

have not realised the hidden depths of this passage. Unconsciously, it is true, and not the less sweetly, we are led by children, but who can at this moment point to a family in which the children are consulted upon any matter dear to their hearts and lives? A children's council, in which the youngest from seven years and upwards, should have the first opportunity of speaking, and at which even baby should be present, would do much to assist parents and children to understand each other. One of the elders, of course, should be voted to the chair, to superintend the order of the proceedings, and the counting of votes. Such an informal gathering would lead to a mutual exchange of confidences, of hitherto unexpressed desires and opinions, of frank criticisms of thoughts and actions, as to enable the matter-of-fact adult to cast aside for a period the commercialism of life, and enter into that happy realm in which untrammelled fancy runs riot.

By combination and co-operation of pocket-money, too, there should be in the midst of

the family circle an excellent organiser and executor. This executive faculty should be trained early, as it brings success and comfort not only to its owner but to the entire group. By systematising little tasks, and little by little putting tiny responsibilities upon them, the children learn to make the best of their time, opportunities and possessions. Girls who have some knowledge of the value of money and how far it will go, will be better equipped even for school life, to say nothing of the future that awaits them. It is well-known that thousands of brave women have had to go through the terrible ordeal of finding work for which they have not been trained; dark days of trouble and heaviness have taken them unawares, and have forced them to display the true nobility of soul which is always latent in womanhood. Beautiful as it may be to contemplate the golden lives of women of courage, endurance and industry, who have been roughly torn away from the slender ties of home life, and its myriad joys, it is neither wise nor kind to increase their number.

Loose habits of any kind are detrimental to the building up of character, and it is essential that our girls should not be financially undeveloped, seeing that in this nineteenth century many are expected to be self-supporting. Dependence upon self has made great men, and there is no reason why it should not make women also great. Use, action, these are the means by which all growth is accomplished. The time has gone by for our girls to sit and wait for princes to come and carry them off to palaces. Even in the oldest times if such an event did happen, sometimes the prince turned a pauper and the palace a hovel, but undaunted in their superstition the hapless creatures dreamt that some impossible thing would happen to change their evil fortune to good. The idea of dependence had been so cultivated, and it had taken such deep root that they could not let it go even in the face of disaster. It is common knowledge that the human mind is very malleable. It grows like that which it daily reflects as in a looking-glass.

GARDENING FOR PROFIT;

OR,

AUNT AMY'S LETTERS TO HER NIECE IN THE COUNTRY.



Letter I.

Chelsea, London, S.W.

MY DEAREST MARJORIE,

I have been thinking deeply over the news contained in your last letter about the state of your dear father's health, and the possibility of his not being able to return to his business for some months to come. It is indeed a most serious matter, and I am proud of the bright, brave spirit, which you, dear, have shown in expressing the desire to do something at once to help in bearing this unforeseen trouble. You ask me whether I know of any suitable post for you in town, either as companion, daily governess, or useful help in any way.

Well, I have made many inquiries for you amongst the several agencies which are employed in finding such situations, and they

one and all tell me the same heart-rending story—how few are the vacancies, and how numberless are the applicants who would fill them—indeed, I came away from the last office quite sick at heart. My journeys on your behalf have more than ever convinced me that there is absolutely no opening in this huge city for those who have not had, or who have not the means of obtaining, a training for some special branch of work.

It is however, always darkest just before the dawn, and as I was idly turning the pages of my newspaper ruminating the while upon the best way of breaking the bad news to my little niece, my eye suddenly caught a paragraph headed "The British Produce Supply Association," and then followed a description of the fine new building lately erected and just opened by Lord Winchelsea in Long Acre, as a central depot for the reception of all kinds of English grown produce, and to be a market where salesmen, and also private people may go to buy genuine English goods—for everything is to bear a brand as a mark of its British origin.

In London, we housekeepers firmly believe that no foreign produce can in any way compare with our own English grown, and I am sure we are quite right, but not infrequently we pay our butchers and greengrocers the high prices they ask, only to find when we have our dinner on the table that the so-called "Welsh mutton" is New Zealand lamb, and that the "Jersey new potatoes" came to light in the Canary Islands.

One would not mind this so much if only one knew it beforehand, but I really do object to pay for the genuine article and have an inferior one foisted on to me. I hear that English farmers are combining together to send up large supplies to the Association, where, if it is equal to their standard of quality, they will brand it with their Cable brand, and offer it for sale. Cheese, butter, bacon, eggs, etc., are also received in the same way, and fruits, flowers, jams, jellies, preserved fruits will be added shortly. So just as soon as ever I can rid myself of my tiresome local tradesmen I mean to go over to Long Acre once or twice a week and order in all that we want. I may not pay any less than I do now, but at least I shall know that my "Welsh mutton" is really and truly Welsh!

I went to bed, dear, still hugging my grievance, and alternately thinking over the disappointment of the day and the new era which has dawned for our British farmers, when it suddenly struck me that here too, was my Marjorie's opportunity!

You have the garden at your feet, so to speak, and though not large, it is capable of producing a good deal more than you are likely to require in the house, and also there is more land to be had in your Derbyshire village if need arise. You know something of gardening already—your father told me how useful you were to him in this and in other ways—and I think I can help you also by finding out, as one has so many opportunities of doing in London, what are the most saleable and most profitable crops for you to grow, and the modern methods of growing them to the perfection to which we Londoners are accustomed. Of course there are many things such as cabbages, potatoes, onions, etc., which would not pay at all to send up; they have to be grown and forwarded by the ton to be profitable, and that would be quite beyond your powers. But there are many smaller articles which are lighter and quite as easy to grow, once you know the way, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, salads, good beans, mushrooms, strawberries, and raspberries, etc. All these will, I know, flourish well in your rich light soil, and I will think out the plan of your garden, and send you directions in my next letter for planting as many of the above as may seem desirable.

In the meantime do not lose a moment, but get someone to dig over every vacant plot of ground, to clear away any old crops that may have been left standing, and to tidy up generally. Try if you can get your neighbours to give you a load or two of good manure to spread evenly over the land, and also a bushel or two of coarse salt before the digging is commenced. You will see the benefit of this later on, so try your best to get it. The autumn is really the best time of the year to make this new beginning, November being, in gardening parlance, the first month of the year in garden work, but you must begin to make your plans now. December and January are also preparatory months; upon the thoroughness of the work done in these three months depends both the quantity and quality

of your garden produce for the ensuing nine months; so you see it is a serious matter.

And on my part I will hasten to pay a visit to the Association, and learn all I can about the mode of sending goods to them, and the things that are likely to pay the best, and I really think that together we may by degrees add something substantial to your family purse. At any rate the opportunity for trying to do so is at your hand; you will not need to leave home in order to embrace it, a boon which your father will be the first to appreciate, for I know he dreads the thought of losing his Marjorie's bright companionship. Awhile ago this plan might not have been so

feasible, but now that we have this splendid opening for disposing of anything that we can grow, it is only our duty to avail ourselves of it.

And on the other hand, here in London, I hope to induce all whom I come in contact with to become purchasers at the depot, for we must have purchasers as well as producers, must we not?

Indeed it lies very largely in the hands of the purchasers whether this venture is to be successful or not. I wish I could make the housewives of England, and especially of London, understand that it lies now in their power to help to bring back to our land its

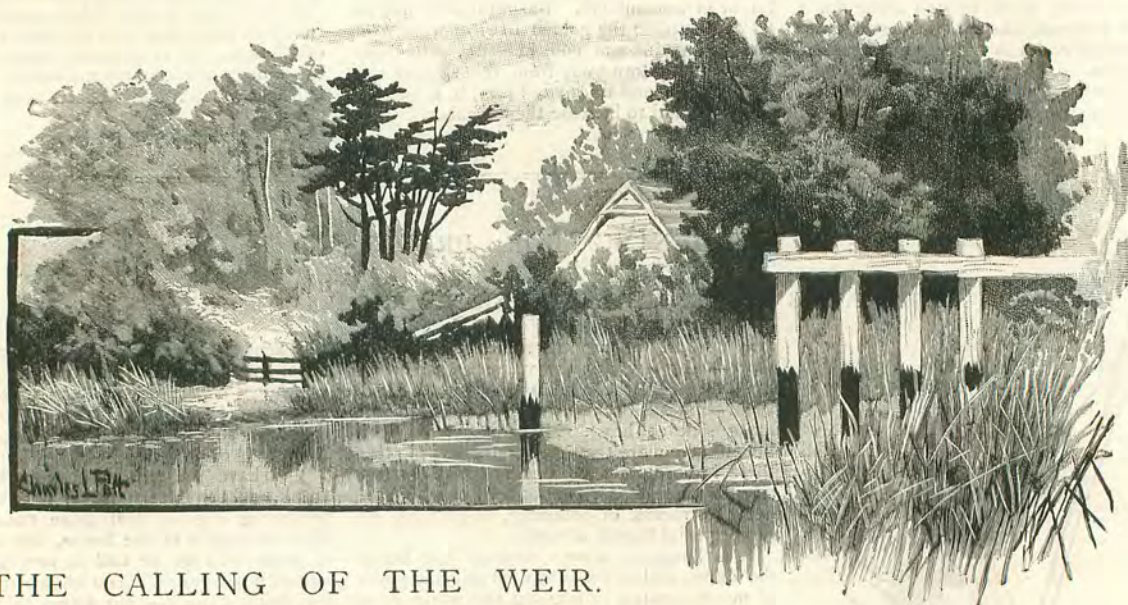
ancient agricultural prosperity, and keep at home the millions of money which we are every year paying away to foreign countries for goods we can produce quite as well ourselves. Oh, ye women of England, will ye not take heed!

But there, dear, I must not sermonise any more; this letter is quite too long as it is. Don't forget my instructions, be sure, but "be up and be doing," and I will do likewise, hoping that in my next I may have further good news for you.

Ever your loving,

AUNT AMY.

(To be continued.)



THE CALLING OF THE WEIR.

By FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE, Author of "Miss Honoria," "The Dreams of Dania," "Sent Back by the Angels," etc.

CHAPTER III.

A QUICK glance of intelligence—in which Mrs. Mack claimed her share—went round the room, and then Hildegard said in words and tone addressed to the domestic, but intended for the hall-mat, "Oh, ask Mr. Docker to come in."

The tone implied, as in such cases it is bound to do, that so far from anyone's feeling surprise at the advent of Mr. Docker, there had been a little general uneasiness on the ground of his rather unaccountable delay.

Meanwhile—in the momentary interval during which the caller was pulling down his collar and imparting a touch to an errant wisp of hair—Hildegard remarked to Mary, "What on earth can the man want here?"

Hildegard clung, as do so many girls, to the superstitious belief that her whispers, whilst pleasantly audible to those to whom they were addressed, were entirely inaccessible to the rest of the community.

That whispers go further and fare worse, the ears of Mr. Docker might have convinced the most sceptical. Mrs. Mack, a witness of the phenomenon, remarking upon it in the morning to Mary, made use of these memorable words: "'Deed, then, I'd aisy light the

drawing-room fire at the two ears of him.'" Now the drawing-room fire was celebrated for its unflammable habit.

"How do you do, Mrs. Haydn?" said Mr. Docker, advancing and speaking with that rapid ease which betrays the nervous soul. "I know it looks awfully queer—" The last word was uttered with a jerk, upon a much higher note than the rest of the speech, and was accompanied by an acceleration of pace and a lowering of the head that suggested the intention of tossing somebody. "Hang the cat!" said Mr. Docker, bringing himself up against the table, and he discharged a belated foot somewhere in the direction taken by the vanished Sweep.

That was one of Sweep's irritating idiosyncrasies. Fire or no fire, he would lie in the exact centre of the rug, and his rusty black coat so exactly matched it, that not even foresight and experience allied were at all an adequate protection against the pitfall which he permanently provided. Falling over Sweep was one of the accepted hazards of existence at Weir Bend. If strangers were expected, either Mary threw over him a warning yellow antimacassar, or Hildegard, remarking, "Here, you come out of that!" kicked him beyond mischief's way.

There was silence. Then, while the

flame radiated from Mr. Docker's ears and wandered down his back, and while he made futile attempts to brush it away with his straw hat, Hildegard began to say what was appropriate to the occasion.

"I am so sorry," she said, rather unsteadily; and went down into her handkerchief.

"Yes, indeed," said Mary, "I hope you didn't hurt—" She ended abruptly with a sob, and made the same descent.

"Oh, yes," said Hildegard, partially emerging; "I hope—I'm sure—one might—so very—"

It was of no use. Mrs. Haydn, with a countenance that worked convulsively, was staring out of the window. Mary's shoulders were shaking. Hildegard stopped, and tried to look the sympathy that she could not speak.

At that instant from the hall, where Mrs. Mack had fallen into a chair, there came a sound as of soda-water discreetly uncorked.

Then all the ladies gave up fighting. With a precision that would have shown a volunteer company what volley-firing ought to be, there followed three explosions in one. And, swaying backwards and forwards, lifting eyes of imploring weakness one to another, Mrs. Haydn and her daughters laughed and cried, and cried and laughed, and conquered

GARDENING FOR PROFIT;

OR,

AUNT AMY'S LETTERS TO HER NIECE IN THE COUNTRY.

Letter II.

Chelsea, London, S.W.

MY DEAREST MARJORIE,—I have just returned from my visit to the British Produce Supply Association, and hasten to tell you how pleased I am with all I saw there. To begin, the building itself is a splendid one, it has been specially built and arranged for its present purpose, so there is magnificent storage accommodation for the reception of meat, bacon, butter, etc., which is to be sold wholesale. The retail shop is beautifully fitted up with marble counters and tiled walls, and I must say that the goods are set out in the most tempting manner possible. The butter counter is very attractive, the piles of golden butter are done up in such dainty shapes, each county having apparently a special way of doing up its butter. That from Cornwall was in square blocks of about two pounds weight each, and the Hampshire butter was rolled out quite thin in the pattern of a leaf and then curled up; it was very taking. Then there were the long narrow rolls with which you are familiar in the Midlands.

I noticed too, some Leicestershire and Melton Mowbray pies, and I wondered why Nottingham does not send up some of her pork pies, which are, in my opinion, far superior to the others. Perhaps they do not yet know of this new market for them. I spent as much money as I could spare in getting samples of bacon, butter, eggs, poultry, vegetables, and fresh meat, and then felt at liberty to attack the secretary, and glean from him particulars as to the way in which our country friends could send up their produce for sale. He explained to me the system which they intended to pursue, viz., that they hoped ere long to have depots opened in various parts of the country as centres, to which small growers could more conveniently send their goods than to the great London centre. There is one such depot now open at Sleaford, in Lincolnshire, and there will be one in Hampshire presently. This will make it easier for all as, of course, the Association prefers to receive as large consignments as possible, it saves both the time, labour and expense which would be incurred in the constant unpacking, entering, etc., of small parcels.

It appears too, that different parts of the country send up very varied qualities of produce, owing chiefly to the difference of soil and climate; to meet this it has been decided that all goods shall be graded, into first, second, and third grades, and everything will be branded with the Cable brand, as a proof of its British origin. I think this grading is a very good thing, because one can scarcely expect to reach perfection in one's first attempt at growing for sale, yet the quality may still be fairly good, so it is comforting to think it will be saleable all the same, though naturally not at the highest price.

I have heard of several private people who are sending direct to the London depot until a centre shall be formed in their district, and the secretary kindly gave me a copy of the "Form of Tender" which they use. This is a printed list of the goods the Company requires for sale, meat, poultry, game, dairy produce, preserves, flour, choice fruits, vegetables and flowers, and you are requested to fill in the form stating how often you propose to send; once, twice, thrice a week, or daily, and full details with regard to quantities, age

and quality, and in return the Association guarantees to allow you the best market price of the day, according to the quality of the produce sent. Their accounts are made up weekly and the remittances sent out, so you see there is no long waiting before you receive the payment, however small it may be.

I learnt too that egg boxes can be hired from them, and this is a great convenience, because properly made boxes are rather expensive and difficult to obtain. You can also purchase addressed labels, etc., at a low rate. If you do not use their boxes they request that the package sent should be, if possible, non-returnable, as this saves a good deal of expense and worry, the cost of the returned empties would have to be deducted from your account, which also is a consideration.

And now comes the serious and important question, "What shall we grow, and how shall we grow it?" This is really a large subject, and I feel that one could write long chapters about it, for it is a question which varies according to the position of the inquirer, who might be a market gardener owning hundreds of acres, or a small nurseryman anxious to make the most of his ten acres, or again, a young girl like yourself, desirous of utilising to the best advantage the home garden and its produce. Perhaps some day, dear, I may venture to offer a little advice to the two former, but at the present moment it is your difficulty that interests me chiefly.

In my last letter I told you to be sure to get every vacant plot of land dug over and manured if possible, and the garden thoroughly tidied up from all its autumn litter; the plots should not be raked over, but left in ridges as they are dug, so that the frosts which we usually have in December and January may kill the insects, purify and render the earth more friable than it would otherwise be. The month of November is a preparatory one, and though it will be cold out of doors there would be many bright clear days when you could be out in the garden doing what requires to be done, for you must remember that winter work is even more important than that of the summer; it is only those who dig, plough, and sow in winter who have any right to reap in summer and autumn.

And before we go any further in planning out the garden for next year's crops, I want you to try and remember and put down in a little notebook what was grown on each plot during last summer, and in future you must keep notes of this matter. It will be simpler if you space out the garden into portions, numbering them one, two, and three, or A B C, if you prefer it, mention them thus in your notebook. We shall then be able to secure a proper rotation of crops, which is, after all, but the first elementary rule in the art of profitable gardening. Our object is to get the greatest possible amount out of the smallest possible space, therefore, plants which belong to the same family or have a close affinity to each other, must not succeed each other, for they will extract from the soil the same food and thus impoverish it. Cabbages, for instance, must not be followed by broccoli, brussels sprouts, or turnips, because they all absorb quantities of potash from the soil, so much so that they are called "deteriorators" of the soil. These cruciferous plants, cabbages, cauliflowers, turnips, rape, cress, seakale, mustard, horseradish, etc., should be followed by leguminous plants, as peas, and beans; and deep-rooting plants, as carrots,

parsnips, beet, etc., that draw their nourishment from a considerable depth, should be followed by surface crops, like spinach, lettuce, endive, corn salad, parsley, etc.

The term "cruciferous," or cross-carrying plants, is applied to those whose flowers have a calyx of four sepals, which fall off after flowering, and a corolla of four petals, which are arranged in the form of a cross, and in alternation with the sepals. No plant belonging to this order is poisonous, but those that are eaten as food are anti-scorbutic. All plants of the cabbage tribe belong to this order, which also includes the wallflower, stock, and many other well known flowers. Leguminous plants are those that bear seeds which are eaten as food, such as peas, beans, etc.

Now having grasped these simple facts, you will realise how important it is to rotate your crops in proper order if the utmost value is to be got out of the land, and with the notes regarding the position of the crops last summer, you can easily work out a plan of the garden one of these winter evenings, assigning to each crop its proper place, only remember that you can frequently economise space by growing two crops at the same time on the same piece of ground. You can plant cauliflowers and early cabbages between the rows of potatoes, and you can sow early lettuces over the carrot bed, and radishes amongst the onions, etc., but do not take up more space with these necessary vegetables than is absolutely necessary to ensure a sufficient supply for your home consumption, since I want you to devote as much space as possible to the produce we intend to grow for sale.

After deep consideration of the subject I have come to the conclusion that strawberries and mushrooms will be the most profitable crops for you to grow at present. They are both easily managed, and do not call for so much skilled labour as some other crops do, and they can be commenced in a small way and extended as occasion serves.

August, September, and October are the best months in which to plant out a strawberry plantation; but if it cannot be done then it would be better to leave it until some open weather comes in early spring and plant the beds then; but you can measure out the ground and prepare the beds at once. If it can be managed it would be well to leave quite one-sixth of an acre; when you come to measure this out with your father's land measure you will see that it is not so large a piece of ground as it sounds. The nature of the soil is of very great importance in strawberry growing, although I have seen it asserted that they will grow anywhere and upon anything, nevertheless good sound loam certainly produces the best results. If you can get an extra load of manure and some road scrapings carted on to the land be sure to do so, and after it is well dug in have it rolled firmly with the garden roller. Then with the line, measure and mark out the beds, which should not be more than four feet wide, and may be the whole length of the plot if you leave a narrow foot-path between each, for you will want to get at the fruit at picking time without trampling all over your plants. Then on each bed mark the places for the plants, about eighteen inches apart, and twenty-five inches between the rows.

You will then see exactly how many plants are required, very likely about three hundred and fifty, and I think if half of them were British Queens, and half Sir Joseph Paxtons they will produce the heaviest crop. The President is another excellent variety, and

Elton is an old favourite for late fruit and preserving, but the two first-named are sufficient for the present. Should the weather be still open and mild when you are ready for the plants, send me word at once, for I intend to get them for you from a reliable nursery in Kent. I shall order them to be in readiness for despatching at the first opportunity, and shall buy rooted-runners grown in pots, which are now nice strong young plants in the open or under cold frames. They will of course, cost more than ordinary runners would have done, perhaps 6s. to 7s. 6d. per hundred, but

will give better results next season. If frost comes the planting should be delayed until the ground is fit again, perhaps until February or March, but the land will take no harm by lying fallow, quite the contrary.

And now I think I have given you enough to do and to think about in this long letter, so shall reserve a talk about mushrooms for my next. Keep up your courage, dear. I know that the work of preparing the ground is not the most interesting part of "gardening for profit," but it must, nevertheless, be well and faithfully done, and at the right time too.

Many amateur gardeners shirk this preparatory work, and then lay the blame upon the soil, declaring it unproductive and unfertile, which is wrong, since the fault lies entirely with themselves. Is it not Keble who tells us that the earth is—

"True to her trust, tree, herb, or reed
She renders for each scattered seed,
And to her Lord with dutious heed
Gives large increase!"

Ever your loving
AUNT AMY.

PRACTICAL PAPERS ON PLAIN WORK.

By JOSEPHA CRANE, Author of "Beautiful Sewing," "Winifred's Home," etc.

PART IV.

RUNNING, FELLING AND SEAMING.

Run-and-Fell-Seam.—Seams made by hand are nowadays nearly always done in run-and-fell fashion.

Look at Fig. 1 and you will see how the running is done.

Take one piece of your material and fold it down so as to form a crease, just under which you lay your second piece.

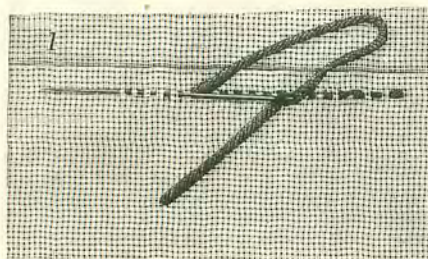
Run closely, taking a back stitch every now and then, and being very careful always to go through the two layers of stuff.

When this is done turn down the upper edge twice, as if for a hem, and tack down neatly.

If the running is done badly it leaves spaces in the seam with no stitches.

Felling.—In Fig. 2 you will see the felling down of the turned-over folds.

The stitches are made V-shaped, exactly as in hemming. Make your stitches evenly and



regularly, avoiding all split hemming and straight stitches.

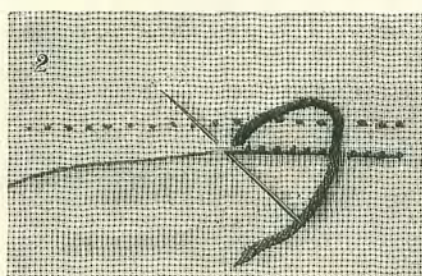
A Seamed Hem.—This hem is very much used in France, and also in this country for house-linen, etc.

In Fig. 3 you will see how it is done, but you must bear in mind that when you are holding the hem to work that it is not spread open as seen in the illustration. It is doubled back and the edges held between finger and thumb.

To prepare turn down your folds as if for a hem and tack down. Then bend back as I have already said and seam the three folds together, keeping the hem away from you and the article itself next to you.

Ordinary Seaming.—The use of ordinary seaming or "top-sewing" is to join two selvages together. These are found in shirts and pillow-cases. It is also employed to join two folded edges of material together as in patch-work, and the ends of bands for drawers and petticoats, etc.

A technical work on sewing enumerates the following most common faults in seaming.



"1. Slip-stitches, i.e., taking only one top-edge at a time instead of both.

"2. Puckering, by misplacing the work, and drawing the cotton too tightly, and making a slanting stitch instead of a straight one.

"3. Putting the needle in too far down from the top-edge, and thus making a deep hard ridge most difficult to flatten.

"4. Putting the stitches too close together, thus marring the shape of the stitch, which ought to be slanting on the top-edges on the right side of the work and straight on the wrong side.

"5. By omitting to flatten the sewing when the seam is finished."

From this you will see what to avoid.
Flattening Seams.—All seams should be flattened, whether sewn or run and felled.

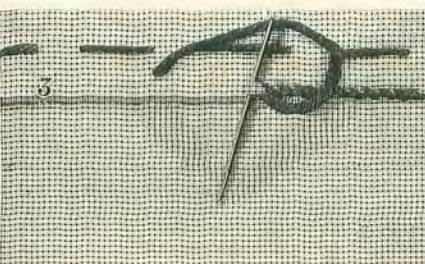
The plan of flattening seams with the thumb-nail, as advocated by some workers, is a very ugly one. The best way of flattening out seams is to lay them on the table and then to press them smooth by passing the handle of a toothbrush heavily along them.

Terms used in Needlework.—There are some terms used in needlework the meaning of which everyone should understand, as failing to do so you do not know how to take advantage of written directions for work of all kinds.

I am indebted to a technical glossary for the information given here.

Bar.—The working across of a button-hole.

Baste.—This word is not so much used now



as tack. Both denote the long stitches used for fixing work.

Bias.—Material cut on the cross.

Casing.—The cover for a ribbon, string or bone.

Cobble.—This is used to mean untidy, slovenly work.

Gusset.—A small piece of material let in to give ease to some part of an article or for enlarging it.

Mitre.—The cut given to corners of patches to enable them to be sewn down well is called to "mitre" the corners.

Nap.—The woolly or hairy surface of cloth.

Nick.—This denotes a snip or notch.

Pile.—The pile is the fine hairy substance on cloth and the silk of velvet that rises up.

Piping.—A cord covered with material cut on the cross.

Placket.—The opening of a skirt.



Pucker.—To draw up your stuff in irregular "furrows."

Ravel.—The fraying out of material that is very loosely woven.

Self-edge or Selvage.—The woven edge of any material.

Slot.—A casing or running into which tape or ribbon is run. Often found in loose blouses for gathering in the fulness.

Stiletto.—A sharply-pointed instrument used for making eyelet holes.

Warp.—The selvage way of the material.

Woof.—The threads woven across the material; often spoken of as "the wrong way of the stuff."

Cutting Out.—Always cut out articles of clothing in the length of the material. This is a very important thing to remember as it makes a great difference in the look and wear of the article.

Shoulder-straps, waist-bands and wrist-bands should always be cut lengthways of the stuff.



A SUMMER MANTLE.

at the edge of the skirt, while the bodices are very much trimmed with accordion-pleated white *chiffon*, also Bolero jackets, capes, ruffs, and yokes of all shapes are made of this *chiffon*. White satin ribbon sashes are used whenever the pattern is white, and the ends are generally decorated with *chiffon* *ruches*, or a wide flounce of accordion-pleated *chiffon* across the end.

So far as gloves are concerned, grey ones are more worn than white, but the black stitchings are as wide and heavy as ever. Most of the good shops have brought out gloves at a moderate price, as they soil so soon, good ones are never worn. I am sorry to see that these gloves are mostly of Austrian manufacture, and one wonders how it is that everything must be "made in Germany." Why cannot cheap kid gloves be manufactured in England?

The last thing that I hear is, that white cloth jackets are to be the most stylish wear, lined with white satin. They are loose-fronted, but tight-fitting at the back, and will probably be used with white chip hats and white ostrich feathers, with trimmings of white satin or *chiffon*.

VARIETIES.

WISE DECISION.—Decision of character will often give to an inferior mind command over a superior.

WHEN WITH OTHERS.—Assert your own freedom if you will, but assert it modestly and quietly, respecting others as you wish to be respected yourself.

DUTY.—The path of duty lies in what is near and we seek for it in what is remote. The work of duty lies in what is easy and we seek for it in what is difficult.

TWO SORTS OF CONTENT.—There are two sorts of content; one is connected with exertion, the other with habits of indolence; the first is a virtue, the other is a vice.

GARDENING FOR PROFIT;

OR,

AUNT AMY'S LETTERS TO HER NIECE IN THE COUNTRY.

Letter III.

Chelsea. London, S.W.

MY DEAREST MARJORIE,—I am so pleased to hear that you are getting on well with the preparation of the strawberry beds, that is, as quickly as it is possible to do so with the unusual amount of rainy weather we are having just now; it is difficult to get on the land at all when it is so soaked with rain.

Speaking of wet reminds me of an old but excellent method for making boots thoroughly waterproof, a very necessary precaution for all gardeners, amateur or otherwise. They should be rubbed well, both soles and uppers, and especially between the welts, with castor oil. You may do them once or twice over, and then leave them to dry a day or two before wearing. They will keep quite soft and pliant, no matter how wet they get, and after a short time will polish beautifully, and will moreover wear better and last longer for this process.

I have ordered the strawberry plants, three hundred and fifty of them, and the grower advises that their planting should be done at the end of February, as the ground will be too

cold for them after this heavy rain, and also it is not improbable that a spell of frost will follow. For my own part I would rather have had them planted now, and risk their becoming acclimatised before severe frost, protecting them with a layer of bracken; but I suppose we must follow their advice.

You are fortunate in being able to obtain as much manure as is wanted merely for the trifling expense of cartage. It is often so in country districts. When farmers are not requiring it for their fields they are glad to be rid of its accumulation. So while you are having some in for the strawberries, take the opportunity of getting a half load dropped upon another vacant plot, which you can spare for a time for the preparation of a mushroom bed, and also a load of fresh loam from some disused pasture. Let them stand in two separate heaps, and get a boy to turn over the manure heap every two days for a week to allow some of the moisture and rankness to escape, for if the manure was used quite fresh it would become fiery hot and heat itself so dry that the spawn would not run in it except round the edges. The chief difficulty with inex-

perienced mushroom growers is in the proper preparation of the manure. It is either used so hot as to destroy the spawn, or else it has been overheated that the nature and strength are taken out of it, so that it will not generate sufficient warmth to propagate the spawn and enable the mushrooms to grow. When the first rankness has passed off, which will quickly be the case in cold weather, the two heaps must be well mixed together, adding double the quantity of loam to that of manure. The soil will steady the temperature and prolong its heating powers, as well as absorbing all amoniacal gases.

The bed must be built up at once. It could be made on the same plot of ground, but perhaps as this is your first attempt at mushroom-growing, it would be advisable to use some old boxes for the beds, placing them in a shed, or under the protection of a wall. Some broad shelves in the tool-house would make a suitable place for your winter crop, but wherever it is, put down a portion of the mixed mould into the boxes and press down very firmly to make it hard, then another layer of mould, also pressing it down, and so

on, until the boxes are full. If they are then to stand in the open air or in an exposed place, cover them with garden mats, old carpets, etc., to keep the heat in.

In another's week's time you may take the covers off and insert a stick to try the temperature. If the stick feels warm, but not hot, you must spawn the bed at once, having in the meantime bought three or four bricks of spawn from a seed merchant or nurseryman. They will cost about sixpence a brick. These must be broken up into pieces about the size of a hen's egg, and inserted six or eight inches apart, just under the surface. Then cover up closely again. If you look again in about ten or twelve days you will probably see that the soil is being covered with tiny white threads running all over it. If so it is all right, but if you do not see these threads, I should water the boxes with a small can of quite warm water, using a fine-rosed can, and then cover up quickly again. But if all seems right you may add a good two inches of nice fresh soil on to the boxes and press it down firmly as before. Leave them thus for another four weeks before you look again, when I hope you will see tiny mushrooms trying to peep through. Perhaps it may take six weeks before they come, so you must keep a watch, and when they arrive remove the old carpet and give a thick covering of nice clean straw instead. They will not need any more water until they have borne for some time, when perhaps if they seem to be exhausted a further dewing over with warm water would revive them for a short time longer.

As I said before, they can be grown entirely in the open, even in mid-winter, but they need much covering of straw and matting, so I think your best plan is to adopt boxes in sheds for the present. Your summer crop can be outside altogether, although, as a rule, it scarcely pays to keep on with them after May. From November to May is the most profitable time for them, when they realise from tenpence to a shilling per pound at wholesale prices.

I will send you down some one pound punnets which I can get very cheaply by the gross at some of the basket-makers round Covent Garden. When there seems to be a sufficient quantity ready to fill several of the punnets, you should write to the secretary of the British Produce Association and say how many pounds you could send up on a certain day. In all probability they will take them, but if not wire me at once, and I will go to Covent Garden and make arrangements with a commission salesman there.

The packing of the mushrooms is a matter requiring considerable care. When you are ready to do it, go to the boxes with a large basket, and cut cleanly all the mushrooms that are ready, leaving the very smallest to grow bigger. Then, covering them up again, take your basket into the house, spread out your punnets, lining each one with a half sheet of the blue paper I shall send you. Place each punnet in the scale, and carefully fill it with mushrooms, laying them lightly one over the other, and as nearly of one size as possible, putting aside any damaged or unsightly ones for home use. See that each punnet weighs just over the pound, then cover them with the other half sheet of blue paper and tie round with bast. The punnets are then placed in a shallow box that will take them without crushing, or if in a deeper box it must be fitted with a tray to hold the second layer.

From the amount of manure you have made up into beds you should be able to cut at least ten pounds of mushrooms a week for about six weeks, or two months from the time they come into bearing. If you only get tenpence per pound for them they will still be very profitable, and you may, if they are well grown ones, get 1s. to 1s. 3d. It will depend upon the general supply.

I have given you the whole of the instructions concerning them in this letter because you can then cut it out and paste up the directions in some convenient place, and know exactly what you have to do.

The beginning or the middle of February will be the time for the general seed sowing of your spring and summer vegetables, unless there is frost, and the majority of seeds can be got in then, though many people prefer to wait until March, but I do not think there is much to be gained by so doing, and each month brings its own special work. Peas should be planted upon the plot which happens to have had the most manure dug into it, for they love a rich deep soil. They should be sown in rows, from four to seven feet apart, and if they require protection from the cutting winds of March, you will find that some boards placed edgewise along the rows on the windward side afford capital shelter. A first sowing of peas is often made in November. They appear above-ground in January, and in some parts of the country they do well, especially in the south, but you will not gain much by autumn sowing in your locality.

You will find the varieties known as "English Wonder," "Earliest of All," or "Ringleader," as first earlies to be very useful kinds, and "Champion of England," "Stanley," for second early, followed by "Mammoth Marrowfat," "Ne plus ultra," or "Veitch's Perfection" for a late summer crop. A few of each series of the above will, sown at three weeks' intervals, keep you well supplied with luscious peas all the summer through. The main crop of broad beans can be got in now, and of these "Early Mazagan" or "Green Windsor" will be the best. You can make a second sowing in April if liked, to come in after the first are over. Runner beans are not so hardy, and it is not usual to sow them before the end of April or beginning of May for fear of frost, which cuts them down very quickly.

On one of the sheltered borders you can make a sowing of early carrots, the scarlet short horn, and a sprinkling of broccoli seeds, parsnips, and early salads should also find a place, to be planted out when large enough to handle. The main crop of carrots, turnips, onions, should be sown in March, and amongst them lettuces of different sorts and radishes can be scattered. At the end of the month the first crop of early potatoes should go in. "Early Regents" or "Myatt's Ashleaf" are perhaps the best varieties.

Herbs and garnishing plants should always flourish in a lady's garden; they take up but little space, and besides, their utility give a quaint old-world air to the garden. Of these the most useful are basil, chervil, fennel, marjoram, mint, parsley, sage, sorrel, thyme, and summer and winter savoury. You may grow them along the borders of the path, and they are all very saleable too. Then there are medicinal herbs, such as balm, borage, camomile, horehound, hyssop, lavender, rosemary, and wormwood, from which simple teas and drinks are made, and also washes and cosmetics for the complexion, some quaint recipes for which I may perhaps give you by-and-by, but at any rate they are very useful herbs to keep in a country house during winter-time when one is far from the doctor. They are Nature's remedies for many an ill, and not to be lightly despised. I may as well add just here a word or two about the best way of drying them, lest I should forget later on.

All herbs should be gathered dry, and in sunshine after dry weather (end of July or August, before they run to seed). They should be hung up in bunches and dried in the shade, in a dry shed if possible, and when perfectly dried they must be pressed close by a press or laid under weights. They are then wrapped in paper and the packets deposited in a drawer

or dry cupboard, and when opened for use they must always be carefully shut afterwards. This keeps in their flavour, and treated thus they are very different from bunches which have been hung up indefinitely until they have become dusty and their flavour quite gone.

I am glad to hear from your letter to-day that you have planted the strawberries, and hope they are now doing well. They will need a little protection from frosty nights, and I should not yet remove the litter of bracken which was strewn round them when they were planted. They ought not to require any watering unless the ground becomes very hard and cracked, which it sometimes does in March, from the effect of the drying winds. If this is the case you had better give them a good soaking now and then with weak manure water. Some sheep droppings placed in a barrel full of water and allowed to stand a few days is excellent. It will help the crowns to swell, which is our object just now. They need this extra care because they were planted in spring instead of last autumn, and have not had the rain of the winter to help to swell them, so they must be assisted to make fine trusses of bloom if we are to secure a good crop of strawberries this season.

The other seeds may need watering at times too, but it should be done with a fine-rosed can, and early in the morning is a better time than evening for them just now, as they do not get so chilled, and the moisture practically evaporates before nightfall. When you have any particularly fine seeds to sow, such for instance as lobelia, or begonia, and want to scatter them very evenly over a small surface, it is a good plan to mix the seed with a little silver sand, and then place it in a tin pepper pot and dust over the prepared surface. In this way they will not require further covering, and will come up very evenly and regularly.

I have not given you any special instructions with regard to the flower garden this year, for I think you have quite enough to do at present with the entire management of the kitchen garden. It is not possible to do everything well at one time, so for this season it will be better just to keep the flower garden neat and tidy, transplanting and dividing such of the roots as may specially need it, and fill vacant spaces with annuals, nasturtiums, mignonette, sweet peas, morning glories, Iceland poppies, etc., but not attempting anything that will take more time than the odd half hours you may have to spare from the kitchen garden crops and your other duties. Another year, if our crops do fairly well, and your father is able to help you again, or can afford to get you a little regular help in the shape of a boy to do the rougher work, we may perhaps include flowers and perchance also poultry in the scheme of our operations. But for the present, dear, "Sufficient unto the day is the work thereof;" otherwise we should surely become discouraged. I am going away for a little visit to some friends in the south, so shall not have opportunity to write you such a long letter again for a few weeks, but I shall hope to hear of the success of the mushrooms and of the strawberries being in full bloom before I return to Chelsea.

Read all the directions over again very carefully, and above all do not forget to give copious draughts of manure-water to the strawberries, unless indeed the dry winds of March are followed, as they should be, by the gentle showers of April, when of course your labours will be lightened considerably, or as Chaucer quaintly puts it—

"Whanne that April with his shoures sote
The droughte of March hath perced to
the rote."

Ever your loving

AUNT AMY.

GARDENING FOR PROFIT;

OR,

AUNT AMY'S LETTERS TO HER NIECE IN THE COUNTRY.

Letter IV.

Chelsea, London, S.W.

MY DEAREST MARJORIE,

I have been greatly pleased with your accounts of the progress of the garden, and especially to hear that the mushrooms yielded so satisfactorily. The crop was perhaps not quite so heavy as it should have been considering the surface spawned, but as a first experiment it was very good indeed. It has been a mild winter and spring and that has caused the prices realised to be rather lower than is usual in severer weather, as all kinds of vegetables were also plentiful. But we must not grumble at this, for a mild winter has its advantages as well as its drawbacks; had it been very severe we might have lost a large number of the young strawberry plants, instead of having them, as they now are, laden with trusses of fine blooms.

I am sorry to hear that you are troubled with insects, worms, slugs, snails, and green fly; this too is a consequence of the mild winter, severe frost usually kills a great number of them. However, we must see if we cannot do battle with these enemies, so I have looked up some old and tried remedies for them.

For the worms, which are so troublesome on the lawn and amongst the seed-beds, I should try a top dressing of common salt, sprinkled over the grass and the seed beds; it will not harm the seedlings, but on the contrary is a capital fertiliser. Also you can mix a quantity of dry soot with the salt and sprinkle in the same way, but not amongst the lettuces, as it is difficult to free them of the soot when they are cut. Lime water is frequently recommended for worms, but I used to find it difficult to apply without burning the leaves of the plants, and prefer one or two applications of the salt instead. Choose a dry day for the operation, so that it may lie on the ground as long as possible without dissolving.

Slugs and snails will prove most destructive pests amongst the strawberry beds if not got under at once, and wherever there are cabbages and cauliflowers there snails and slugs are certain to abound. Their greatest depredations are committed in showery spring weather. The greatest friends you could possibly have in the garden would be a pair of peewits, for these birds hunt out snails and slugs from amongst strawberries and young seedlings of all kinds, and moreover they never damage the plants. Failing these, handpicking with a lantern after night-fall is the most effective remedy, but it is scarcely one you will like to carry out, so for the strawberries it will be better to try the more troublesome but effectual method of placing a ridge of bran round each plant. Slugs are very fond of it and it attracts them from all quarters. The following morning you must go round the little heaps with a small broom and dust pan, and a pail of salt and water, sweep them up and empty them into the pail; this will kill them at once. It will be a rather troublesome job amongst so many plants, and you may not have time to do all of them at once, so take some cabbage leaves, warm them in the oven until you can spread some unsalted lard evenly over their surface, place them overnight round the plants which are infested and in the morning you will find the slugs underneath, and can destroy them as before. If you persevere a week or two with these remedies I think you

will soon rid the garden of these pests, and an occasional raid will keep them under for the future.

The green fly which attacks the young tender shoots of currant bushes, and worse still the black fly which rejoices in the succulent tops of broad beans, are best got rid of by syringing with strong soapy water. If they are very bad it will be well to snip off the top of the shoots and burn them, syringing the rest of the plant. They are very injurious and must not be allowed to spread. For pot plants in the house, or under glass, fumigation with tobacco is the best remedy, but it is difficult to apply out of doors.

Field mice are most destructive vermin in the country. They nibble the stems off your plants, or gnaw them right through their roots. They will also dig up whole rows of peas, beans, radish and other seeds, and one wonders why they have not come up. They are moreover very cunning and difficult to trap. The surest remedy for them is poison, but this you cannot use where there are children or pet animals running about. I think if you place a few traps about the garden you will get rid of the majority at any rate. A simple way of arranging these traps is to bury a rather deep earthenware basin in the earth till it is but slightly above the surface, half fill it with water, and plaster the rim inside with lard; the mice in their efforts to reach the lard generally overbalance themselves and after a short swim they perish.

The strawberries will now require great care and much attention bestowing upon them; they must never be allowed to get "dust dry," and if there is not much rain, they will need watering with weak liquid manure water twice or three times a week. The plentiful application of manure water when they are in bloom to set the fruit is the secret of success. Take care not to touch the foliage or flowers if you can possibly avoid it, and this process will be easier if you have a long tin spout added to your watering-can. Give the roots a thorough soaking; this will



help to swell the fruit and improve both its quality and size.

To prevent rapid evaporation, and also to keep the fruit clean, it is desirable to spread a layer of short litter or clean straw round each plant. If this is not easily procurable, it would be better to gather a quantity of bracken fronds and green twigs from the hedgerows, breaking them up into short lengths and arranging round the plants; they will at any rate serve to support the fruit from the ground, though not so well as the mulch of clean straw.

Some strawberry growers make a great point of cutting off all the large outside leaves of the plants just before the fruiting time, and

I think this would not be at all a bad plan in your neighbourhood as the sun is never so scorching as it is on the south coast where they leave all the foliage as it is required to shade the fruit.

After this is done, and before the crop is ripe enough to gather, you will have a little time to give to the other portion of the garden. Some preparations have now to be made for the autumn and winter, such as planting out of the winter brocoli and Brussels sprouts, celery, and late potatoes, and the sowing of seeds of winter salads, endive and corn salad. The young herb seedlings, too, will require transplanting to their permanent quarters. The early potatoes should be earthed up for the last time, and peas and beans staked.

When the first crop of broad beans has been gathered, the plants can be cut down to about six inches from the ground; they will then push up three or four stems instead of one and yield a good second crop. This will save you the trouble of making a fresh sowing; but it will be quite worth while to put in another row of scarlet runners to come in in late autumn.

Prune the tops of the gooseberry and currant bushes so that light and air may have free access to the branches and ripen the fruit. Birds are very partial to ripe gooseberries, and it is sometimes necessary to tie some black thread from point to point over the trees as a slight protection from their ravages.

I am glad to hear that your raspberry canes are looking so well. I did not know you had two plantations of them; but it is fortunate, especially as they promise a heavy crop, for raspberries are very highly thought of in London, and I have no doubt that if you pick the finest and pack them in punnets similarly to the strawberries they will be worth a good price. You are quite right in keeping them well-watered and applying liquid manure occasionally.

To-day I have been to King Street to order some more punnets for you, and also ordered six nice boxes, wooden ones, rather shallow, specially made to hold half-a-dozen punnets of strawberries. The lids of the boxes are just laid on, not nailed down, and they are piled one over the other and corded together.

Your name and address is to be burnt on each one, so that there will be no excuse if they are not duly returned to you. I thought you would probably fill about three boxes a day, that is eighteen punnets, partly strawberries, partly raspberries, and if the empty boxes are returned each day that number will be sufficient; but if there is any difficulty, or you find that you can fill more, send me a telegram at once and I will see to it.

Be sure to write to the Association in good time, saying that you will have some to send; it is possible, too, that I may get you a private customer or two as well. A lady has just started some tea-rooms in Regent Street; she will be obliged to have supplies of strawberries and cream by-and-by, and no doubt would be glad to have them sent to her direct instead of having to send out for them. I will see if it is possible to make a business arrangement with her; but do not, however, wait for this order, but send up to the Association regularly if you can.

At first sight it seems more natural to deal with private people; but the experience I gained long ago showed me that this is not always the most profitable plan, and that it frequently pays better to take a lower but permanent rate of payment from one firm than go from market to market, or customer to customer, in search of a higher, your produce deteriorating meanwhile for want of gathering at the right moment.

About the time of day for picking the strawberries—the morning of the day upon which they are to be eaten is the best of course, but you are so far from London that they would arrive too late for sale on that day. So I think the next best plan would be to commence picking them after five in the evening, the great heat of the sun will be gone and the dew not have begun to fall, so they will be quite dry. Gather them in a large shallow basket or tray, then take them indoors and line your punnets with three strawberry leaves, place each one in the scale and fill carefully and lightly with sound, unbruised fruit. Then put them in the box, in two rows, and cover with a thick layer of strawberry leaves. Stuff the spaces between with cut leaves also. If very hot weather a sheet of paper, in addition to the leaves, will

help to keep the heat out. Cord and label the boxes, and get them down to the local station in time for a midnight or very early morning train to town. Above all, do not neglect to enclose with each consignment a list of contents, and keep a duplicate of the same in your account book, so that you know exactly how matters stand and what money is owing to you. The strawberries will arrive in splendid condition if thus carefully packed, and be in good time for the morning sales in town.

I am very glad that they promise to be such fine ones this year, though, of course, the crop will not be very large, as they are young plants; next year, however, will be their best bearing time, and you may confidently look forward to doubling your consignments, whatever they may amount to this year. If you get 250 lbs. weight from the three hundred and fifty plants, they will have done remarkably well, although next year they may yield from 600 to 700 lbs.

I shall be eager to hear how you succeed with them, and wish I could spare the time to run down and help you at this critical moment, but, as you are aware, although it is a busy time in the country, with so many crops requiring attention at the same time, it is also the busiest time of the year in London, with "the season" in full swing. The Park is crowded, the streets are bright with the glitter of harness and smart equipages, and the shop windows displaying all the dainty novelties prepared for summer wear. Indeed, I know of no place so attractive as London on a fine June morning; I enjoy it immensely, and yet, at the same time yearn longingly for a sight of the sweet, open country, where the June daisies and grasses are bowing their heads in the soft warm breeze. I think, if we could, we should all be glad to lengthen this month of balmy days—the noontide of the year. As we cannot, we sigh with the poet, who exclaims—

"Oh, what is so rare as a day in June;
Then, if ever, come perfect days,
When heaven tries the earth if it be in
tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays."

Ever your loving aunt,
AMY.

HOLIDAYS IN THE GREEN COUNTRY.

By "MEDICUS."

"The tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy
wood;
Their colours and their forms were then
to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm."

"God made the country,
Man made the town."



HAVE two or three subjects for my monthly health-sermons in my work-book, which I hope to take up soon, and which I think will be of interest to my readers. One is "The Turkish Bath and Health of the Skin,"

another "Eczema, Prickly Heat and Kindred Ailments," and a third, "Life at Hydropathic Establishments."

I had meant to have taken the first of these to-day, but as many hard-worked lassies in all

lines of life will now be longing for a holiday of some kind, having, I trust, laid up a bit for expenses connected therewith, I think I cannot do better than tell some of you where you may spend a delightful holiday, not at the seaside but in the green country.

I am very sorry to have to report, that tens of thousands of the inhabitants of this country flock to the seaside annually during the season, who, as far as health is concerned, would be ten times better at home, and for several reasons—

First and foremost. Every case is not benefited by sea air and sea breezes. For let me tell you that girls, who are very much run down by over-work and breathing the stifling air of badly-ventilated and unwholesome workshops, generally suffer more or less from congestion of the brain and irritability. They are often very nervous, and the buffeting of the winds on the beach, the glare of light that is reflected from white sands and the sea make them worse rather than better.

Secondly. At the seaside, unless one is a

millionaire and can order hotel apartments regardless of expense, there is often a lack of home comforts during the season. Places are mostly full-up, so that you may thoroughly tire yourself out the very first day looking for a decent room. The price of this room may be startling, for lodging-house keepers have consciences it is true—and so has a coal-carter's horse.

Thirdly. There is too much excitement and din at most seaside watering-places. You get carried away in the vortex of this; the streets are hard and hot, you go to bed tired almost every night, and perhaps toss wearily about in your sleep, so that you awake peevish in the morning, and when the end of your holiday comes at last you learn, to your sorrow, that you are worse than before you came down.

But a holiday spent in the cool green country is often much to be recommended, especially to those who are jaded and weary and tired of bustle and stir.

I cannot describe many country health-

the top of the crown, and caught down here and there on the brim. A straight band of black satin ribbon seems to tie the crown firmly in; and at the left side is a big bunch of poppies, black, and pale shades of green, with a clump of foliage, and a black ostrich-feather ornament standing straight up. A wide double bow of black satin ribbon is placed just under the brim at the back, and looks most pretty on the hair. This is an exceedingly good style of hat, and is very smart.

An ordinary sailor hat is the shape of the last sketch, and is in a delicate shade of pearl-grey chip; a band of ribbon velvet in a deeper shade of grey is laid round the crown, and buckled in front with a very handsome steel and paste buckle. Three deliciously soft grey-and-white wings are sewn on to the crown near the front, with another of the manufactured aigrettes, this one being white, coming from the middle of them. The silk gauze, which is called *brillante*, forms the soft white rosettes,

some resting on the side of the crown, and others lying on the brim; and I cannot describe how dainty and fascinating the whole hat is when finished. It would look charmingly cool and pretty on the hottest midsummer day.

I hope these sketches and hints may be of real use to a great many of you, and that your summer hats may be prettier in consequence.

CYNTHIA.

GARDENING FOR PROFIT;

OR,

AUNT AMY'S LETTERS TO HER NIECE IN THE COUNTRY.

Letter V.

Chelsea, London, S.W.

MY DEAREST MARJORIE,—I am quite jubilant over your last letter recounting the grand sales from the strawberries. They were indeed a splendid crop judging by those you sent me. I weighed one or two specimens of the British Queens and found they were over one ounce each in weight. They were exceedingly fine, and so dry and well-flavoured. The Paxtons were almost as fine, but to my thinking they were rather acid; this was due to the soil, for they are a peculiar strawberry, being acid in some parts of the country and sweet in others; some people prefer them on account of this very acidity. Both sorts travelled very well indeed, and I think you could not do better than continue with the same varieties now that they have proved their suitability to your soil and climate.

As soon as the fruiting is over they will throw out runners in all directions, the strongest one from each plant must be selected and layered down near to its parent, all the others being ruthlessly cut away. The parent plants will not thus become so exhausted as they would otherwise do. Keep them still well watered if the weather be dry so that the crowns may swell and become thoroughly ripened in the sunshine, but it is not now necessary to give them manure water at all. By the beginning or middle of August the runners will have become established little plants and can be severed from their parents and planted out upon a new plantation, which has in the meantime been prepared for them by manuring and digging over. You will thus have a second strawberry plantation, and if treated as liberally as the parents were they will yield equally good results when their fruiting time comes round, while the crop from the parent bed, being its second season, will be its heaviest. After three years' fruiting it is better to destroy the bed entirely, for the amount of fruit they give is then not worth the space occupied, and you will have the younger beds coming on. A good way of destroying the bed is simply to dig the plants in, thus returning to the soil exactly those elements which have been taken out of it. I should plant early potatoes on this plot for one season before using it again for strawberries.

If you are equally successful in the sale of your produce another year it will be quite worth while renting an extra piece of land for larger plantations and employing a permanent helper, as this would give you more time to devote to the flower garden, where many simple plants can be grown for which there is an equally good market. Some day perhaps, who knows, you may become the proud possessor of one or even two glasshouses and frames! Then would come the question of the forcing of early fruit and vegetables beside your outdoor grown.

But for the next year or so I would still advise you to concentrate all your energies upon the same routine as this year, only adding as much more of each crop as you are able to cope with.

After the new strawberry beds are planted the raspberry canes should receive attention; having done so well they are worthy of still more care. All the old canes should be cut out after the fruiting is over, and the best of the young ones left, the weakly suckers being all cut away so that the strength of the plant may go to the formation of good, sound, well-ripened canes for next season's bearing. It is important to see to these matters, that is the proper cutting and pruning of all fruiting plants and shrubs as soon as they cease bearing for the season, so as to give the branches as much air and sunshine during the late summer months as possible, and to prevent the strength of the plant from running to useless growth. It is in fact, the science of domestic economy applied to the kitchen garden!

I am hoping to come and see you before the plums are quite over, for of all fruit I love them best, and am grieved to hear that the wasps are troublesome and threatening to spoil them so. I should try hanging some wide-mouthed bottles half filled with treacle and water amongst the branches; it attracts them away from the fruit. The trees will require to be examined every day, gathering all that are ripe in the early morning. Plums will ripen in the house if not quite ready to eat when gathered, indeed sometimes one is obliged to do this to circumvent the wasps. They are very fastidious, and you may be sure that a fruit is fully ripe when they attack it; they will not touch it otherwise.

With regard to the apples and pears, both are improved in quality if gathered just before they are fully ripe. When the seed of either has changed from a light straw colour to a dark brown, the fruit may then be gathered and will ripen without shrivelling or rot. Both should be taken from the tree by hand, not shaken off, and should be carefully placed in baskets and taken at once to the cellar or storehouse to be laid away where the light can be excluded, with the same care to prevent injury from bruising. If you compare the fruit gathered in this way with any left to ripen on the trees, you will be surprised to find how much superior it is in flavour.

Choose a cool, dry place for storing fruit, and one which can be kept dark if possible; it must also be kept perfectly clean, for dirt harbours disease for fruit as well as for human beings. Do not use hay or straw as a covering or even paper, for strange to say, both apples and pears have the peculiar property of absorbing the flavour of everything which comes near them. A friend of mine once stored a large quantity of beautiful dessert apples in a stable loft, and to exclude the frost, burnt a petroleum lamp in it. One night this

lamp smoked dreadfully for some time before it was discovered, and the whole stock of apples imbibed the flavour of paraffin smoke so that they were quite useless. We tried washing them with soap and water, and several rinsings of clear water, but without effect.

At the Chiswick Gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society they have beautiful fruit, and their mode of keeping it is to lay the fruit singly in layers, not touching each other, upon plain deal boards, so that air has free access to them all round. In this way they never shrivel, but are perfectly sound and good even in the following spring, when they send specimens to the flower shows. Considering how much more valuable well kept fruit is it is quite worth while to take this extra care at its harvesting time.

After the trees are cleared it is a good plan to give them all a top dressing of manure; the rains of autumn and winter wash it gently down to their roots, and it adds greatly to the size and quality of the fruit the following year.

In October, when these matters are all attended to, it would be well to start making the mushroom beds again, and this time you might try in the open as well as your boxes under cover. They will thus come into bearing about the middle of November, and will command a good price. Proceed exactly as you did last year, being careful to obtain the spawn from a good and reliable grower, and not to allow the beds to become cold before spawning them. I forget whether I have already told you that mushrooms can be induced to grow under the orchard trees by inserting pieces of spawn about the size of a hen's egg here and there in the grass about the end of July when the temperature of the ground is, in ordinary seasons, warm enough to set the spawn running. The first showery days of August will bring up the mushrooms, but if it is a wet summer it is not worth while trying this plan, as the earth is then too cold to do any good.

In the flower garden the autumn is the best time for transplanting and dividing all biennial and perennial roots, biennials meaning, as you are doubtless aware, a plant which lives about two years, being produced the first year from seed, and the following year blossoms, seeds, and perishes. Perennial is the name given to plants which last longer than two years, some of which shed their leaves only, leaving bare stems, and others cast up fresh stems every year. Aquilegias, or columbines, belong to this latter class, and some of the new varieties are exceedingly pretty. A. Skinneri is a very distinct species, a delicate canary yellow, very dainty when cut, and another, A. Pyrenaica, a pale mauve, and other varieties in pink and crimson. These are quite worthy of being cultivated for sale, they are very uncommon, and moreover if cut before they are fully out, they travel fairly well.

The old clove carnation is another very saleable flower; the variety named Uriah Pike

is considered the best, as it does not split at the calyx so much as some other varieties. It will be of no use to try growing roses, except they were for local sale, because they do not travel well, and you are too far from London to ensure their being in the market early enough. To fetch the best price it is absolutely necessary that they should be cut the same morning, but the hardy flowers I have mentioned will all travel well. For the autumn, some of the new varieties of the Michaelmas daisies are most useful, they are very beautiful too. Then there are chrysanthemums, both early and late, of sorts too numerous to mention; they are now so largely grown by everybody that I doubt their being at all a profitable crop. The supply is far in excess of the demand, in London at any rate. Violets are a good paying crop, but I fear you would not do much with them without a frame. *Myosotis*, or forget-me-not on the other hand, will grow as a weed in your limestone district.

But the great secret of success in flower as well as in vegetable and fruit gardening, is to select one or two crops which are known to do well in your particular soil and climate and grow them to as great a degree as possible. Too many varieties will distract your attention

and prevent you from concentrating your energies upon the points most necessary to success.

The proper packing of cut flowers to be sent for sale is a very important point. If sent up by parcels post the boxes should be of light chip wood, bought by the gross flat, and folded when required for use. They are very cheap, costing from one penny to two-pence each, yet they are very strong. The flowers should be carefully cut, bunched and allowed to stand in water for an hour before they are packed, the boxes are lined with tissue paper and then well filled with the flowers. No room should be left for shaking about, and no fully blown flowers be sent; remember they will always open in water on arrival.

I remember some years ago a lady in Ireland writing to ask me to dispose of some snowdrops for her. Her estate was simply carpeted with them. I promised to do what I could, and she sent a large box of the snowdrops as a sample, containing at least a hundred bunches. They arrived in splendid condition and were the largest and whitest I have ever seen, but alas, the box chosen had previously held bloaters, or red herrings, and the poor flowers had so strongly imbibed that pungent odour that no one would buy them,

and the whole boxful of lovely bunches had to be thrown away! In this market, as in every other, competition is so keen that one cannot be too particular over every detail.

I am so glad that your father is now better and able to return to his business again. He has told me of the great pleasure it has been to him and to your dear mother during these warm summer days to watch you at work amongst the garden plots, gathering here and planting there, with tireless energy; and if you have sometimes felt life to be monotonous and tame, you must remember how much they love you, and how much they would miss you if you were to leave the garden for the city, which would not really yield you more profit in the end if you had yourself to keep out of your earnings, and I know that you would quickly droop and pine for the freedom and the sweet pure air of the country.

Presently, when the autumn work is well off hand, I shall be glad to have you spend a few weeks with me before you settle down to the quiet routine of the winter, but this is a matter I must arrange more particularly with your mother, so good-bye for the present, and believe me,

Ever your loving Aunt Amy.
(To be continued.)

STUDENT-LIFE IN FLORENCE.

Letter IV.

Via Seraglio,
Florence.

June 1896.

MY DEAR L.,—Your letter came like a delightful and refreshing breeze from the Fatherland. When I hear you speaking of the Thames, and the boat-houses, the regattas, and the cool evenings spent on its waters, it makes me homesick. However beautiful the scenery here, however blue the skies, we have no trees like yours, we have no river like good old Father Thames; the green, and rather stagnant Arno is a poor substitute indeed.

Oh, by-the-bye I had the most charming surprise a short time back. I was getting through a tiresome morning's cleaning when I heard a strange rat-rat at the door. It was such a distinctly English knock that I hastened quickly to find out whom it might be.

Imagine my transport, my delight to see beaming upon me the dear, kind face of Mrs. H—. She had not told me anything about coming here, nor did I in the least expect her. My surprise was only equalled by my joy. After the first exchanges of happiness at the *rencontre*, and, after I had asked her a thousand questions concerning home, and home news, we planned together a series of the most delightful excursions, including Fiesole, Vallombrosa, and Pisa.

* * *

I have been to all the places mentioned above, and a great many others besides. Oh, the intense, the radiant loveliness of Florence and its environs, who can worthily describe them, who adequately sing their praise?

Fiesole is, as you know, one of the largest and the most important of the villa-dotted hills surrounding "Fair Firenze." Oftentimes from afar I had admired its undulating beauty, with the purple clouds throwing their shadows on the sweet green fields, and olive groves, and tender, clinging vineyards, and now, in company with Mrs. H—, I had the happiness of a closer investigation. As our carriage wound in and out the zig-zag roadway I could note with beating heart the banks of wild flowers, tulips, and anemones; the villas bright in luxury encased in terraced gardens; the graceful grouping of the farms and cottages, the grey extent of mountain ground,

the ilex and the olive. It was at Fiesole where Giotto spent the first years of his life tending his flocks of sheep amongst its verdant fields. Cimabue also, and the angel painter Fra Angelico abode here. What inspirations they must have gained from such surroundings, and how their hearts must have beat with joyful pride on viewing through the network of the trees the distant spires and gables, the domes and villas of their lily city.

On the top of Fiesole is found a cathedral with a slender tower. It is dedicated to San Romulo, and has played an important part in the history of Florence. There is also a little church in the piazza beyond, which contains a tabernacle by Robbia. A number of important Etruscan fortifications on the brow of the hill are well worth seeing—these are the remains of a Roman amphitheatre half buried in flowers, and a sort of vault called *Le Buche delle Fate*, or "Den of the Fairies;" there is also an ancient Gothic archway.

On our return home we visited a villa in which Mrs. H— had formerly lived, called "Villa Querci," one of those ideal Florentine abodes so oft described, so often sung about; a house white, and fair, as though built by the fairies surrounded by a garden, or rather bower of roses, so wildly beautiful, so extravagant, and so bewildering, that one's very mind got puzzled, and one's eyesight dazzled by the glowing, perfumed mass.

We dined together in the evening at Doney *à Nipote*; an excellent meal at five francs a head including ice, and music.

For Vallombrosa, that far-famed mountain, supposed by some to be the loveliest spot on earth, we started at six o'clock in the morning. The journey thither was most interesting, especially the mountain path, up which we climbed in a curious sort of car with heavy cogs to the wheels.

You know it was at Vallombrosa that Milton wrote his *Paradise Lost*, amidst its forests, waterfalls, and mountains bare. We went reverently to pay tribute to his memory and to Paradisino, where his house once stood. It is being pulled down now to give way to a large hotel. Doesn't this sound like desecration?

To attempt to describe the varied beauties of this fairest spot on earth would be a crime,

and my feeble language is indeed inadequate to such a task; for Vallombrosa is everything, and has everything, from foaming cataracts, to gentle streams, from flowery meadow-land to hoary forest. Let me content myself with a short quotation concerning it by Elizabeth Barrett-Browning. Speaking of Milton she says—

"He sang of Adam's Paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa."

Returning from Vallombrosa we were caught in a most terrific storm, and the sight of the sheet lightning piercing through the clouds, giving lurid glimpses of the craggy rocks and precipices was most appalling.

Pisa took another delightful day, and I cannot describe to you the thousand thoughts which assailed me whilst gazing at that noble pile of buildings massed together including the cathedral, the baptistery, the leaning tower, and Campo Santo.

Pisa is a quiet, sweet, mediæval town, with a breath of bygone times accompanying you at every step. The people look sleepy, business seems slack, but the Arno flows just as brightly, just as peacefully as elsewhere, and the dear hills like a chain around the town show up their soft and undulating forms.

I am not going to describe to you the interior of the cathedral. It is too severe a task for a short treatise, so I will only say that the very beautiful wrought-iron lamp, under whose form the great Galileo worked, is there, and throws its deep, decided shadows on the marble pavement.

The frescoes in the Campo Santo are most interesting, but the spirits so vividly depicted frightened me not a little, and I carried away such a vivid recollection of them, that they even haunted me in my sleep.

To-morrow I am going to play the part of cicerone, and take Mrs. H— over some of my beloved galleries and statuary.

She leaves to-morrow evening, and I shall miss her dear, kind face, her sympathy, her thoughtful goodness. I shall miss everything, but it will only be an *au revoir*, *à riverderci*, for am I not myself destined to return sooner or later to the dear land of my birth, my fatherland, my England?

Yours,

GARDENING FOR PROFIT;

OR,

AUNT AMY'S LETTERS TO HER NIECE IN THE COUNTRY.

Letter VI.

Chelsea,
London,
S.W.

MY DEAREST MARJORIE,—In reply to the question which you ask in your last letter as to whether it would be feasible to add a small stock of poultry to your "gardening business," I must say that I think it would be not only quite feasible but also very profitable. Years ago, when I was a young girl, we lived in a large country house in France, where we had a large stock of poultry of various sorts, and so far as I can recollect they gave but little trouble and yielded pleasurable results in the way of good eggs and pullets for the table.

The French, as a nation, are extremely fond of eggs, and so they contrive to have them in great abundance all the year round. They feed their fowls well, chiefly on curds and buck-wheat, and keep them very warm, roosting them in a stable, or even in the kitchen during winter-time. Keeping the hens warm in winter is really the great secret of obtaining eggs during the cold weather.

French breeders also make a point of keeping their fowls in as small a space as possible in order to generate the warmth that will induce them to lay, while English breeders on the other hand allow more space for exercise, larger houses and freer circulation of air. A close warm roosting-place does certainly cause the production of more eggs in winter when they are scarcest and most valuable; but air and exercise are very necessary to rear superior fowls for the table, for if they have the run of a farmyard or good fields in which to pick up grain and insects, their flesh is much superior in flavour, and a little confinement and crowding at night will do no harm.

A small, lean-to house or shed could very easily be made for them with boards about an inch thick against the west or south side of any wall. Felting should be laid over the roof because it keeps in the heat; but it must be tarred over once a year to maintain

it thoroughly waterproof. The ventilation should be so arranged that no draught is caused, and will be best done by a small opening at the top covered by some perforated canvas or a sheet of perforated glass. Under the roosting-place some boards should be fixed, or better still a broad shelf, and under this shelf the nests could be arranged. The shelf should be sanded and scraped clean every morning, not only for the sake of the cleanliness which is so necessary to the health of the fowls, but also to collect the manure which is very valuable, being strong, stimulating and nitrogenous, possessing great power in forcing the growth of vegetables, particularly strawberries; but, being so strong, you must be careful to dilute it with an equal quantity of earth.

Fowls are very liable to be troubled with insects, and to keep these down the roosting-house should be lime-washed three or four times a year. For this purpose also a dust-heap must be allowed them in a corner of their run, where fresh-sifted coal-ashes can be thrown every day. This dust-heap is just as necessary to them as water for our baths is to ourselves. It cleanses their feathers and skin from vermin, and is very instrumental in promoting their health. If they should seem to be much troubled with insects, some wood-ashes and a little flowers of sulphur can be mixed in the heap. Plenty of old mortar rubbish kept in a dry place under the shed provides them with the materials for eggshells, and also aids their digestion, for hens kept in rather confined spaces are very apt to lay soft-shelled eggs if not provided with the necessary material. A square or two of fresh turf to peck at does them good and amuses them too.

Having so many valuable crops in the garden, you will be obliged to keep them in a covered-over run for the greater part of the year, and they will thrive quite well, provided they are kept clean and properly fed. In the autumn you could perhaps let them out into the fields near you for a time, when they would pick up a good part of their nourishment for themselves.

While they are confined to the run they will require to be fed three times a day. The morning meal should be of warm soft food, potato parings boiled and mixed with meal or bran, or mangold-wurtzel, swedes, or other turnips mixed with poultry meal. The mixture must not be too soft, but dry and friable, or the fowls will refuse to eat it. The mid-day meal may consist of the house scraps cut up small and thrown out. They are particularly fond of these, and soon learn the time of day when they may expect them; you will find them waiting anxiously when you go out with the plate. At night a good feed of corn is the most nourishing and sustaining meal, because it is not so quickly digested. Fresh leaves of cabbages and lettuces may be given them freely, it gives them employment as well as food; but, above all, do not forget to see that they have a constant supply of fresh clean water, for this is indispensable.

If eggs alone are wanted it would be better for you to commence in the spring by buying as many hens as you have room for—six or seven hens to one cock. They should not be more than a year to eighteen months old, and if in good health will already be laying, or will begin almost immediately, and if well housed and fed, will continue to give you a constant supply of eggs until they moult in the autumn.

Before they cease laying and begin to lose

their condition by moulting, it is best to kill them and replace by young pullets hatched in March or April. These would begin to lay in November, and might be kept until the following autumn, when they too should be disposed of and the stock again replaced in the same way. This is the most profitable plan to follow in rearing poultry, though it sounds rather cruel. It gives a good supply of eggs all the year round, and at the same time provides some good and saleable table fowls. If you could give them a run over the fields a week or two before killing, you would find them as fat as anyone could desire, being more like Michaelmas geese than chickens.

With regard to the breeds, the Wyandotte is considered a prolific layer, some having been known to lay over three hundred eggs per annum. It is also a very good table bird, and not inclined to broodiness. Black Hamburgs are noble-looking birds, the cocks often weighing seven pounds. They do not, however attain to maturity until they are three years old, and therefore should not be killed off in autumn like the others. They are also prolific layers, and not large eaters, so they are a profitable bird to keep, but they do not thrive quite so well in a small run. Dorkings are the very perfection of table birds, but they are not good layers, and do not thrive really well, except on a very dry soil.

Of French breeds, the Crève Coeur is perhaps the best. It is a fine bird and much kept in France; it lays very large white eggs. La Flèche is another very good variety. Cochin-China, Brahmas, Malays, Minorcas, Andalusians, Leghorns, Houdans, are all very good birds both for the production of eggs and for table use, and as general "barn-door" fowls.

In addition to these there are many fancy varieties, some having one excellence and some another, and to those who go in for keeping "pure breeds," there is a considerable profit to be made by the sale of eggs for hatching purposes. There are many advertisements of such in the *Bazaar* and the *Feathered World*, so that some people must find it fairly remunerative.

I do not know what varieties are most common in your neighbourhood, but with these notes regarding the chief peculiarities of the principal breeds, you will no doubt be able to make a fair selection. In any case do not buy too many fowls to begin with; a dozen hens and two cocks would be quite sufficient until you have thoroughly learned how to manage them, and even then it is not advisable to go in for poultry-rearing upon a large scale; it has frequently been stated that fowls pay well in a small way, but not at all when reared wholesale. After all, they are not unlike children; they want individual attention if they are to thrive as they ought to do.

A French farmeress, who was noted for her eggs and poultry, used to say that sixty hens were as many as any farmer ought to have at one time. They seemed to thrive well with her at any rate, although the attention they received was very scanty; a little corn thrown down night and morning, and the rest of the day they found their own living in the farmyard or by the wayside, a perch or two across the stable being their resting-place at night. As a rule, English people err in fadding after their poultry too much; giving them elaborate hutches and runs, and feeding them with expensive meal, but doubtless the "happy medium" between neglect and fuss is productive of the best results.

Now I am sure you have quite enough on hand (or will have when the poultry come, if you decide to try them) to fill profitably every spare moment of your time. I want you "to get on," and feel sure that you will do so now, gaining in knowledge day by day. After a year or two of this quiet experience, I doubt not that there will be a possibility of enlarging your sphere by turning the garden, with further ground added to it, and glasshouses and frames, into a successful nursery garden. There are already several lady market-gardeners in business in various parts of the country; the majority, if not all of them, are much older in years than you are, but I know that one or two at least have not

had the advantage of being country born and bred, but have taken to the work later in life. You have this much in your favour—that you begin quite young—and with an elementary knowledge of the subject gained in childhood. Age and experience are therefore now the chief requisites to ensure your ultimate success, and each day you live adds to these.

So, my dear Marjorie, take heart of grace, and go cheerfully forward, rejoicing that you have in your hand the means of becoming not only a stay and a comfort to your dear father and mother, but also a useful and honourable member of the great community. At the present moment you are helping your own family chiefly, but by-and-by it is possible

that you may have an opportunity of helping other young girls, perhaps by employing them to work with you in the "nursery garden." Who shall say how far your influence may extend, or of how great an undertaking this may be but the small beginning?

And now, dear, remember that whenever you want advice I shall be greatly pleased to help you as far as it is in my power to do so. Therefore do not fail to write when you can, for I am deeply interested in all your efforts, and however busy I may chance to be, will strive to find time to reply to you at once.

Believe me,

Ever your loving
AUNT AMY.

"AGATHA'S CHOICE."

By A. FRASER ROBERTSON, Author of "A Commonplace Woman," etc.

CHAPTER I.



ALL happened thirty years ago. Time enough, you will say, for the events to have grown old and faded, but that it seems to me memory knows no flight or passage of time. And so it comes to pass that the array of pictures as they file before me are as fresh to-day as if they had been painted yesterday.

The first one that comes naturally to my mind is the eve of my sister Lily's wedding, my own little room at Aunt Theresa's, and my sister kneeling at my bedside, her sweet, grave face bending over me, the words falling from her lips with almost the tender intonation of a mother.

"Agatha," she said, "I have come to say 'good-bye.' I hate leaving you so, but it cannot be helped. Harry must go abroad."

"I shall be all right," I faltered.

"You will come out to us by-and-by; but meantime, promise me, you will live for something better than the world and its ideals?"

She had always been serious-minded, I think she was moved by the thought of the crisis at hand. Her emotion partially communicated itself to me.

"You will live for something better than the daily round of gaiety—you will have some higher ideal than—than Aunt Theresa's?"

"I wish you were not going," I burst out, aware of a panic of unprotectedness I had never contemplated before.

I saw her again in all the glory of her wedding-garments, through a vista of faces and falling rice, but it is kneeling by my bedside, oh, my sister, that your image comes to me across the years.

We do not live for long without discovering that the comic has a way of treading on the heels of the tragic. The day after Lily's wedding, I found Aunt Theresa standing at the window of the breakfast-room, her tortoise-shell *pince-nez* uplifted, her shrewd eyes through them, keenly on the outlook.

The house inside had been reduced to a condition of remarkable order. Not a trace of anything proclaimed that Lily had been and got married and left us for ever. Some people have a faculty for dispatching things and people so that they leave hardly a vestige of their presence behind them. Aunt Theresa had it.

"Dixon," she said, as the servant entered with breakfast. "Look here, there are still traces of rice on the pavement, in the corner beside the doorstep. See that it is cleared away."

The man departed and Aunt Theresa sailed forward and took her place at the breakfast-table. I handed her the toast. The last trace of Lily inside and out had been removed. Dixon, with something of the instinct of his mistress, had refrained from setting a chair opposite to mine, so that I was spared the pang of seeing it vacant. Aunt Theresa was apparently thinking. At last she spoke. I could trace her train of association from her words.

"Lily," she said meditatively, toying with the wing of a chicken. "Lily has done fairly well, but you, Agatha, ought to do better."

Back came my thoughts from the choking contemplation of Lily's absence and the blank in my own heart.

The words brought a reaction, painful at first, by-and-by more bearable.

"You are better-looking, you have more variety, more piquancy."

"Not so sweet-looking," I interjected, half-laughing, half-tearful, as I recalled my sister's charms.

"Perhaps not," assented Aunt Theresa; "but sweetness has been known to degenerate into insipidity, and insipidity palls."

Was it then came the first faint stirrings in my heart of worldly ambition, emulation, desire to have men speak well of me? It is only in looking back that we are able to mark epochs. After Lily's marriage I acknowledged the approach of no special crisis in my life.

And it was as unlikely a thing to contain significance, more unlikely than most, only a quiet little dinner-party at a cousin's of Aunt Theresa's. Aunt Theresa had lately lost her husband, and our diversions and gaieties were of the quietest. "Unfortunate for me," Aunt Theresa remarked, "but in the circumstances unavoidable."

I knew she intended to clear me off as she had done Lily, indeed that until I was settled she would be haunted by a sense of duty unfulfilled.

I remember distinctly that the prospect of that evening bored me. Mrs. Frere's house

was dull and commonplace. It was only after we were seated at the dinner-table that I discovered I was interested. When we were half through dinner I ceased to regret that Hugh Grazebrook, seated half-way down the table, or Arthur Fenwick, whose smooth dark head I could just distinguish above the lamp, had not been my partner.

"Mr. Templeton." That was the name on the tiny square of pasteboard opposite to the place on my right hand. With the carelessness born of the smallest expectations I had not noticed anything remarkable about him when he was introduced. On nearer inspection with the aid of the lamplight I saw he had rather uncommon deep-set dark eyes, a square chin, and lips whose decision was half-concealed by his moustachios.

The man himself was, strictly speaking, not so good-looking as either of the other men, whom if left to my own inclination I should have chosen as a partner. It was his conversation that first caught my attention.

I happened to ask him if he were related to Major Templeton who was causing some excitement at the moment in the exploration world.

"No," he said, "I believe he is a North of England man. We are not related." Then after a pause: "I hail from Surrey."

"It must be nice to make a noise in the world," I remarked idly.

"For an ambitious man," he assented, with a smile.

"Most men are ambitious," I returned. "I think a man without ambition not good for much."

"I suppose we all have our private ambitions," he said. "I know nothing whose nature varies so much."

"You have yours?" I asked looking up at him, on the spur of the moment. His eyes danced in the lamplight.

"It sounds a modest one," he said, "to fill my place."

"I don't call that ambition," I began.

"Ambition with you means not filling your own place but struggling to fill up somebody else's place?" he asked, with another flash from his eyes.

"My ambition moves forward," I corrected. "Yours is content to stand still."

"I score in the long run," he answered quickly. "You go on and on but are never satisfied. You make one step only to pant for another. Now my ambition leaves me my peace of mind."

"Is peace of mind among the most desirable of things?" I asked.

"I think one of them undoubtedly," he returned, and again his eyes smiled at me, and