen by the eye of a close and constant observer of Nature, and the generalisation of a great poet like Tennyson, who notes each particular instance and gives it a wide-reaching application, that natural description is seen at its best. Below I give Thompson’s description of spring as he opens his poem of the “Seasons,” and some lines of Lowell’s, to show how the eighteenth century poet described Nature in the hackneyed similes and images, the common property of all writers in his day; while Lowell, true to the spirit of our own time, is actual, whatever else he may be:—

“And see where surly
Winter passes off
Far to the north,
and calls his ruffian
blasts.
His blasts obey, and
quit the howling
hill,
The shatter’d forest
and the ravag’d
vale.”

This is Thompson, and might have been written by one who had never lived out of Fleet-Street.

“Fust come the black-
birds, chatt’rin’ on
tall trees,
An’ settlin’ things in
windy Congresses,
* * *

’Fore long the trees
begin to show be-
lief,

The maple crimsons to a coral reef;
Then saffern swarms swing off from all
the willers,
So plump they look like yellow catter-
pillars.
Then gray hoss-ches’nuts leetle hands unfold
Softer’n a baby’s be at three days old:
Thet’s robin-redbreast’s almanick; he
knows
Thet arter this ther’s only blossom-snows:
So, choosin’ out a handy crotch an’
spouse,
He goes to plast’rin’ his adobe house.”

This is Lowell, in the *Biglow Papers*, written in the Yankee dialect; true poetry for all that, and could only have been penned by one as observant as a naturalist as imaginative as a poet.

I have given a drawing of willow in flower. These blooms are known as “Catkins,” and consist of pollen-bearing flowers; the female, or seed-bearing, flowers being of a greenish colour, and of the form as shown in sketch.



PRIMULA, DOG-TOOTH VIOLET, AND PERIWINKLE.

The Catkin is a common form of inflorescence, and is found in the hazel, poplar, arbutus, and other trees. The reddish flowers, called by children “pussy-cat’s tails,” fall from the poplar, and I well remember picking them up, as a child, by the Botanic Gardens, Regent’s Park, and wondering what they were.

The elm flowers before it leaf, and appears to consist of dense clusters of reddish stamens growing out of a cup of bracts, which soon fall away. The flowers are succeeded by flat, thin, leaf-like or winged seeds. The wych-elm, of which we have a fine specimen in the

middle of the village, has its twigs thickly encircled with these winged seeds, which make a conspicuous feature and quite carpet the ground when they blow down. A good many people never think of such trees as the elm flowering, and yet in March the colour of the flowers make the topmost branches of the trees look quite crimson, especially when the sun shines on them.

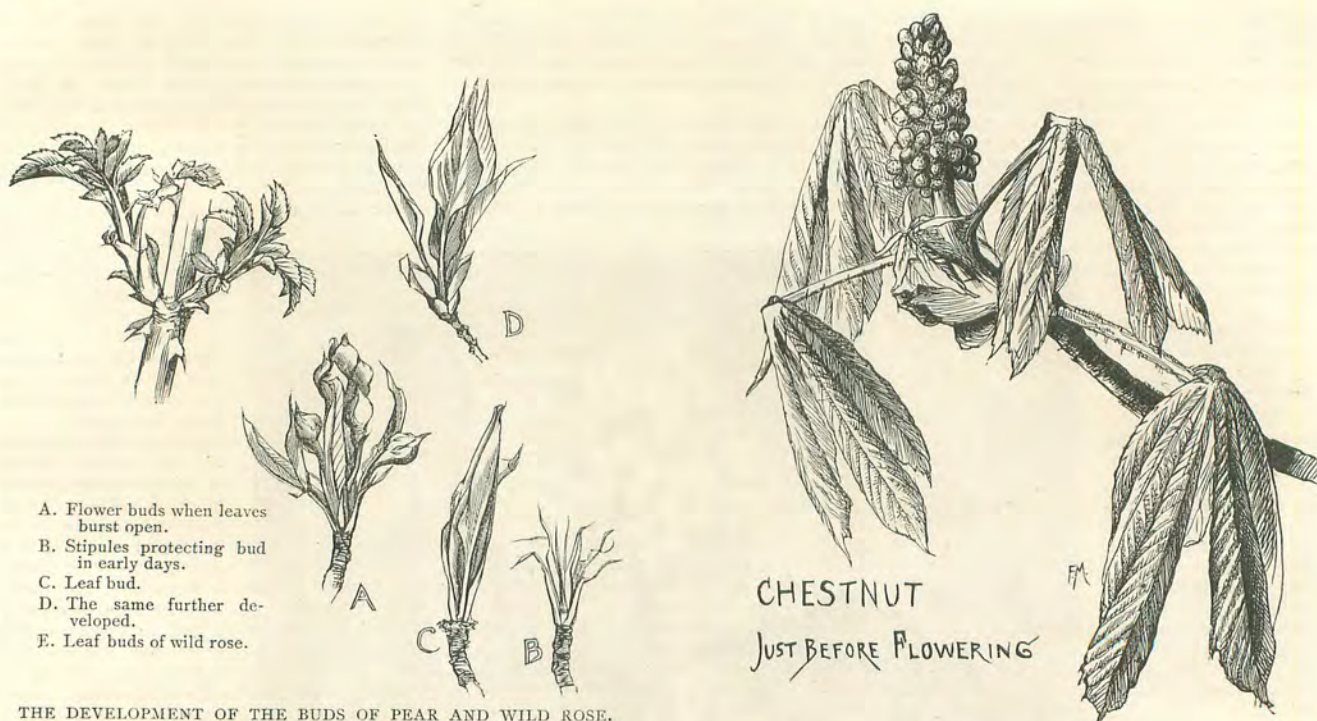
The birds that stay with us through the year are all busy building this month, and the gardens are filled with the songs of blackbirds, thrushes, robins, chaffinches, and wrens. Two thrushes built in a yew-tree just in front of the house, and I could watch them hard at work as I dressed in the morning. My walnut-tree, which is thickly covered with moss, is visited a good deal just now by birds to obtain material for their nests. Where there is a rookery, the birds may be seen busily engaged in repairing old nests or laying the foundations of new ones; for during high gales in the winter some of the old nests are sure to fall out of the fork in which they are placed. It is always a marvel to me that their nests stand the wind as they do, for the twigs composing them are very loosely put together. When the young ones are hatched, a good many get blown out during rough weather, and last year some rookeries were considerably thinned in this way, owing to the high winds we had in April. Tennyson, in the “May Queen,” alludes to this bird:—

“The building rook
caws from the
windy, tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover
pipes along the
fallow lea.”

It is well known that birds will frequent the same trees for years; while, on the other hand, they will avoid building in certain trees which, to our eyes, appear every whit as suitable as those they select. Indeed, when some birds begin building in certain trees, the other members of the colony at once set

to work to pull their nests to pieces and compel these innovators to abandon their intention of using fresh trees to build in.

It is often forgotten that a large number of birds which are very familiar to us only visit us for the spring and summer. The swallow tribe come in the following order:—Sand-martin, swallow, and martin, while the largest of the tribe—the swift—does not come much before the end of April or even May. The wryneck, or cuckoo’s mate, as it is called in country places, arrives towards the end of March (White gives the date March 5th as



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUDS OF PEAR AND WILD ROSE.

the earliest time of seeing it), and its marked note, somewhat like the sawing of wood, distinguishes it from all other birds. The willow-wren, which I have drawn perched on the willow, is another early visitor. It is a small bird of a dull greenish hue. I have had it build in some old fagots in my garden, its nest being spherical, with a hole in the side to admit the bird. Many of the warblers, like the blackcap, sedge, and reed warblers, are also migratory; the first of these, known as the mock-nightingale and but little inferior to it, may be seen towards the end of the month. The grey plover or lapwing, with its mournful whistling cry, is a conspicuous bird in the fields in spring. It lays its eggs on the bare ground, in rough grass, or ploughed fields; and if a dog happen to go near its nest it will fly about the dog, almost touching it with its wings, to call the dog off from its nest to itself, in order that it may lure the intruder to a safe distance. All birds are in their

gayest plumage in the spring, and the brilliancy of such a bird as the yellowhammer or chaffinch is very striking to those who have not seen these birds outside a cage or museum. One recalls those well-known lines in "Locksley Hall":—

"In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast,
 In the spring the wanton * lapwing gets himself another crest."

March is very dependent upon the weather, a cold, frosty month, such as we get some years keeping vegetation very much in check. Wild flowers are not numerous. The "wild marsh marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray;" the cuckoo-flowers, or lady-smocks, are to be seen here and there, though

* This alludes to the bird's strange wayward flight, as it will apparently go away and then return a few moments afterwards.

April is really the month for them; the wind-flower, or anemone, and primrose and violet, may be found in the woods, but, like the cuckoo-flower, April sees them in perfection. In the gardens, the snowdrops are nearly over, while the crocuses and daffodils are in full splendour. In a note I made on March 14th, 1890, I found the following in bloom in the Oxford Botanic Garden:—

Iris reticulata, a dwarf-growing variety, with purple flowers; the earliest to bloom.

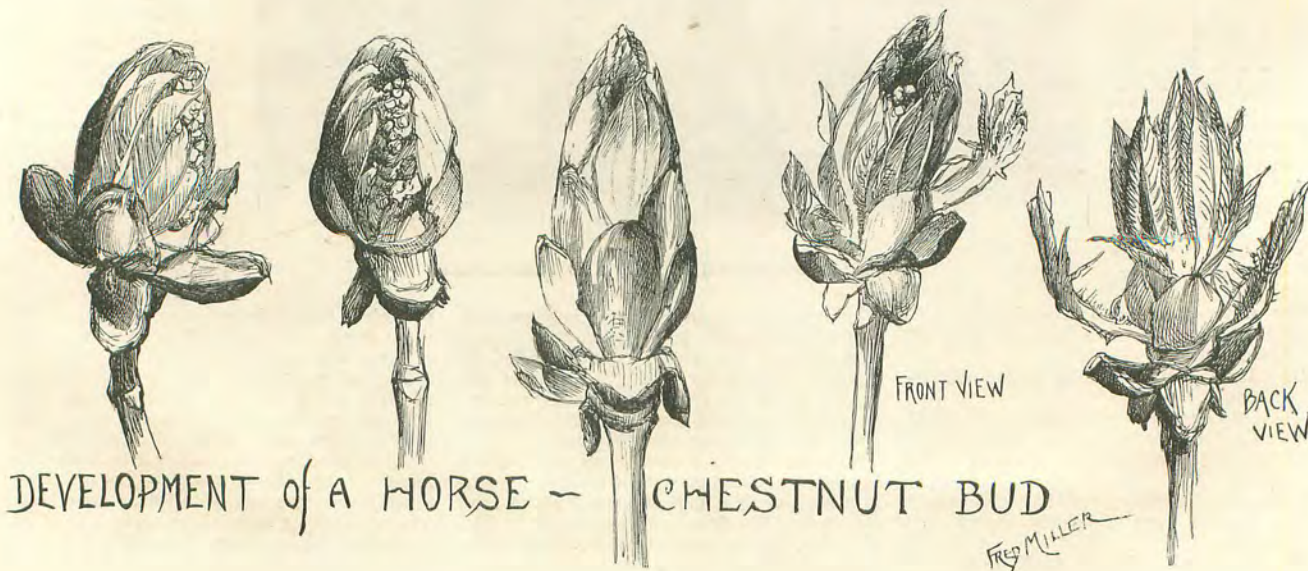
Crocuses. There are several varieties of each of the three colours—yellow, purple, and white. Squill, the white and blue; always an early bloomer. A wild variety is found near Bath.

The Snowdrop. There is, besides the ordinary single and double kinds, one with large leaves and larger flowers.

Hellebore, or Christmas rose.

Erica Carmina and the blue anemone Hepatica, besides polyanthus and wallflowers.

Among the primulas, the one I have drawn



(known as Pulchellum) is a beautiful variety, having mauvish-white flowers. The flower at the back—the dog-tooth violet, as it is called—is an early bloomer. Its flowers are pinkish, and its leaves strikingly marked with purple brown. The flower in front is the small periwinkle, found growing wild in hedgerows; there is a larger variety which flowers later in the year. I have introduced the peacock and sulphur butterflies, these being the two that are seen earliest in the year. I have noticed the sulphur as early as February on a warm day, and very cheering it is to see it flitting about like primroses on the wing. These butterflies are hybernated specimens, remnants of late autumn broods, which lie dormant during the winter in some hole or crevice, out of reach of the frosts and which are tempted out by the first sunny day. Most of these early butterflies are more or less damaged, their wings often torn and the feathers rubbed off; some, indeed, being quite dilapidated.

The spring of 1893 was so exceptional that it is worth making a note about it. With the exception of a few hours' rain we had one day towards the end of April, our spell of continuous sunny weather has lasted since the beginning of March; a spell of dry warmth the like of which has not been seen for over forty years. As I write this June the 16th, the weather is intensely hot—nearly 90° in the shade—and all the meadows are burnt up. Farmers have not had enough grass to cut, and have turned their cattle into the fields instead of mowing them. What little hay there is, is mostly stacked; the wheat is in flower and apples are quite large. Cherries and pears were blooming the beginning of April, while apple-trees were over before April was out. Hawthorn was out in April, and all over by the middle of May, while chestnuts were in bloom in April, which makes the season quite four weeks earlier than usual. The drought has continued now for so long, and the sun has been shining continuously for so many weeks, that the ground is as parched as it is in August, and on the Chiltern Hills water is being bought at 2d. per pailful. There is a great scarcity of food for cattle, and no prospect of any, as the clover is quite burnt up. My gooseberry-trees are completely stripped of every leaf by caterpillars, and the fruit has had to be picked to prevent them falling off. A few thunder-showers have occurred around us, but none have visited this particular locality, and rain, to judge by the glass, seems as far off as ever. The limes are in flower, and the leaves so thickly covered with honey-dew that it drops on to the plants below, and I have seen it in the sunlight falling through the air.

Towards the end of the month the wild cherry, or gean, and the pear should be looked for, as in mild seasons both these are to be found in bloom about this time. The wild cherry is plentiful in Burnham Beeches, and on Whittenham Clumps there is a very fine specimen of the bird-cherry growing in the ancient earthworks of the camp; the fruit is small, bright scarlet, and quite bitter. The wild pear is not so common as the cherry; there is a fine specimen in the Oxford Botanic Gardens, which is covered with brown top-shaped fruit later in the summer. These pears seem to dry the mouth, and are to the cultivated pear what the crab is to the apple. I give a drawing of the buds of the pear, showing how leaves are wrapped around the flower-buds. The leaf-bud, as it expands, presents a very symmetrical form, as do those of the wild rose. The leaves of all shrubs are protected by bracts of brownish leaves, which fall away as the leaves expand; and in the pear we have stipules in addition—elongated greenish filaments, which seem to protect the joints in the harness, so to say. The flowers again are

protected by the leaves which are wrapped around them. Nature is most careful to pack her treasures so as to keep them out of harm as far as possible, though late frosts play sad havoc with such trees as the horse-chestnut. A frost one night in May killed every shoot on the walnut just as they were expanding; while last year we had 10° of frost on the 17th of June, which killed the potatoes in many places. I have given a series of sketches of the buds of this tree, showing the gradual opening of the bracts and unfolding of the leaves; the flowers themselves are not seen till May. The leaves, it will be noticed, are at first protected by bracts, which are covered with a gummy substance, evidently a non-conductor of cold. Many buds have this varnish, but in none is it seen so plentifully as in the chestnut, which is one of the first trees to break bud. The young leaves, which form a sort of pouch to the flowers, are very downy at first, though this peculiarity is quite absent in the full-grown leaves.

Another of the lowly flowers of March is the smaller celandine, which Wordsworth celebrated in song. I had occasion to look into *Culpepper's Herbal*, and it may interest my readers to see his notes on this plant. Culpepper was a herbalist and astrologer, and after each plant described by him he gives its "government and virtues":—"This is an herb of the sun, and under the celestial Lion, and is one of the best cures for the eyes; for all that know anything in astrology know that the eyes are subject to the luminaries. Let it be gathered when the sun is Leo, and the

moon Aries, applying to this time; let Leo arise, and then may you make it into an oil or ointment, which you please, to anoint your sore eyes with. I can prove it doth—both my own experience and the experience of those to whom I have taught it—that most desperate sore ones have been cured by this only medicine. Also I have read (and it seems somewhat probable) that the herb being gathered as I shewed before, and the elements drawn apart from it by the art of the alchemist, and after they are drawn apart rectified, the earthy quality still in rectifying them added to the Terra Demnata (as alchemists call it), or Terra Sacratissima (as some philosophers call it), the elements so rectified are sufficient for the cure of all diseases, the humours offending being known and the contrary elements given. It is an experiment worth the trying and can do no harm."

The coltsfoot, which flowers before the leaves appear, somewhat resembling a dandelion, and this latter flower—both old-fashioned country remedies—are in bloom in the fields in March. Patent medicines have driven out most of the old herbal remedies, which were at one time made in every village by some old dame, whose lore on such matters had come down from a remote past. Many of these herbal medicines were useful, but there was a good deal of the superstitious, more suited to the times of old Culpepper than these enlightened days, about these cures for all diseases; though it cannot be said we have made much progress in such matters, seeing the implicit belief we place in someone's pills or the other one's balsam.





NOTES BY AN ARTIST NATURALIST.

"Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,
And purpled orchises with spotted leaves."

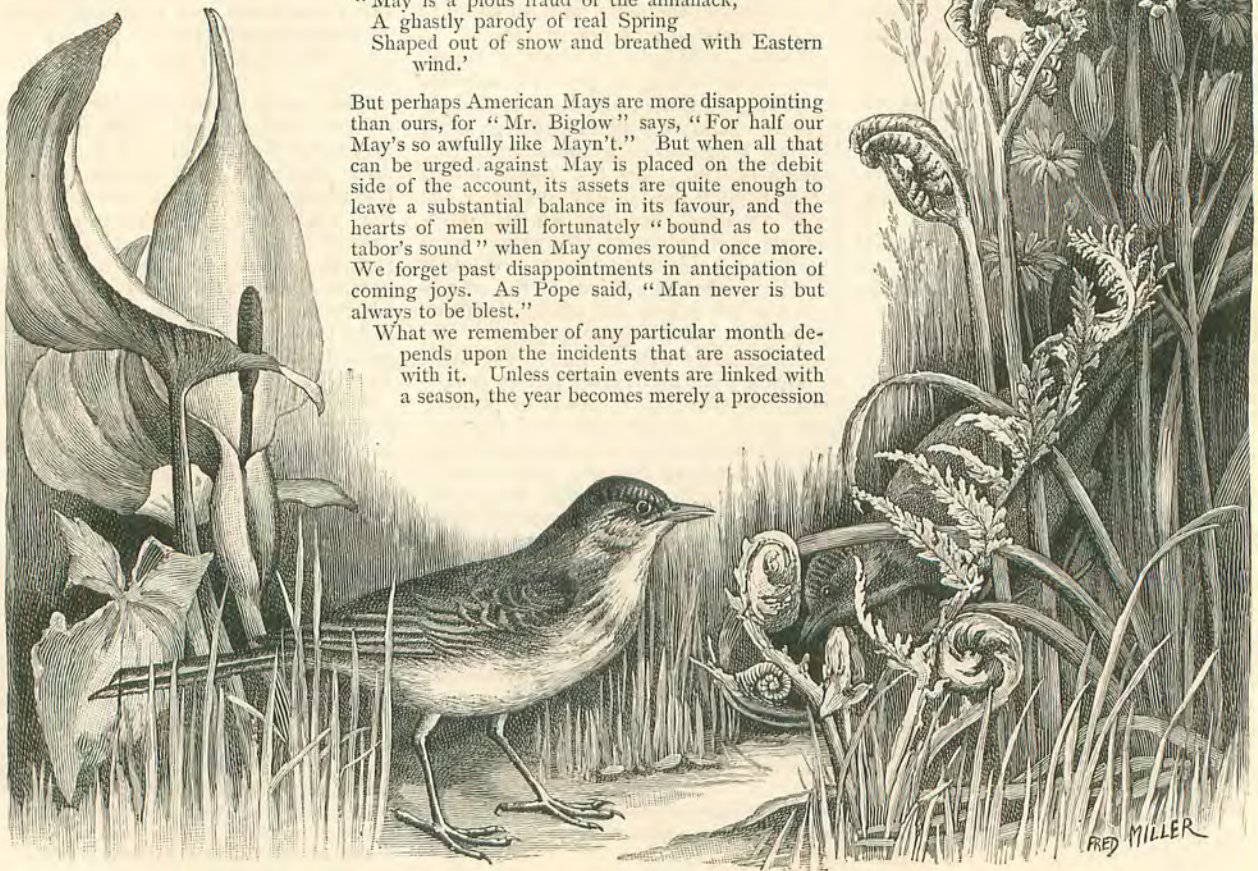
"The sweet spring days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And bluebells trembling by the forest ways,
And scent of hay new mown."—*Matthew Arnold.*

It was my privilege one year to spend the first three weeks of May at Burnham Beeches. I went there to sketch, and being out of doors the whole time I had every opportunity of watching how rapidly nature leaps into activity and rushes into life in this, the month that sounds pleasantest in our ears of the whole twelve, for May is the month of breaking bud and bursting blossom. The cynic may say that May is disappointing, and its pleasantness exists as an idea that has come down to us from a past when the season was in harmony with its name: that May is chilly and makes the tooth of the east wind felt. Lowell was in such a mood when he penned—

"May is a pious fraud of the almanack,
A ghastly parody of real Spring
Shaped out of snow and breathed with Eastern
wind."

But perhaps American Mays are more disappointing than ours, for "Mr. Biglow" says, "For half our May's so awfully like Mayn't." But when all that can be urged against May is placed on the debit side of the account, its assets are quite enough to leave a substantial balance in its favour, and the hearts of men will fortunately "bound as to the tabor's sound" when May comes round once more. We forget past disappointments in anticipation of coming joys. As Pope said, "Man never is but always to be blest."

What we remember of any particular month depends upon the incidents that are associated with it. Unless certain events are linked with a season, the year becomes merely a procession



of uneventful weeks, and awakens no associations when we look back upon what has gone. To those who dwell in cities, as I did myself for so many years, the procession of the seasons makes very little impression upon them, for if you do link events with times, the events themselves are those pertaining to our artificial life, and so May to an artist may come to mean the month when the Royal Academy opens; but with country folk the planting or gathering of the herbs for the service of man marks off the different months, so that each one stands out like a distinct personality. In that thoroughly country story of Ruth the season is spoken of as the time of barley harvest, and if you live in a village and associate with the peasantry, you will find that it is the time of "tater planting" or "hay-making" that is spoken of more often than the particular month when such duties are performed. I heard an old farmer say that when the parson began the Bible was the time to plant beans, and the lines—

"When elm leaves are as big as a shilling,
It's time to plant kidney beans if you're willing;

When elm leaves are as big as a penny,
You must plant kidney beans if you mean to have any."

carry out the same idea of linking two events together to remember one of them—the essence of artificial memory. I learnt May as it were during my sojourn in the Beeches, for it was the first time that I had spent May out of doors, watching, during the pauses of my work, the rapid growth of everything around me, for whether I would or not, I could not help being made aware of the ever-changing scene that I was trying to get down on my canvas. One of the subjects I had in hand was a study of some willow trees bending over a pond. When I began the sketch, the trees were just tinted with a bloom of pale green produced by the opening leaf buds. The leaves were unwrapped just enough to clothe the branches with a veil as of delicately-tinted gauze. In three weeks those same trees had become masses of green, the opened leaves hiding all but the main branches, and even these were almost concealed. The beeches, which were quite bare the first week of May, were tinted with a green of a quite vivid tint, which most artists find very unpaintable owing to its crudity; the

bracken, which was only just through the soil with all its leaves wrapped tightly together in a characteristic scroll, were some eighteen inches high in three weeks, and all over the common, and in the open spaces in the woods a thick miniature forest of rich brownish-green stems had pushed their way *where before* the ground was bare, so quickly does bracken grow.

In the middle of the month I noted that primroses still lingered in the woods, now purple and blue with wild hyacinths. Matthew Arnold also noted this in "Thyrsis"—

"And only in the hidden brook-side gleam
Primroses orphans of the flowery prime."

Wood anemones hang their heads on the banks and outskirts of the spinneys. Furze is in full blow, and broom is just opening into flower by the road-side. A few apple trees are out in blossom, but the bulk of them want another week to be in full pink and white perfection, while the cherry and pear trees are carpeting the ground below them with their petals. The woodruffe was a conspicuous plant with its straight stems and intensely yellow-green flowers and dark azalea-like leaves growing out of the low *clumps of bramble* and

WATER BUTTERCUP.



BUCK BEAN.

WATER VIOLET.

ORCHIS.

RAGGED ROBIN.

bracken. The delicate, white, fragile starwort found its way through these bramble clumps, Nature piloting it through its thorny path so that no damage befel it. The oaks are now covered with their rich, warm-brown, half-opened leaves, quite reddish beside the birches and beeches, while the ash trees are slowly spreading out their leaflets.

On May 20th, I noted that I picked the first white campion in a cornfield. What a delicious scent it has! I noticed the glow-worms shining brilliantly as I walked home in the dusk. It quite startled me to see one shine forth suddenly, for as it flashes out in the dusk and shadow of a hedge the light appears most brilliant, as though a star had accidentally slipped out of its place and fallen earthwards.

The birds are full of song now, and while the hen birds are sitting their mates spend a good deal of their leisure in letting the world hear that they have voices. I had never until this visit to Burnham Beeches heard the song of the nightingale, or if I had heard it it had left no distinct impression on my mind; but their song in the woods was to the music of the woods what a violin is in a concert. At about nine o'clock in the evening one bird would begin, and in a few minutes he would be answered by another bird, and then a third would join in, and every few minutes the chorus would be augmented until all through the woods you could hear the whistle, the trill and the guttural, for the three bars in a nightingale's song are all very marked and distinct. The nightingale's song is heard at

a time when so many other birds are still, that it has attracted perhaps more attention to itself

"The cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to search
And wash the whole world clean as
gold;
The olives crystallised the
Broad slopes until the hills
grew strong:
The fire-flies and the
nightingales



BLACKCAP WITH
SLOE AND
ALMOND BLOSSOMS.

The nightingale has been heard in Victoria Park and Kensington Gardens. The blackcap is another beautiful songster, and is the earliest of the summer emigrants to visit us, and instances have been known of its staying the winter with us. Both male and female assist in incubation, though the male will often feed his mate as she sits on her eggs, and then perch by and sing to her. Birds at this season of the year put on their gayest dress, and the brilliancy of the plumage of such a bird as a cock chaffinch must be seen to be appreciated. No idea can be formed of the colouring of birds from those kept in captivity, and even stuffed specimens fade even if they were originally brilliant. The linnet's

than would have been the case had it sung only in the day; for the nightingale sings through the day, and yet the casual person does not notice it then. The nightingale appears early in April (Gilbert White gives its date as the first), and sings through May into June, and leaves us in August.

In speaking of glow-worms and nightingales I am reminded of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, "Bianca among the Nightingales," the first verse of which I cannot refrain from quoting:—

Throbb'd each to either
flame and song.
The nightingales, the nightin-
gales."

APPLE BLOSSOM
and BLUETITS

breast is, in a wild state, most brilliantly marked with crimson; but it loses this after its first moult in a cage, and never gets it back.

I noted on the 26th that a nest of young thrushes, which were only hatched some three weeks before, flew this day when I went to look at them, as I frequently did, for the nest was in a low oak bush, and was by no means concealed before the leaves had opened. The "pink-pink" of a female chaffinch as one walked through the woods told one that a nest was in the vicinity, and it would have been comparatively easy to have taken a good many nests early in May, so little are they hidden until the leaves burst their buds and expand. Young birds, when they are just capable of flying a short distance, but cannot keep on the wing for more than twenty or thirty yards, fall victims to cats, stoats, and boys. I have frequently had opportunities of catching these fledglings, and one morning in walking through a wood I was startled by a thrush suddenly starting up close to me. I guessed something was wrong, for a thrush does not in a general way allow one to almost step on it, so I looked about, and presently saw a youngster on the ground that had evidently ventured out on its own account, too soon for its own well-being as it appeared. I picked the fledgling up, but the old bird, whom I had disturbed in looking after the youngster, and who had perched on a near bough, exhibited so much concern, and chattered away in a manner that told me plainly how upset she was, that I left the young thrush on the ground for the old bird to do what she could to get her offspring out of its danger.

I often had my attention called to the woodpeckers by the tapping of their beaks on the branches of the trees. The succession of rapid short taps instantly tells you where the bird is, and by waiting and watching you can generally see him as he runs up and down the branches. We have three woodpeckers in this country—the large green, called in some places the wood-parrot, the spotted, and the small one. This latter I have seen on the walnut tree in my garden; but they are essentially woodland birds.

On May 27th I made this note which emphasises my opening remarks. It is hard to realise how rapidly everything grows in the spring if the weather be warm. During the time I have stayed at Burnham, I have seen

the beeches, and oaks, and birches become almost full foliaged, and when I came the leaf-buds were only just bursting. Cherries have flowered and fallen, and apple trees have blossomed and been scattered by the breeze. Cowslips have been succeeded by violets. Arnold says—

"Where thick the cowslips grew and far
descried,
High tower'd the spikes of purple or-
chises."

And primroses and anemones have paled before the hyacinths, which in turn are seeding and giving place to foxgloves. The colour of a mass of hyacinths in a wood has often been commented upon. The tint appears to vary very much as the sea under sunlight, and one minor poet has likened the hyacinths in Nuneham Woods to a "Breath of sea blown inland." Tennyson speaks of Guinevere riding with Lancelot over "Sheets of hyacinth that seem'd the heavens up-breaking through the earth." The gorse has flowered and is now succeeded by its warm seed-pods, and the broom has filled up the gap in colour. The hawthorns have just put on their leaves, the "mantle green" which Nature spreads, as Burns so happily puts it, and are now white with feathery sprays of blossom. The bracken must have grown daily by inches, seeing that now it is from eighteen to twenty-four inches high.

In this Thames village we have many apple orchards, and there is no more beautiful month to make its first acquaintance than May, when the air is perfumed by a scent between rose and almond of the apple blossoms. Unquestionably the apple is the most beautiful of all flowering trees, the pink of the buds, and the white of the petals—more silvery than the pear, which is a creamy white—and the grey-green of the leaves produce a harmony which makes an apple orchard one of the most striking sights in a village—making Arcadian what at other times may be almost

squalid. The medlar and quince are much less seldom met with. The foliage of both these trees is more laurel-like, while the blooms are much larger than apple blossoms, though in the quince and medlar they grow solitary instead of in clusters as in the apple and pear.

It must be borne in mind that locality considerably influences the flora of a district, and that the plants which I saw in the woods in May at Burnham would not all of them be found, say, on the hills in Surrey. The hyacinth, for instance, and woodruff, are flowers not to be found on heaths or hills, while the whortleberry or bilberry, which belongs to the ericas or heaths is only found growing in sandy soils, such as the Surrey hills, where the children gather the berries in August to make into jam. Then again such flowers as the buckbean, with its petals covered with a sort of downy fringe, the water violet, somewhat like the ladysmocks, ragged robin, with its pink, ragged petals, myosotis or forget-me-not, and water buttercups, are all aquatic or bog plants, and are only to be found in such situations.

The cuckoo pint or wild arum, called by children lords and ladies, is pretty commonly met with in hedgerows and shady spots, and in the woods; the wood-sorrel, with its frail, mauvish-white flowers may be met with growing in clumps at the foot of a tree. It is said by some to be the plant St. Patrick took to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity.

The spotted orchis, so named from its leaves being marked with purple spots, is plentiful in moist situations, while the bee and fly orchises are found, on the other hand, only on chalk hills. There are flowers again only found in a few restricted localities. The fritillary or snakeshead, with its spotted purple flowers is one of these local plants. Around Oxford it is plentiful in low-lying meadows. It is found



almost white as well as purple, and there is a garden variety, which is very effective in the borders.

"I know what white, what purple fritillaries,
The grassy harvest of the river fields,
Above by Eynsham, down by Sandford,
yields,
And what sedg'd brooks are Thames' tributaries."

Some birds too are only found in certain situations, and those who have stayed on the Surrey hills in spring are familiar with the melancholy cry of the night-jar or goat-sucker, which lays its eggs on the bare ground on heaths and commons.

Most of the summer migrants arrive in April; but the house martin is seldom seen before May, while the swift is not common until the middle of the month, and leaves us again the third week in August.

The flycatcher is another late visitor, arriving

with May. A pair built in some ivy just over one of the windows, and brought off four young ones; and we could watch the old birds flying to and fro the whole day long, bringing insects in their beaks to feed their eternally hungry children. The corn-crake, with its monotonous, guttural, rasping cry, is heard in the meadows both day and night, but it is a bird which is very rarely seen, keeping in the thick tall grass.

Poets have ever delighted to honour May, and when every village had its maypole country folk ushered in May with rejoicings and merrymaking. These old customs die hard, and in this Thames village the children gather wild flowers and make them into garlands, and decorate their hats, and then go from house to house to show themselves and their floral trophies and sing. I was agreeably surprised the first year I lived here to have May-day announced by a gathering of children before the door carrying a large gar-

land upon a stick held by two of the company. Nor was this all; for in a sing-song, such as is familiar in children's games, they chanted the following rude stave:—

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,
I wish you a happy day;
We've come to show our garland,
Because it's the first o' May.
First of May is garland-day,
Second of May is my birthday,
Third of May is my wedding-day.
A bunch of flowers I've brought you,
And before your door I stand;
'Twas God who made all things,
And made the world so grand."

I cannot pretend to explain the meaning of some of these lines. I give them as I wrote them down from the lips of one of the little girls, whom I got to say the song over slowly—a trying ordeal, she appeared to think.

QUEEN MAB'S MISTAKES.

By RUTH LAMB.

CHAPTER IV.



ABEL kept her resolution for several days, then broke it by writing a short but reproachful

note to her aunt. "Surely," she wrote, "you might let me know how you are going on, and whom you meet. Everybody that we used to see might have vanished from the earth, since you never name them. I have sent you sheets and sheets at a time, from a place where there seems nothing to tell. I wonder if you ever count the days that must pass before we meet again, as I am always doing?"

Mrs. Allington soon answered this, but instead of pleading guilty complained of Mabel's last note.

"I am surprised you should count turns with me," she wrote. "Young people ought not to do so with their elders. You know I detest letter-writing, and there is not a scrap of news. Just the same old round of faces you know by heart, and the people whose doings you can picture for yourself. I have made a few acquaintances of the here-to-day-gone-to-morrow sort, and I don't care for any of them. You have more news at Brayle, and your letters amuse me. If your time hangs heavily, spend it in enlivening the quiet hours of your loving auntie,

"MAUD ALLINGTON."

"I suppose I ought not to count letters with aunt seeing how good she was to me, and that I want to go back to her some day. But she never complains that time passes slowly without me. I am sure people grow more selfish and exacting as they grow older. If you are not close to their elbows you are sure to be forgotten."

However, perhaps from some selfish feeling on her own side, Mabel sent her aunt a sufficiently long letter, first telling about her own doings, then of her neighbours, especially Mr. Hawtreys.

"By the way, you asked if the curate is related to the Hawtreys of Elmsthorpe. He is a son of Sir John, but not the eldest, for he spoke the other day of a brother ten years his

senior. He is quite settled here now, and is to be a fixture. Everybody sings his praises but myself, and I am not likely to join in the chorus.

"He is a gentleman and very unlike the slum-workers we knew. He does not talk of the miracles of reformation wrought by his agency. He works well, and is manly in his ways. He plays tennis wonderfully well, but I have hitherto neither been his partner nor opponent. It has cost me something to refuse; but I made up my mind to have nothing to do with him before he came, and I have kept my resolution, with difficulty I own, but I really do dislike him more than I care for tennis. So I gnash my teeth at being out of the game, yet will not join it with the best player in the neighbourhood, because that player is Mr. Hawtreys. I think he soon found out that I meant to snub him if possible, so whilst perfectly courteous to me at all times he holds himself aloof.

"I am a little sorry now and then, as Mr. Hawtreys manages to interest everybody else, so when my aunt, uncle, Elsie and whatever guests are present get infected by his enthusiasm and hang upon his words, of course I feel left out in the cold.

"I shall fare no better now the tennis season is over or thereabouts, and long evenings have to be faced. If we only have a keen winter I shall enjoy the skating, for I flatter myself I can hold my own on the ice.

"Elsie gives a glowing description of skating parties on the Brayle, for the river is just lovely for such gatherings and, she says, is always frozen in a moderate frost.

"You remember my writing to you about our village pariah, Bess Cradock. She is an awful-looking old woman. Her grey hair hangs like a mat about her wrinkled face, dark as a gipsy's. Her eyebrows are white, but her eyes are black and fairly flash when she speaks to you. She lives in a wretched hovel just beyond the boundaries of my uncle's property. Her abode is on a bit of waste ground which she seems to claim as her own, and such is her evil reputation that no one dares to dispute her right to it.

"I have been trying to cultivate Bess Cradock's acquaintance. I have been more civil to her than to her richer neighbours, and have taken solitary walks in the direction of her dwelling on the chance of meeting her. Bess does not, however, care for my acquaintance.

When I bid her 'good-morning,' she scowls and mutters something in return. I cannot catch the words, but they are the reverse of complimentary, I am sure.

"A few days since I knocked at her door. She opened it, but promptly shut it in my face. I went a second time, carrying with me some little dainties which aunt Raynor allowed the cook to prepare for me, though she told me beforehand they would not be accepted.

"'If you succeed in reaching poor Bess's heart, dear Mab,' said my aunt, 'you will do what all others have failed in doing. Take what you like, do what you will. I am delighted to think that you are becoming interested in our very poorest neighbour.'

"I reached Bess Cradock's hut just as a perfect flood of rain was falling. I went when there was a prospect of it on purpose.

"Hard as she was, Bess hesitated about shutting the door in my face, and especially as I made no attempt to enter. 'I have brought some little things I hope you may like,' I said, 'please don't let me have to carry them back.'

"She flung open the door and sternly bade me come in, then in a shrill voice said, 'They shall not say Bess Cradock shut her door on gentle or simple, man or beast, in such a down-pour. Take that.' She pushed a rickety chair towards me, and I sat down quite obediently, whilst she crouched before the fire in silence.

"The storm continued, and, shall I own it, despite the queer surroundings, and Bess's mutterings, I began to feel that my walk had made me very hungry. I thought longingly of the good things in the basket, but I turned humbly to Bess, and asked if she would give me a mouthful of bread and a draught of water.

"A strange look crossed her face and she rose as if to comply with my request, but crouched down again and pointing to my basket said, 'You have food there. Why do ye not eat?'

"'Because I brought this for you. If you will share it even, we will eat together; if not, please give me the morsel of bread and cup of cold water I asked you for. I should like these better by far.'

"'Then you are not afraid to break bread with old Bess. You're a queer one,' and she gave an uncanny laugh as she went to her cupboard, and fetched bread which she placed



NOTES BY AN ARTIST NATURALIST.

THIS is the month to see the most striking and certainly some of the most beautiful of our wild flowers in perfection. By the side of any stream the loosestrife, willow herb, blue meadow, cranes-bill and meadowsweet are conspicuous objects. Indeed, the meadowsweet might be called the flower of July, as it grows in profusion in all the ditches, attracting notice by its scent as well as form, and is quite a note in the landscape. It succeeds the wild roses of June, and is a most decorative plant, and one I have frequently introduced into my work. The meadowsweet belongs to the rose tribe, little as it may appear to the casual observer like a rose, but in natural botany plants are classed according to the arrangement of their stamens and seed-vessels, and this brings together as cousins many apparently dissimilar flowers. It also separates others, as in the case of the limnanth, which has leaves exactly like the white water-lily, and bears delicate yellow flowers of five petals. It can be found growing side by side with the "Nymph of the rivers," and one would say it must be closely related: yet this is not so, as it belongs to the gentians. The white water-lily flowers during June and July, and on the Thames is frequently met with in the backwaters and wherever the stream is not too rapid. It is first-cousin to the giant lily of the Amazon, the *Victoria Regina*, which by the way can be seen growing in Kew Gardens—though hardly in perfection, I imagine.

I am inclined to think, though this may be because I have for some time lived in a village on the Thames, that the flowers which grow in the vicinity of water are the most beautiful of any that we possess. Of this I am sure that the edge of a stream is a very happy situation for flowers and plants, either when reflected in the water or seen against it, as one does when walking along the bank. Old Isaac Walton says—

"Let me live harmlessly, and near the brink
Of Thames or Avon have my dwelling-place,
Where I can sit and watch my float down sink
At eager bite of perch, or bleak or dace."

but though I have carried out his wish practically I haven't the old angler's enthusiasm for watching a float, and very rarely trouble to throw a line into the Thames with a "fool at one end and a worm at the other," as Johnson might have said in one of his frank outbursts. Fishing is a capital

excuse for sitting out in warm weather to slowly drink in the beauty of the day and prospect, for I am not keen enough an angler to enjoy the sample of weather reserved for him. Much comes to one that one does not go for, just as it does when one is sketching out of doors. Fish come to the surface, and you may see a trout or a barbel jump right out of the water, and the bleak and small roach and dace leap out as a jack or perch shoots into a shoal to make a meal. It may be your fortune, too, to see a kingfisher fly off with a fish in its mouth or a heron alight and wade in on the shallows, and with his head bent and beak pointing downwards keep motionless until its head darts forward, and having secured his prey flies off with stately flight to eat it at his ease. Rats come out of their holes and swim across the river, while dragon-flies dart about and swallows skim the surface after insects. These sights are not often seen if you go out in a business-like way to see them, but while sitting quietly at your work, be it sketching or fishing, many a little drama is enacted before you which the restless individual never sees.

In the marshy country by the Norfolk broads I have found the grass of Parnassus with its delicate white flowers, each on a tall slender stalk. It belongs to the sundews, our representative of the insect-eating plants, which are also found growing in boggy places. The spearwort is another flower I have gathered in Norfolk. This belongs to the buttercups, but though the flower resembles our familiar yellow friends of the fields, the leaves are long and

tapering somewhat like an iris. The frog-bit, with its three-petalled white flowers, somewhat like the flowers of the arrow-head and the water-soldier, which rises to the surface to flower, and then sinks, with its flowers set in the centre of its leaves, edged like a saw, I have seen in Norfolk, though neither of them grow in the upper reaches of the Thames. On the other hand we have two flowers, the fritillary and snowflake; plants very locally distributed, and both found in abundance about here. In tidal rivers and in salt marshes, the aster, with its numerous blue star-like flowers, and the horned poppy may be found, the latter a striking plant with its glaucous green leaves.

The teasel, sometimes growing five to six feet high, and dock, are conspicuous plants in July when both are in flower. The latter is a strikingly decorative plant with its long broad leaves of many colours, green, purple, yellow and red, and its purple brown seeds, and I have frequently used it in screens.

Along the river some very large clumps of it are to be seen. The fig-wort with its tall, square, purplish stem, three to four feet high, round seed vessels, and inconspicuous reddish purple flowers, and the toad-flax, looking like a yellow snap-dragon, are also common plants in July. One must not forget to mention too, the water plantain, not unlike asparagus in growth, and the beautiful flowering rush with its umbels of pink flowers. It is a conspicuous plant growing three to four feet high among the rushes and flags. The common reed with its long spear-like leaves and feathery-purplish flowers, covers large tracts of marshy land in Norfolk, and is now the only place where the bearded tit is to be found. It is a beautiful bird having conspicuous tufts of black feathers growing by the side of each eye, which has the appearance of a beard. Among these reed fronds the bittern is occasionally found, and in the winter wild ducks, snipe and many of the rarer birds are to be seen. This reed (*Arundo phragmites*) is to be found in some of the backwaters of the Thames, but like the bulrush, it prefers a muddy slow stream, or stagnant water. The wild iris or yellow flag is plentiful all along the river, but has by July ceased flowering, and has developed its triangular seed-pods, which later in the year split open and disclose the reddish round seeds. The plant which has similar flag-like leaves, only that they are crimped at the edges, is the sweet flag. The leaves, if crushed in the hand, are highly aromatic, not unlike walnut leaves, and were probably the reeds used by the Saxons to strew on their floors, and in Norfolk it is said to be strewn on the floors of churches on festival days. The flower of this scented flag is quite

inconspicuous, being merely a greenish spathe growing low down so that it is rarely seen, and many people therefore think that it does not flower.

The lime trees are in bloom this month, and in the evening the scent given off from a row of trees in the village is powerfully fragrant. What is known as honey-dew drops off the limes like globules of gum. This was particularly noticeable in the hot summer of 1893.

By the third week in July the harvest has begun in all the southern counties, and in Sussex, where the land is forward, wheat is frequently carried before July is out. Rye is the first to be cut, but there is not nearly as much of this corn grown in this country as on the continent, and rye bread is a thing unknown here. Winter oats come next, then wheat.

Barley and beans follow, and it is no uncommon thing for these latter to be out when the snow comes. The old plan of letting out the harvest to the men for a stipulated sum is seldom



THE EDGE OF AN OAT FIELD.

followed now, as so much of the corn is cut and tied by the self-binders. When corn was "fagged" with a sickle, the whole of a village were in the fields, the women and children making bands and tying, the men reaping, and shocking and carting. The villagers worked from early till late, for the sooner harvest was finished the better was it for all concerned. Harvest men used to go about the country (many coming over from Ireland), and beginning in the south work their way northward where the harvest was later, but around me few casual hands are taken on, for machines do the work so rapidly

year, especially in midday, when everything is seen under the glare of a hot sun. The effect of this white heat is not picturesque when adequately rendered, for trees look black and everything appears cut up and scattered. There



is a want of unity and effect, for everything has an equal value, being seen too much in detail. In the evening, on the other hand, objects mass themselves and nature simplifies herself, only the salient features standing out. This is the time to paint, and those who have been disheartened by failure to do anything in the glare of the sun should pluck up and try an evening effect. Places become absolutely beautiful in the evening which are quite commonplace in strong light. There is a village near me, Ewelme, where there is a well-preserved Tudor church and some quaint red-

brick almshouses crowning a hill. I saw it for the first time one evening when the buildings were seen *en silhouette* against the sky, and I was enthusiastic about the place;



DOCK AND LOOSESTRIPE.



that the ordinary farm hands are sufficient to get through the harvest. Harvest at one time was looked forward to as the great event of the year and as a time of plenty, and when the last load was taken home, boots and clothes were bought for the year, rent was paid, and occasionally a few days holiday taken to see friends and relatives who had left their native villages to find work amid new scenes. I remember as a child staying in a Cambridge-shire village during harvest-time, and the recollection of the light-hearted activity and good-humoured toil of the whole place is an *abiding one*. Everyone looked forward to the time, and though the work was hard, yet all appeared contented and each did his share with a will. "Man should rejoice in his labour for that is his portion." The few who did not work in the fields were at home cooking for those at harvest, or taking the meals into the fields, and even the older women and young children took their turn at gleaning. For once in their lives each year the villagers had more than supplied their immediate wants: they were as rich as the richest then.

July is not the most paintable month in the



LIME
IN
FLOWER



and yet friends who have gone at my suggestion and have only seen it in the glare of a midday sun (especially after a hot dusty walk of two miles from the nearest point on the river) come back with a most injured air, to say how disappointed they were with the place—that they could see nothing in it, a reflection upon one's judgment. If they had seen Ewelme as I first did my friends would have been spared their disappointment, and my reputation as a guide to the picturesque might have received a warranty. I have seen some most beautiful effects while walking to bathe in the evening when the crimson and orange of the sunset is whisked into the faint blue, and the meadows appear a warm, soft, russet-green, and the dew rises heavily obscuring all objects low down, while the cattle nearer the eye stand out sculpturesque against the white mist. One feels that one can do something with such a subject, "when the long day wanes and the slow moon climbs," and you may depend upon it that one is not likely to be successful when one does not feel drawn to the subject.

Most of the hay is in by the second week in July, though in some wet seasons hay-making trends upon the heels of harvest. When the hay is all cut and carted the fields have a shorn, bare appearance that is not more picturesque

than is a prisoner when he comes out of jail. One notices the change after one has been enjoying the luscious abundance of the meadows, with their oxeye daisies, sorrel, cranesbills and meadowsweet, but by this time the corn is becoming the feature in the landscape, and the joys that nature gives are quite equal to those she takes away. On the other hand this year (1893), owing to the long spell of dry weather and hot sun, most of the hay is stacked by the middle of June. This season has been so exceptional that it is worth while making a note about it. Since the beginning of March we have only had one afternoon's rain, and now we are in the third week in June, and during this time we have had almost continuous sunshine. Apples are now quite large, currants are ripe and will be over in a week or so, wild roses are getting over, and lilies, campanulas and carnations are in full bloom in the gardens, while meadowsweet and loosestrife are in flower by the river. Wheat is in ear, and so is barley and oats, and in short everything is quite four weeks earlier than usual. The fields are as burnt up as they are in a hot summer in August, and the drought is making itself severely felt in this part of the country, which is naturally hot. On the hills people are giving five shillings a barrel for water, or two-pence per pailful, a state of things difficult for us to imagine who have water in abundance. Ordinary garden flowers like pansies, campanulas, sweet peas and dahlias can only be kept



alive by daily watering, while ten week stocks, asters and zinnias are stunted in growth, and will do very little good this season, as they do not make root growth. Last year I sowed a quantity of annuals such as larkspur, escholtzia, linum and poppies in a part of the garden and many of these seeded themselves, and this year among the potatoes I have many annuals in bloom. Poppies and escholtzias appear to stand the drought better than anything, doubtless owing to the long tap root they send into the ground, which enables them to get moisture which the shallower rooted plants do not obtain. I have rather despised annuals hitherto, but I can see that at least they are a second string to one's bow in gardening, for many herbaceous plants like hollyhocks cannot stand the drought. I shall certainly scatter some mixed seed in my borders this autumn, for I find that autumn sown annuals are stronger and more forward than spring sown ones. I just walked up to a garden I have

away from the house to see what plants had stood the heat and drought, and was astonished to see how freely the Shirley poppies were blooming. Some which sowed themselves against a wall on the gravel have done as well as any, showing how capable they are of thriving in an arid situation. The escholtzias, or Californian poppies, growing among the potatoes are blooming profusely. *Bartonia aurea*, with its handsome golden flowers and thistle-like foliage, and sweet sultan, are also in bloom, as well as some self-sown larkspur and cornflowers. The sunflowers too look promising.

Among the conspicuous flowers in a garden in bloom during July are gaillardias, delphiniums, campanulas, Iceland poppies, *mirabilis cardinalis*, *potentillas*, *salvias*, *bergamot*, *veronicas*, *erigeron*, evening primrose, sunflowers, Indian pinks, everlasting flowers, *linaria* and lilies.

A pair of fly-catchers built their nest two

years in some ivy just above one of the windows, hatched four young ones, and in three weeks and a few days they were ready for flight. We often watched the old birds as we sat indoors flying constantly to and fro with insects to feed their eternally hungry children. The old birds would alight on the top of the open casement before perching on their nest. To show that birds do not always hide their nest these fly-catchers placed theirs in the most conspicuous place, where there were no leaves to hide it, as it merely rested on the thick stems of the ivy. Another pair have built almost in the same spot this year. A faggot heap is a favourite place for birds to build in, and in my yew tree and hollies I generally have two or three thrushes build, though this year a pair half finished a nest and then forsook it. Towards the end of July swallows and martins begin to congregate, and the swift flies southwards, being rarely seen after July.

"LIKE A WORM I' THE BUD."

By ANNE BEALE, Author of "The Queen o' the May," etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

"GOD TEMPERS THE WIND TO THE SHORN LAMB."



WHILE Mara and Edwin were engaged in the foregoing conversation in one sitting-room, Mr. Vaughan and Mariana were together in the other. Each was anxious enough; the one that the cherished wish of his heart might be fulfilled, the other that two people whom she loved might be made happy, even though her own happiness were destroyed.

"Mariana, let us trust they may be guided aright," said Mr. Vaughan.

"Yes, father," said Mariana, struggling with her poor heart to pray for what she could not desire.

The ledger that lay open before Mr. Vaughan was untouched—the work drooped in Mariana's fingers. That hour seemed the longest in their lives, but it was over at last. The slamming of the front door made Mr. Vaughan get up and Mariana start. Mr. Vaughan was at the window in time to see Edwin hurry through the snowstorm, and he knew what must have happened. He looked stern and pale when he turned round and faced his timid but excited daughter.

"If she has refused him again," he said, "she may leave this house for ever."

"Oh, no! father," cried Mariana. "We cannot control our love."

"What has love to do with duty?" asked Mr. Vaughan severely.

Mariana scarcely knew. She felt that love and duty ought to be one, but that they were too frequently at issue.

Her father left the room, and she heard him go to Mara. She gave way to her feelings and began to cry. But her heart was habitually too much under the control of her will for this mood to last, and she soon thought of the risk Edwin ran of increased illness from exposure to the snowstorm. She went

into the passage, took a large cloak, and carrying it into the kitchen told a man to hasten after Mr. Morris with it, and beg him to come home quickly.

Meanwhile Mr. Vaughan's cold eyes were turned upon Mara. The sight of his compressed lips and stern brow had from childhood raised the spirit of evil in his daughter. No sooner did she see them now than the softened temper in which Edwin had left her gave place to the obstinacy natural to her when in strife.

"So, Mara!" began Mr. Vaughan, "you have sent Edwin forth to meet his death in this inclement weather?"

"I did not send him," was the reply.

"What has been your conversation for the last hour, and why did he leave you so abruptly?"

"He chose to renew a subject which you know is hateful to me, and I told him that I would not marry him."

Mara said these words as decidedly as her father could have said them, and met his eyes unflinchingly.

"You have been, indeed, a bitter daughter to me, Mara Vaughan, and the curse of disobedience must rest upon you. Is it because you still think of the other that you cannot marry the God-serving man?"

"My thoughts are my own, father. But aspersions on the supposed dead are unbecoming."

"You are resolved that you will never marry Edwin?"

"Never. I do not love him. I never loved him."

"Then, perhaps, you will return to your chosen home, the workhouse?"

"I certainly will. But, remember, that I did not come here to meet Edwin. This has been your doing, not mine."

Mr. Vaughan knew that she spoke the truth.

"It was for your present and eternal good, Mara. But you have ever resisted all my efforts for either."

"Father, I am no longer a child. I know that my conduct has always displeased you, but had you been less hard

to me it might have been different. You forget that there are fathers of prodigals as well as Abrahams in the Bible."

"Mara! this from you!" exclaimed Mr. Vaughan.

"You have brought it on yourself, father, by preventing my marriage with one I loved as my own soul, and urging me to marry one I disliked. You have misunderstood one child and made her rebellious—beware how you drive your other into straits in which she would perish rather than seek to escape by disobedience."

"Unnatural, unfilial daughter, you may go," said Mr. Vaughan, pointing to the door and hurrying out himself first, afraid to trust himself to say more.

Mariana came in at once, and Mara threw herself into her arms.

"I was born to be a torment to everyone," she said. "Dear Nanno, do not desert me! Father remands me to the union, and I go at once. Where is Ivor? We shall not mind the snow."

"Mr. Roderick has sent a cart and Shon the post for Ivor," said Mariana. "But do not go away, dear Mara."

"I must. I will go with Ivor. Come and help me."

She hurried upstairs, packed up her box, and in five minutes was ready to start. She found Ivor crying, and Billo trying to comfort him.

"Come, you little ghose," said Billo. "They 'ont be beating you. Miss Marget will be seeing to that. Come you."

An old mail-cart was at the back-door, and the servants were gathered round it, talking to Shon the post, the one-eyed driver.

"'Ont he be catching it?" said Shon. "Mak' you haste, Mynydd."

"You cannot go in that cart," said Nanno; "you will be upset."

But Mara hastily kissed her sister, said good-bye to the servants, and mounted beside Shon. Ivor was lifted up between them, and the box put in behind.

"Is it safe?" asked Nanno anxiously.

"Safe enough, miss," said Shon.

NOTES BY AN ARTIST-NATURALIST.

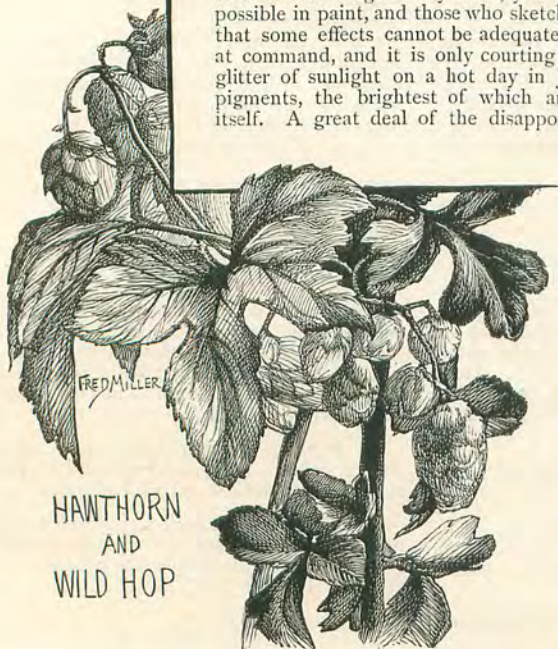
SEPTEMBER



THE mornings in September are often misty, and the sun does not show itself much before eleven o'clock—not until it has sufficient strength to dispel the vaporious clouds and fog which wreath the river at this time of the year. But these misty autumnal mornings, warm without being hot, are delightful. A pull up the backwater then, when the distant elms tell only as a pale grey tint, vague and phantasmic, and only the herbage close to the boat is pencilled out with sunlight, and has distinctness and actuality, is among the treasured memories when winter is upon us. To the artist, September is a much more paintable month than July, for in mid-summer the glare of the sun makes the full green of the trees somewhat black, and the intense light cannot be rendered in paint. The softer light and more subdued colouring of fields and trees as the foliage slowly fades, yield effects which are much more possible in paint, and those who sketch from nature might remember that some effects cannot be adequately rendered with the materials at command, and it is only courting failure to attempt such. The glitter of sunlight on a hot day in July cannot be realised with pigments, the brightest of which are dull compared to sunlight itself. A great deal of the disappointment the young landscape

painter experiences is due to an unwise selection of material and an unpropitious moment when there is either no effect—i.e. no concentration of effect which can be grasped mentally before an attempt is made to commit the same to paper or canvas, or one that, as I have just said, is impossible. From September onwards are the best months in which to sketch, for as the trees change colour, they declare their individuality, an oak colouring quite differently to an elm, and a willow different again from either of them. Sketching from nature, disappointing and tantalising as it is, seeing that one's fingers come so far short of what one realises in the mind's eye,

is among the most delightful pursuits one can engage in. The sitting out of doors in anything like decent weather with such exacting and fascinating work to chain one to the spot has compensating advantages, in spite of manifest drawbacks. Like the angler, who said, "he hadn't had a bite but he had had the day," so, though the sketch you bring back may only have helped the artist's colourman, yet you have sharpened your perception, gathered experience, and had an excuse for sitting out of doors. I spent the whole of one September working at some figwort, thistles and dock which grew by the backwater in a Thames village, and though the actual result, so far as work went, was inadequate to the time I spent upon the canvas, it was very enjoyable in every other respect, for like so many autumns, the unsettled weather of August cleared up, and September and October were beautiful. Walking home in the twilight with the white mist rising off the river and lying in long bands over the fields, and that mysteriousness over everything as the light fades out of the sky, making you feel that the whole world is peopled by yourself, rounded off the days spent in trying to catch some of those fleeting beauties which inspire one to begin and disappoint one in the doing, I remarked then how very distinctly mushrooms can be seen in the evening. The white glistening surface can be detected fifty or sixty yards away. In one of the meadows I had to cross there were several "fairy rings," as they are called. The grass in these rings is much richer in colour than in the surrounding meadow, and the fungi grow in these rings, some of which are quite a circle as though struck with compasses. Other fungi, such as puff-balls grow in circles besides the agaric, but there is no mistaking a mushroom if its points have once been mastered. Some fungi are very gorgeous in colour—orange, scarlet and yellow, and in some of the recesses in Epping Forest many of the rarer kinds are to be found, and the society which



HAWTHORN
AND
WILD HOP



HAZEL

makes this lower plant-life a special study make Epping Forest a happy hunting-ground. In the marshland of Norfolk, mushrooms grow to an immense size, and I have heard of them being found weighing 5 or 6 lbs. each, while puff-balls as large as a bushel measure are not infrequently met with.

I frequently went into Norfolk in September, when I lived in London, to visit a friend, who was both an excellent naturalist and sportsman. September is a great holiday-time for country men, as partridges are killed from the first. I daresay, had I been brought up in the country, I should have been keen after sport, but not having handled a gun at the time when one ought to have got one's hand in I used to content myself with going with the party to enjoy the day's outing and the exercise, for one covers a good many miles in this way, and it is rough tiring work going over "the ploughs" (the land that has been ploughed and is lying fallow), and jumping hedges and ditches. Nature, as we know, adapts her creatures to their environment and makes the colour of birds and beasts to nearly match their habitat. But the force of this abstract law is only realised when you are told that a covey of birds is lying on a fallow within a few yards of one. My eyes not having been trained to see such objects as partridges and hares were as good as non-existent on such occasions, and I remember causing an old keeper much amusement by not being able to see a hare that had squatted in a furrow within twenty yards of me. In fact, I at first doubted whether my sporting friend could see "birds" two fields off, for look as I would there was nothing perceptible to my deficiently trained eyes.

How ignorant townsmen must appear to a countryman! But then they would miss a good deal that we have been trained to see. You should have seen the astonishment on the faces of some old women who were weeding in a field, when to settle a dispute I had with some fellows I went up and asked them what was growing in the field. But the Londoner was equally amused and astonished at the old

countryman saying, as he stood in Oxford Street, "Let's bide in this doorway awhile until the crowd goes by, for the sight o' so many folks bothers ye." The old chap did not realise that the crowd, as he termed the people, would go on until quite late at night.

In most seasons in the southern counties harvest is over by the first week in September, but this is not always the case, and the further north you go the later is the ingathering; so that in the more exposed parts of Derbyshire corn is sometimes out until November. In 1892 we had a good deal of rain during the latter part of July and through August, and though a good deal of corn was cut and shocked the rain prevented it being carted. The result was that the wheat sprouted badly, for the showers were followed by hot sunshine, and this caused the kernels to send out a tap root several inches long. This sprouting spoils the corn, and I am told that bread made from flour of sprouted wheat will not rise, but is "clung" when baked. A wet harvest is a very trying time for everyone. Even the on-looker like myself cannot help feeling for those whose livelihood depends upon the produce of the land, and to see a bountiful harvest spoiling in the fields is one of the most depressing experiences I know.

Farmers are accused of being chronic grumblers. I notice that all people having much to do with the soil are a serious, almost mournful race, as though they were always looking out upon nature when she is in an unkind mood, and had to put up with weather that was the reverse of what they desired. The wit and gaiety and humorous light-heartedness one

finds in London among the same grade of workers is quite absent in the country.

At our village concerts I have heard villagers sing comic songs in the style of funeral dirges. Those unacquainted with the song would never guess that it was comic. Mournful songs relating to the deaths of soldiers and sailors, or flowers from mother's grave are those generally given and most appreciated by the audience.

If there is a month in the year when there is a pause it is September, for with the gathering in of harvest the anxieties attending the year are over. Nothing now can make a bad crop good or spoil a good one that is gathered. There is a feverish unrest in the early year—anticipation and expectation—the weather playing an important part in the

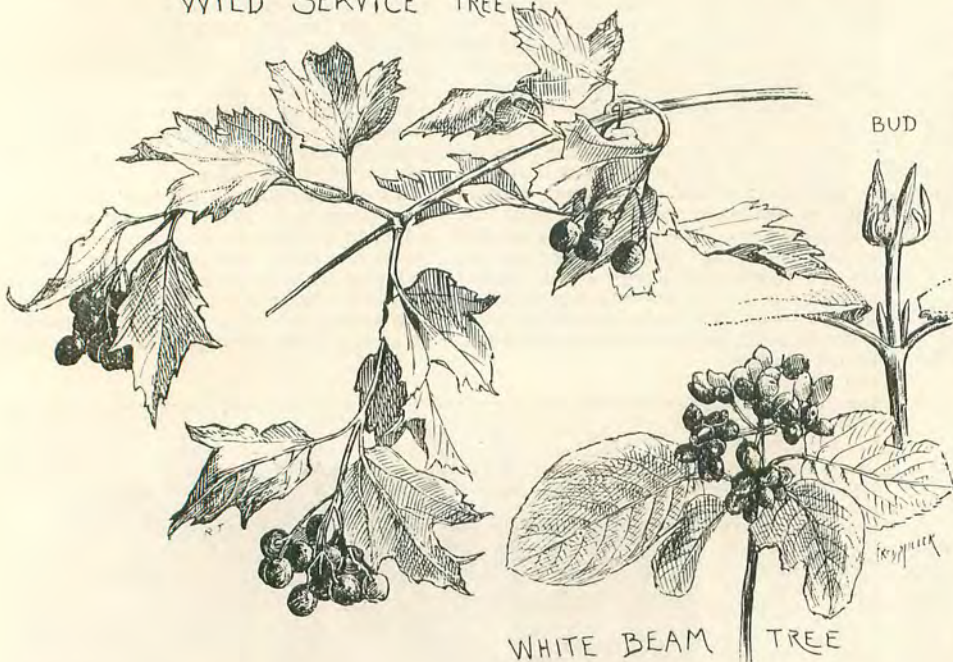


FRED MILEY

drama. The gardener has an unpropitious spring to try him, and late frosts to nip his tender seedlings and make his life both anxious and disappointing. The farmer looks about his crops, and gets weather, apparently, never quite to his liking. Haymaking is a trying time, and at harvest he is always on the stretch. But by September he knows where



WILD SERVICE TREE



WHITE BEAM TREE

he is, and for good or ill can rest awhile and contemplate his past labours. The weather, now that so much less depends upon it, appears to be more calm and settled, in tune with his feelings. The sun may be warm, but it does not burn as it does in midsummer; and the colouring of all nature is becoming subdued and suggestive of rest rather than excitement.

It is too early yet to begin sowing wheat, and the roots are not yet ready for pitting. A good many pleasure fairs take place towards Michaelmas. There was a time when servants of all kinds were hired for the year at Michaelmas, and these fairs were known as "statute" or "hiring fairs." Men seeking fresh places—and women too, for that matter—went to the fairs, and the farmers attending made their selection and settled the labour question for the following year. The permanent hands on a farm, such as carters or horsemen, foggers and shepherds, are still

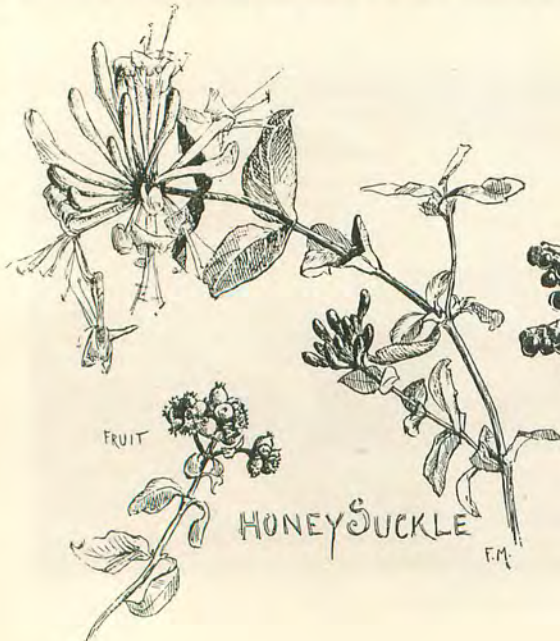
engaged by the year, and I know farmers and labourers attend Wallingford and Abingdon fairs to hire and be hired. But fairs are no longer what they were, and it will not be many years before most of them will drop out. Much of the romance of life goes with the growing matter-of-factness and unsentimental character of people. Harvest-homes were universal at one time. The "orkey load," as it was called, supposed to be the last load of corn taken to the farm, was the occasion of much mirth and hilarity, and the farmer gave his men and women a supper to celebrate the completion of harvest. I am sorry to say that this custom has almost dropped out, gone with much else that decorated life and its labours.

Even gleaning is now largely discontinued, and in 1892, owing to the wet, scarcely a handful was "leased." At one time the church-bell used to ring to announce that all

could go into the fields which were ready. Wheat was then worth double what it is now, and bread, instead of being fourpence halfpenny a loaf, was ninepence and tenpence. Pure wheat bread was at one time a great treat to villagers, as they used bread made of tail wheat (the indifferent kernels which come out at the end or tail of the machine) or wheat mixed with barley. I am sorry to say that in this village, except to compete at the annual flower show, there is not a cottager makes her own bread. Yet home-made bread is not only cheaper, but has more heart in it.

Steam-thrashing machines have quite superseded thrashing with a flail, except in the case of a few beans and peas, and in September you hear all around the continuous mournful hum of the "drum," revolving at a very high rate of speed, beating out the kernels. I question whether the younger men on a farm could swing a flail without knocking their heads or legs. Women are employed in thrashing, generally on the machine, untying the bands around the sheaves of wheat or barley, or if the corn has been cut with a self-binder, cutting the string that holds the sheaves together. Women are employed, too, in hoeing, "scutching" (getting couch grass), and bird-

keeping. In the next village a most extraordinary woman lives who does bird-keeping and other work on a farm. She is a most inhuman-looking object, quite a Caliban in fact, and the first time I saw her on Whittenham clumps with a gun over her shoulder, and her weather-beaten witch-like face, her appearance was most startling. Had she not had an apology for a dress on, and a shapeless weather-beaten bonnet or hat, you would not have known that "Kizzy" was of the gentler sex, so entirely absent was anything approaching gentleness in her appearance. Many quite old women still earn their living working on the land, and I photographed two old dames taking their lunch while sitting on a horse-harrow, one of whom was eighty-three and the other seventy-nine. In the winter some of these old women go into the Union; but so strong is their love of liberty, and so great their dislike to the "House," that as soon as



HONEY SUCKLE



ELDER

the winter has turned they come out to earn a few shillings a week weeding, picking stones, or swede cleaning for the sheep. These women must have had out-of-the-way constitutions, for this latter job is a rough hard one, and they are exposed to the inclement weather of the early year.

Towards the end of the month blackberries and hazel nuts are ripe. In Norfolk there must have been tons of this fruit left to decay, for in following the guns when out partridge-shooting I used to come across quantities of blackberries, delicious when quite ripe. We always make some blackberry jam, and most popular it is with our friends owing to its novelty. The jelly is even finer, as the seeds, which are somewhat dry, are taken out. Crab-apples make good jelly, but few people trouble to use them. Sloes again are to be had by the bushel in favourable seasons, yet few people trouble to get them. Old-fashioned people used to make a wine from sloes which resembles port in colour, and it was said to be good for diarrhoea, just as cowslip wine was reckoned good for fevers. Mrs. Primrose in

the *Vicar of Wakefield* was proud to offer her guests some of her home-made gooseberry wine.

By the end of the month swallows are getting ready to go, while the fly-catcher, so common in gardens in the summer, has left us. The house-martin is the last of the swallow tribe to leave us. The cornrake, which keeps up that continuous grating noise day and night in the spring, leaves towards the end of September, and considering the shortness of its wings and its disinclination to fly, make it all the more wonderful that it can migrate. It must ever be a source of wonder how small birds like golden-crested wrens can travel immense distances in journeying from their winter to their summer quarters.

The berries are a great feature towards the end of the month. The wild service-tree, for instance, is most beautiful with its purplish green leaves and bright berries. The wild hop, too, as it climbs over the hedges is a feature wherever it is found.

A garden ought to be majestic in September, as the taller-growing perennials are now in

bloom, such as sunflowers, asters and Michaelmas daisies, hollyhocks, phloxes, gaillardias, and dahlias. Among the annuals, zinnias, asters, sweet peas and phlox are the most noticeable; but many plants that flower earlier in the season can be kept blooming if only the seed-pods are carefully kept picked as soon as they form, for nothing so exhausts a plant as allowing it to seed. By this simple device I have had a row of sweet peas over six feet high in September, and yielding blooms until cut off by the frost. Then, too, nasturtiums, canariensis, convolvulus and other climbing annuals have gone on growing like Jack's magic bean until they lose themselves in the shrubs they have made their mainstay; and this wealthy profusion and negligent abundance which characterises gardens in September makes them to some eyes more beautiful at this time of the year than at any other, for all plants have by this time asserted themselves, and have got out of leading-strings to a liberty which at first we would not allow them to enjoy, because we would train them in the way we thought they ought to go.

"LIKE A WORM I THE BUD."

By ANNE BEALE, Author of "The Queen o' the May," etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

"GOD'S MILL GRINDS SLOW, BUT SURE."

WHEN Dr. Herbert went to the rectory, the morning after his interview with his uncle, he found the rector ill in bed. He attended him daily, and while ministering to his disease, artfully tried to discover whether he knew anything of Mara's marriage; but as the subject only irritated the old gentleman, he was obliged to give it up. When he asked his uncle to let him and the clerk or Tudor search the registers, he met with such an angry refusal that he believed the rector must know something of the marriage.

"I don't suspect anything wrong, but I strongly suspect a secret marriage," he said; "Gerwyn had many friends among the curates—I wonder whether one of them might have performed the ceremony."

"How can I remember twenty years ago, when I don't know what happened yesterday?"

"I will come to-morrow, and we will have a look at the registers, uncle. They will refresh your memory; we won't be hard upon you, and you will be doing a righteous deed."

"Don't go away, nephew—you have made me quite ill."

"You would be better, sir, if you did justice to the living and the dead."

"Nonsense. Surely Margaret Vaughan must know whether she is married or not."

"Perhaps she has faithfully promised not to tell. It would be generous to absolve her. It will be worse for her to bear the shame than you the penalty."

"What penalty? It is not my fault if I have a bad memory and get imposed upon. Poor young things! The founding, too. Well, nephew, I will try to remember; come to-morrow. But you must not be hard upon me—you are so severe, Llewellen."

The morrow came, and therewith Dr.

Herbert. Mr. Traherne had been nerv-
ing himself to the work before him, and
therefore made no further difficulties.
They set out together for the church.
This was situated on the top of a hill,
and the walk to it was always tedious,
and Mr. Traherne was compelled to
stop frequently.

"That beacon in the old tower was a
grand idea of yours, uncle. It has saved
many a ship," said Dr. Herbert.

"So I have done something well! I
don't think I originated the idea."

"Everyone says you did, uncle, and
hundreds of sailors have blessed you
for it."

"Then if I have saved few souls, I
have saved some lives. The only thing
I never forget is the beacon. I look out
for it every night, and if it is not alight
I send off to Matthias. A city set on a
hill must not be hid. I am better now.
We will go on."

They reached the church at last. It
was an old dilapidated building, moss-
eaten without, worm-eaten within. It
commanded a grand prospect of sea and
land, and the beacon placed by Mr.
Traherne in its high tower was seen at
night for miles. The indefatigable
Tudor had set on foot subscriptions not
only for repairing this, the parish church,
but for building a more central one in
the town. He was warmly assisted in
this by Mr. Glyn and others.

When Llewellen got into the vestry
and saw the heap of mouldy registers,
he made an ugly face.

"Now, uncle, you must help me," he
said.

"I know nothing about it. I will fetch
Matthias."

Before Dr. Herbert could remonstrate,
the rector was hurrying towards a small
house near the church, in which dwelt
the clerk. He soon returned with him.

"Matt knows the registers by heart.
He always searches them for me," said
Mr. Traherne.

"But you empowered me to look
through them," said the doctor.

"As you like—as you like. Register
of birth, Matthias. Baptised at the
workhouse. What year, Llewellen?"

Dr. Herbert named the exact date,
which he had ascertained from Mr.
Roderick.

The clerk was a shrewd man, who
had held office nearly as long as the
rector, and was in all his secrets.
Llewellen would gladly have done with-
out him.

"My uncle wishes to see the registers
for those two years," he said, glancing
at Mr. Traherne, whose back was visible
through the vestry.

"Old gentleman will never find them,
sir. He's off already."

"Old gentleman! You are older than
he, Matthias."

"Age don't go by years, but by health
and understanding. Master's old—I'm
young. Birth, death, or marriage—lay
my hand on any one of 'em. Know 'em
all by heart."

"Have you attended all the funerals
and marriages, Matthias?"

"Never missed for four and thirty
year. If I was struck blind to-morrow,
could say all the responses by heart."

"Suppose a secret marriage now,
would you have been present?"

"Can't say, sir."

"There must have been marriages
without consent in this church, Matthias."

"To be sure, doctor. I've seen more
than you 'ould think. Married unbe-
known myself. Had a good wife and
fifteen children, as you know, sir."

"Well, Matthias, as you would help
me to find out what I want, you would
be doing a good deed."

"What do you want, sir?"

"I want to prove the marriage of a
member of my family, who was, I
strongly suspect, married here. Did
you ever assist at the marriage of my
brother Gerwyn?"