

turn out well. She is the sort of woman who is clearly intended by nature to become a wife and mother; and she has a character that will submit contentedly to slavery."

"I am not a slave-driver," said Ambrose, with a certain impatience. "If she honours me by being my wife, I shall treat her as if she were my queen."

"That's very pretty, Mr. Hathaway." Cis's grey eyes twinkled merrily. "After all, I'm extremely fond of Erna, and I haven't a bad opinion of you."

She put one hand on the crown of her sailor hat and pressed it firmly upon her head, nodded to Ambrose, and marched off down the green alley. Madge hesitated for a moment, and then ran after her, leaving the young man among the sunflowers alone.

"Miss Willowby," began the child, panting, "let's be good friends. Everything is going to turn out in the most splendid way. You don't really think me mean, do you?"

"No," Cis answered; "but I do think you are rather a subtle little girl. Didn't you know that your uncle was somewhere about when you began to talk to the sunflower?"

"I—I just fancied he mightn't be far off; but I didn't know you were near," said Madge, with a blush.

"I was coming to the house to ask how you were getting on with Mrs. Howe," Cis explained. "And then I heard you holding forth, and I thought it must be for somebody's benefit. Now let me give you some advice. Let this matter alone, and don't say a word about it to any one. If you talk you may undo some of the good you have done. You are quite clever enough to look as if you didn't know anything. Above all, keep out of the way of General Westwood and Lord Goldie."

Ambrose Hathaway did not linger long in the green alley. He walked away with a quick step, and the sunflowers were left to the dew-fall and sunset. There was just time enough to go down the hill before dinner to the old inn and call on Miss Westwood.

She was in the reception-room alone, sitting close to the glass-door which opened upon the lawn, and wondering wearily what had become

of Cis? Her guardian had gone upstairs to dress for dinner, and in spite of all that he had made her suffer she sincerely pitied him. He had spoken very little all day, and had looked strangely haggard and old. Erna, with her sweet, easy nature, found no difficulty in forgiving anybody. The General had been hard; he had kept Ambrose away from her, but he seemed sick and sad, and she was sorry.

When Ambrose himself suddenly walked into the room the lovely, impassive face underwent a swift change. She held out her hand, blushing exquisitely, and smiling with irrepressible gladness. He smiled, too, remembering how he had thought of her as his "high, proud ladye," who might condescend to be won in time. She was not proud at all, but a big, soft, loving woman, whose queenly beauty gave every one a false impression of the real Erna. Only Cis Willowby, who had loved her in school-days, had known her always.

"I am come," he said, in a masterful tone, "because I won't be kept at a distance any longer. It rests with you to tell me whether I am to go or stay."

"Stay!" said the Princess, dimpling with delight.

He took her in his arms then and there, and any one who had been walking on the lawn might have seen his kisses for aught he cared. About half-an-hour was spent in this pleasant fashion, and then the General came in and found them together.

Ambrose looked at him with a defiant air; but his enemy met him with unexpected meekness.

"Pray don't let me disturb you," the General said. "I was quite prepared for this. Last night my niece and her friend unintentionally enlightened me. I know a good many things now, I assure you."

So this was the cause of his altered looks. Erna, the tender-hearted, quivered all over with remorse.

"Oh, Uncle Edmund, we didn't mean half that we said," she faltered, telling a big fib in sheer compassion.

"Oh, yes, you did," he answered sadly. "And the worst of it is that the things which

you both said were true. It was the first dose of unadulterated truth that had ever been administered to me. I admit that it was bitter—bitter enough even to satisfy Miss Willowby."

Ambrose Hathaway stepped up to the man he had so cordially detested and held out his hand.

"Let us bury the hatchet, General Westwood," he said cheerfully. "I'm not surprised that you don't think me half good enough for Erna; but she has made up her mind to accept me. I'll promise to give you as little trouble as I can, and be an all-round good boy."

The General took the proffered hand, but he still looked rather rueful.

"I shall do nothing to mar Erna's happiness," he said. "Take care of her; that is all I ask."

"Oh, Uncle Edmund, I'm so glad—no, I mean I'm so sorry," said Cis, going up to him with lovely, tearful eyes. "What I really mean is that I'm glad to be happy, but I'm sorry that we said all those horrid things last night."

"General Westwood wouldn't believe me if I said I was sorry," said Cis, who had come in through the glass-door unheard. "Nevertheless, it is a fact that I hate giving pain to any one or anything. The pity is that one has to do it sometimes. But—if I went too far, as we women occasionally do—I will frankly say 'forgive me.'"

This time the General's gloomy face brightened as he shook hands with the vigorous little woman before him.

"I don't think you went too far," he admitted. "I feel I have been a very disagreeable fellow for years. I see myself now as others have always seen me, and I'm a sadder and a wiser man."

"Don't take it to heart too much," cried Cis, in her clear, gay voice. "I have no doubt I should wince if I could hear what some of my friends really think of me. Remember that we all live in houses lined and padded with conventional courtesy. Hearing the true opinion of your neighbours is merely a question of an unsubstantial wall!"

WHAT WE DID WITH OUR GARDEN FRUIT.

It was our first year of real country life. Up to this time we had been fairly well-content with the mock country of suburban London and occasional months of farmhouse holidays, but we had never lived the seasons round with nature before.

Father had realised his ambition at last. There was enough laid aside in the bank to provide comfortably for the score or so of years that he reasonably hoped might remain to him, and also to leave us girls beyond the reach of want when he was gone; why, therefore, should he tie himself any longer to desk and pen in the stifling city?

So he bought this country homestead in leafy Warwickshire, and we migrated to it as eagerly as birds flock home.

Oh, the joy of beginning anew in the spring of the year, with everything about us starting, bursting afresh into life! Is there any experience to compare with it?

It was near the end of February when our migration took place, and already the earth was being freed from its winter bonds and the air was freshening with breezes that carried a hundred messages to those who could feel and listen.

The brooks and rills gurgled and swelled, and one could almost detect the sap rising in the trees.

Our homestead was of genuine last-century build; all gables and corners, one part playing hide-and-seek with another, while thick ivy clothed its northern side and a vine covered the south front.

At the western end was a porch, wide and deep enough to shelter many wayfarers. We pictured to ourselves how delightful it would be to sit here on sunny afternoons with the door open to the cool, dark hall behind us, and beyond that, open again to the orchard at the back.

"It is idyllic, poetic, just like a book!" said Susie, in a rapture.

"It is like Norman Gale," her twin added in harmonious second; though to which of the Warwickshire poets' songs she alluded she did not deign to say.

More alluring than all the delights the house held for us, was the garden. Garden back and front, garden all round about, and where the garden left off the orchard began, and beyond the orchard were paddocks and fields, brooks and hedgerows.

No next-door neighbour for a good two miles, no fashions for five at least, and no train nearer than Fordhaven right away over the hill, an hour's brisk trot for our pony's stout legs.

This, for us, meant wearing a short skirt, a

blouse, and sailor hat all day long (we eventually settled into print frocks and sun-bonnets as being more in keeping), and it also meant flying the flag of freedom on the housetop.

We ran that flag very high in our first flush of excitement, later on it as furled in somewhat as we learnt that liberty must be harnessed to labour if we would reap all we hoped for.

I am not going to describe all our life in its manifold details, they would fill a volume easily. If anyone doubts this let them try a round of busy country life for one week; every day full of engrossing interests, every minute bringing its own duties; and they will doubt no longer. What I have to tell here is the practical tale of pleasure and profit we gained from the fine old trees our garden and orchard held. Never, surely, was fruit grown that tasted sweeter, or trees that bore more generously.

There were five of us girls and our mother; one maid only was allowed to us as our "help," with a man-factotum who groomed and gardened, was carpenter, smith and wheelwright in turn.

It was part of the bargain when our migration was first mooted that we should all take our share in work and play, and we

were nothing loth, being young, of healthy mind and independent spirit.

Father was head overseer out-of-doors as mother was queen within, but both of them allowed us free hands to will and carry out, only guiding and directing when their wiser heads saw a better way.

Maggie was chief in the kitchen-garden, and its plots filled, yielding a wonderful increase under her care.

Lois elected to reign supreme over the poultry-yard and dairy, although mother's eye had to be very watchful here, for Lois was not one of the most dependable souls.

The twins laboured lovingly together in the flower-garden, and it bloomed a sweet reward for their pains; they of us all were the least restricted, but among flower-beds and borders, paths and lawns there was much occupation to be found and little harm to do.

To me, as I wished, fell the care of the fruit trees and the orchard. I had to watch and gather, each in their season, the fruits as they ripened; to make the right use of them and to see to their storing and preserving. And with a garden so prolific you may imagine there was little idle time for me, once the summer had fairly begun.

It is about my own department of the vineyard that I am going to descant upon here; though I say it myself, if other girls could be induced to imitate my course, they would find it bringing benefit to themselves and to others, as it did to me and mine. With experience I could, doubtless, have made much more from the same materials, but for a trial-season's work the result was satisfactory enough.

Let me tell you, then, what I did with my crops.

We rarely had a meal without fruit upon the table in some form or other, and it was my pride to invent and alter, with as many variations as possible, the ways of serving it. Lois and mother grumbled sometimes at my frequent raids upon the dairy in quest of cream and curds, but I would never be refused.

Mother pointed out to me one day the array of empty jam-jars adorning the pantry shelves.

"I want to see them all filled, Betty, before the season is ended, and you will not be able to do it if you stew so much of the fruit," she said.

The reminder was a needed one, doubtless, but what I resented was her designating my *compôtes* and *purées* by the name of "stews," really it was sacrilegious!

The jam-pots were filled, every single one of them by Martinmas, but before enlarging upon their contents I want to describe some of my pet confections.

I must first own, however, that they were not all the creations of my own fancy, some of them were culled from an American cook-book, some from other sources. The icy coolness which gives so great a charm to all fruit dishes could not, in my case, be brought about by the use of ice and a freezing pail, but I found a substitute which served its turn remarkably well; this was by filling a shallow dish with water and inverting a clay flower-pot upon it, wrapping around the pot a strip of coarse flannel, taking care to keep this bandage always moist. My dish or basin set upon this flower-pot became, and kept, delightfully cool on the hottest days.

When cooking any kind of fruit, I invariably prepared my syrup first, by boiling the requisite quantity of sugar with a little water, then putting in whatever was intended to go.

A few minutes' cooking sufficed, and then taking out the fruit I boiled the syrup yet a little longer and poured it over all. A *compôte* made thus is immeasurably superior in flavour and appearance to fruit that has been "stewed."

Fresh cream whipped made with this quite an elegant sweet for the dinner-table, and the juice strained from a *compôte* of currants and raspberries, mixed with curds and beaten light and smooth, was a delicious accompaniment to mother's sponge cakes and scones.

Amongst our greatest favourites were *Fruit Floats*; these were made of every fruit in turn, beginning with gooseberries and ending with apples; they were prettiest when made with cherries.

I first made a *compôte* of fruit, boiling the syrup rather longer than usual that it might be extra thick.

To make our requisite number of floats four eggs were needed, the whites separated from the yolks. With the latter I made about a pint of thick boiled custard with milk and sugar to sweeten it. The whites were whisked to a stiff froth, then two or three spoonfuls of castor sugar were lightly mixed in, and the fruit syrup (when cold) added a little at a time, taking care that it should evenly colour the whole and not be streaky.

A number of small saucers were needed, and at the bottom of each was placed a small round of stale spongecake; upon that a few spoonfuls of custard, then a little heap of the float, and the fruit made a ring around the outer edge. These we ate with biscuits and rusks, or plain cake.

Mother had always had a *penchant* for making sponge cake, and now with new-laid eggs freely at command she indulged her taste. Sometimes one of these became dry before it was cut, and I seized upon it for a *Topsy Cake*, which was guaranteed to be decidedly non-intoxicant.

A *compôte* of fruit prepared as before mentioned was poured while still hot over the cake that was cut ready in thin slices. When cold, this was built up again to its original shape and sprinkled all over with desiccated cocoanut. It was set in a deep glass dish, the bottom filled around with jelly or fruit float, then whipped and sweetened cream piled over all. This was a Sunday's treat, the chiefest part being prepared the day before, leaving only the cream to be added afterwards.

We were the possessors of some old-fashioned champagne glasses—the tall kind; wine rarely touched them, but we used them instead for our *Syllabubs*, half-filling them with sweetened fruit juice, then pouring in frothing new milk.

Another use I put them to was to place cooked fruit and juice (ripe gooseberries were the nicest, being a little sharp) at the bottom, then to whip the whites of a couple of eggs to a froth, beat in some castor sugar and a few spoonfuls of juice and fill up the glasses with it. Red currants and raspberries made sweet went by the name of *Red Grits*. A *compôte* made from these had to be rubbed through a sieve, and the juice thus obtained was required to be about a pint in quantity. To this, in a saucepan, was added two large spoonfuls of ground rice, a little more sugar, and a small teacupful of water. This was boiled over the fire until rather stiff, then it was poured into a wetted mould and set aside to become cold. When turned out it was smothered in fresh cream, making a delicious and fairly substantial pudding.

Fruit puddings, pies and tarts we had in plenty; for extra occasions there was another way of making the latter, which was especially good when the tart was compounded of raspberries, apricots or peaches.

A tart dish (or tin) was lined with good short pastry, and filled up with fresh-picked fruit well covered with sugar, then the upper crust laid on but not fastened round the edges. When cooked this upper crust was removed and sweetened cream or thick custard poured

in and the cover replaced, the cream not revealing itself until the tart was cut.

But I must not forget to tell you of our *Strawberry Shortcake feast*.

This was in early July. The strawberry crop was a very heavy one, it took me all my time to keep level with it, and besides sending away a quantity, we stored up many pounds in jam, not to mention the piles kept for our own faring.

My American cook-book told of a delectable shortcake, and one day I tried it, to the great satisfaction of all. Then mother mooted a project she had long had as a secret desire; this was to invite a number of the aged and poor to a feast of ripe strawberries under the green trees on the lawn.

Fordhaven boasted no Union; the nearest was at Sharding, some fifteen miles away, but hither went our two waggons in search of guests for the feast.

Meanwhile tables were spread under the chestnuts and seats brought from every direction. Tea, coffee, fresh fruit and cream in plenty were made ready; but the glory of the repast were the cakes that Martha and I laboured to prepare.

With sleeves rolled up and aprons donned, we kneaded and rolled, baked and dished a famous batch of cakes, and though I say it who should be silent, no lighter, crisper, or sweeter shortcakes ever were eaten.

This was the proportion of the materials we used:—

To every pound of flour was allowed three ounces of sweet butter, three of sugar, a pinch of salt, and one egg, with about a teacupful of buttermilk. The milk had previously been well-frothed by the stirring in of some carbonate of soda.

We rolled out portions of the dough to the size of a dinner-plate, and the thickness of a quarter of an inch, placing them on buttered baking sheets. When baked one cake was spread thickly with picked berries and sugar and another pressed down over it. The cakes were cut in large triangular pieces and sent round covered with cream, to be eaten with fork and spoon, and "received with thanks."

How many cakes were made and consumed that day I should be afraid to say. Martha and I retired to our beds at an unusually early hour that evening tired out, but with the consciousness of having acquitted ourselves with distinction; and the waggons that rumbled away in the gloaming had cheerful and smiling faces for their load.

And now it is time to take a look at the jam-pots.

The first to be filled and set away were some three dozen of gooseberry-jelly, made while the berries were still green, but on the point of turning colour. When making this I boiled the berries until they almost dissolved, having a little water at the bottom of the preserving-pan to prevent them burning. The fruit was then passed through a jelly-bag until well-strained and the juice returned to the cleaned-out pan.

While this was being brought up to boiling-point, after it had been measured and weighed, the sugar (in proportion of a pound of the finest lump to a pint of juice) was spread out on tins and placed in the oven to become hot through. When the juice boiled the sugar was put in; it hissed and bubbled in fine style, and very quickly dissolved without once hindering the boiling of the pan; a very few minutes longer, and then it was poured straight into heated glasses and set aside to cool. When cold the jars were covered with paper dipped into white of egg and tied down; the jelly "set" firmly even before it was quite cold, and was of a beautiful bright colour.

Our strawberry jam had a good proportion of currant juice added to it, to give flavour to this otherwise somewhat insipid preserve. The

currant jams and jellies had quite a fourth part of raspberries added to them, and we found a mixture of red and white currants with a few rasps made a most delicious jelly.

We had several kinds of plums in the garden, and a selection of each found representation in the jam-pots; so also did the apricots and peaches. Black currants yielded us both jam and jelly, but these jars were set apart for the possible sore throats and colds that winter might bring. Black currants also furnished us with one or two bottles of cordial, and another was added to these when we went blackberrying in October.

Old fashioned raspberry vinegar and raspberry cordial too found a place on the pantry shelves, and mother even essayed the making of gooseberry and currant wines, but truth compels me to state that her first attempts were not crowned with success. She did better with the elderberries in the autumn, however, and many a homely "grog" for winter nights' suppers came from this innocent "brew."

Mother gave me her guidance in the making of the preserves, and she carefully impressed upon me that the secret of success was to gather the fruit when it was at its "perfect" state, *i.e.* ripe, but not over-ripe, in dry weather, and to boil it well before putting in any sugar; to have the latter of the best quality procurable, and to boil the jam for a short time only after the sugar had been added. "It is the fruit that requires cooking, and not the sugar," she said emphatically; telling me how the latter went quickly and almost imperceptibly from one degree to another.

Our apple crop was also an abundant one as the store-room showed when all had been gathered in. A small quantity of apple jelly was made for consumption on high days and festivals, and I also made a trial experiment with apple butter, but lacked the patience necessary to bring this to perfection, therefore, though eatable, it was nothing to boast of.

We had apples galore that winter, in every

conceivable form that apples could take, and many a bushel found its way to our less fortunate suburban friends of olden days.

Although our fruit garden yielded me many delights and much profit, it also gave me many anxieties and not a little hard labour.

I lay awake when the winds rose in anger, fearful of the damage I dreaded to see on the morrow; I learnt the meaning of "blight," of caterpillar pests, and waged a keen warfare with the enemy wasp. How to keep the bushes and trees in good bearing-condition became a very serious study, and pruning and grafting were all-absorbing themes.

"Impossible for a girl to attempt," do you say?

"Not a bit of it," I answer. And I maintain moreover, that if more girls—the strong, well-grown, able-bodied girls of to-day—would turn their energies and strength to account in such-wise, our English agriculture would soon revive, and cease to be bemoaned and be pitied as it is!

LUCY H. YATES.

WAITING FOR THE MARKET.

By HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

JUST a pile of fruit fresh gathered—
Gold and purple, white and red,
That are waiting for the market
In a corner of the shed—
And my thoughts have gone a-roaming
To a quaint old straggling town,
With its sunny gardens, sheltered
By the harbour's thymy down.

And I see the crowded market
With its stalls in long array,
And the women with brown faces
'Neath their folded kerchiefs gay.
And the maiden at the corner,
Trying vainly not to smile
On the youthful peasant lover
Who would fain her heart beguile.

Then it brings me happy visions
Of a spot that's dearer still—
Of a grey chateau that's nestled
In the valley o'er the hill,
Where my thoughts fly—ah, how often!
For there's one I ne'er forget,
Dwelling 'midst the sunny gardens
Of that peaceful valley yet.

THE SCARLET PANSY.

By FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE, Author of "Sent Back by the Angels."

It was a place of many gardens, that bowery white town that rose terrace on terrace above the quiet bay. Every villa had its hothouses and its brilliant borders. Every cottage was rich in diamond beds. The great folk cultivated orchids. The poor grew sweetwilliams and lilies of the valley, and all those homely flowers whose names are a rest to the heart and their smell a welcome, a memory, and a hope. In the summer nobody could open a casement without shaking out the scent of a rose.

But the fields! what with hedgerows, trenches, and their own bright-fancied sward, I almost think they were the best gardens of all. From the February day, when the earliest celandine looked out from its sheltered bank upon a half-clothed world, filled with the quavering voices of lambs and the first flurry of projecting rooks, till those golden afternoons when the royal foxglove, born in the purple of perfect summer, saw the rich sunsets bloom and fade, it was all a ringing of sweet changes upon the bells of flowers.

Its lanes—which wisely wound in and out,

so that one always had to go twice the delightful distance—were pleached alleys, gushing with the song of thrushes, trembling with the hum of bees, and heavy with the spice of limes. In June its woods were so blue with hyacinths that one might have thought the peeping sky had fallen through. And its orchards! they made one think that the snow which had lain about the mossy trunks had been drawn into the sap and had quickened into perfumed blossom.

Yes, all the white town was a garden. Tender exotics that elsewhere needed coaxing and cossetting under glass thrived in the open there. Hardly was there a flower known to the florist's lists that might not be seen growing in luxuriance.

And yet nobody was quite satisfied with the product of his garden.

"It is all very well," folks said, rich and poor alike, "but I cannot grow the scarlet pansy."

Pansies, of course, were rife enough, from the great velvet blossom dark as wine of

Burgundy, cat-faced, soft and rich as the fur of a royal bee, to the little yellow or purple thing scorned of its splendid kin, and glad to grow wherever heaven gave an inch of earth; but the scarlet pansy was not. Seed that claimed to be of the true stock had been procured from many a cultivator, at home and abroad, had been lavishly paid for, heedfully nurtured. But sometimes it died without a sign above the ground. Sometimes it was eaten in tender infancy by slug or fly, or without apparent cause, languished and failed. Sometimes it promised well and even lived to blossom. But, though up to that time it seemed to wear the prized authentic hue, as soon as ever its face was revealed, it was seen to be in truth brown, yellow, purple, indigo, or of one of those nameless shades akin to all rich tones of velvet or of plush yet identical with none; of any colour, indeed, save that one desired. No one had ever grown a scarlet pansy. No one did I say? Well, perhaps, that is more than I have a right to affirm. There were people who had seen it, or who