THE SUMMER SUN.

By CLOTILDA MARSON.

"To please the child, to paint the rose, the gardener of the world he goes."
R. L. Stevenson.

"THE year's primal burst of bloom is o'er," the spring is gone and the summer is come. Is the present better than the past? It is hard to answer. Many would choose the summer at once, forgetting all the freshness in each leaf and flower, and the moist scent of the earth which made the rare accompaniment to the main music of spring. Many do not hesitate to agree with the fine lines of King James the First's ambassador to Venice, in which he sought the utmost image of loveliness for his mistress, the Queen of Bohemia.

"Ye violets that first appear,
By your pure purple mantles known;
Like the proud virgins of the year,
As if the spring were all your own—
What are you, when the rose is blown?"

To him the summer alone could picture her who was "by virtue first, then choice, a queen," the summer, as he had seen it, perhaps in all its glory in

"The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair."

In Italy the natural mood of the country seems to be summer. The stone-pines stand in monumental calm against the intense blue sky, the frescoes crumble in the cool houses, and the green of the olives never spoils with dust and saves our eyes from glare. But, if Sir Henry Wotton had spent more time in his English home of "Bocton Malherbe, in the fruitful county of Kent," or by the green lawns of Eton, where he ended his life, perhaps he would have found it harder to take away the palm from the season when the leaves burst and the ash-buds look black in March, when the ferns uncrumble and the hedges are white with may. Yet however much we may long to be in England when April's here, there is one joy of summer that spring lacks. Only in summer can we lie outstretched upon the lawn the live-long day and delight in that indescribable sense of warmth and blessing in the brooding air and the distant haze, which suits so well with the down on the peach and the velvet petals of the rose. For the sake of that we can forgive the dusty, windy days, when the hedges look ragged, and even the trees are monotonous against the dull sky in their deepened green.

Come out with me into the garden this 22nd of June, when all the growing things seem holding Jubilee. The spreading branches of that gum cistus on the lawn have looked green for long, and have oozed a gummy resin that was fragrant in the sun. To-day it is covered for the first time with large shy white flowers, with a deep carnation heart, that have opened their crumpled white frail blossoms to fall to-night and scatter the lawn before they have time to fade. To-morrow and to-morrow a fresh troop will appear from the pretty bag-like buds with their long pouting lips, and bloom and fall in a day.

We have been bemoaning the breakage of the mowing-machine, but we are not sorry this morning as we look at that holiday carpet of bright yellow bird's-foot trefoil with the little red buds, and the sweet heads of the pink clover in among dark purple patches of self-heal, all flecked with the sunlight. The air hangs heavy as we sit under the walnut-tree and keep Jubilee with strawberries and cream, but when evening falls the air is cool and fresh, off we start in the donkey-cart across the straight marsh road between the streams to watch beacon-fires from the hill with its one strong oak, which is the highest point in our home-landscape. The night air is sweet with "the beauflower's boon," and the new-mown hay lies piled in heaps on either side of the road, away behind the willows—

"Deserted is the half-mown plain,
Silent the swaths, the ringing wain,
The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,
All housed within the sleeping farms.
The business of the day is done,
The last-left haymaker is gone,
And, on the pure horizon far,
See pulsing with the first-born star
The liquid sky above the hill,
The evening comes, the field is still."

On we jog, past the weird silver shine of the willows, so like those amongst which the child in the ballad saw Erlkönig's daughter crouching in the dim shadow. As we pass the village at the foot of the hill we find the aged, and the babies who are too young to climb and watch the sparks, assembled to see the distant glow and feel to the full this bit of history that has come so near to their own tiny village. It is hard to recognise faces under the tree at the summit, for they are all distorted into queer Alpine outlines in the lurid glow. We turn to look at the wide prospect dotted everywhere with bonfires and beacons, seventy-five in all, though it is not everyone who has patience to count them through. We watch them leaping up in the darkness and think of the hearts all over the English world warm with love of their country. One man takes a trumpet and plays the well-known tune, and all of us are glad of the friendly dusk as we shout out our enthusiasm for the Queen with voices, some of them unmelodious, but all of them in earnest. The bonfire is nearly out now, and the great eager flowers of sparks that flamed and died and flamed again, more briefly even than our cestus of the morning, are all scattered on the night air. It is time to clamber down the hill and go home to bed.

Many bright summer pictures pass before my mind as I sit here in the first chill days of September. How pleasant is the unusual sound of the scythe in the early morning as the grass falls in lines on the lawn among the beds of great pink and red peonies, and the scent of syringa and rose makes the air sweet around. The big purple feather hyacinths are toppling over with the weight of their soft rich plumes and touch the leaves of that luxurious York and Lancaster rose. The sweet-williams, with their "homely cottage smell," are very handsome this year, and make a gay hedge of every shade of fretted pink and freaked carnation in that long bed, whose pride is the bush covered with Etruscan damask roses.

Out in the lanes the summer fashions have begun. One day we take a long drive to the borders of Dorset to see the old farm among the hills, where Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy lived just a hundred years ago, and where they first knew Coleridge. The country changes after we leave Crewkerne, and the hedges are taller and wilder and the lanes deeper than at home. The dogwood, with its delicate white heads of flower, is out in crisp freshness, and every now and again the far lovelier water-elder glorifies the hedge with its snow-white flowers; each cluster looks up to the sun with the little blossoms in the middle and the large separate ones round the edge. The tall foxgloves are not all over, and they grow wild here and nod from the great hedges as we drive past Blackdown Church and near our journey's end. We seem breathing "an ampler ether, a diviner air," as we look round on the rare beauty of the great circle of hills—Lewisden, Pillesden, Golden Cap, Lambart's Castle and Greggy—among which lies the old farm with its quiet, unaltered rooms and the delicate plaster-work of its last century ceilings.

After our kind hosts had given us tea out of the old buff-coloured granite china, we climb the hill and try to catch a glimpse of the distant sea in a break of the hills. A peewit circles over our heads with its pathetic human cry, as we hold in our hand its downy baby with large frightened eyes, whom it had left a moment on the bare ground. We soon restore it to the mother and wander on over the thymy ground trying to learn by heart the great picture of this amphitheatre of the hills.

No wonder this year's crop of corn has been so unique, when we remember the lavish gift of sun that has shone upon us. In no other June for many a year have the roadsides been so gay. There is a hillside between Clevedon and Failand where the flowers seemed to be having a party of their own as we plodded up the hill one bright June day. Climbing everywhere are the bright yellow blossoms of the yellow bedstraw, making a sweet gossamer web of little yellow spots, like the hundreds and thousands that children love. The scabious is rich with soft lilac pin-cushions full of fairies' pins; the blue chicory is all over that bank in front of the old farm-house, and makes room in between for the feathery heads of greater knap-weed in gay pink, and the wide soft silky mallows who are the most richly dressed, perhaps, of all in this gay garden-party of the flowers.

July passes by and we wander in the heat by the canal where you can hardly see the water for the great flowering rush that nearly fills the bed and looks so green and cool with its huge pink sentinel head of flowers. It is very rarely indeed that that pink "boutomos"—as Homer called it, because the sharp spikes cut the tongues of the oxen—grows in such lavish profusion. Soon the villagers will cut it down, but now we can still bring home sheaves of the large pink blossoms with their touch of dark brown in the centre, and fill with it our tallest, clearest vases. In early records of these parts, in the days of the Edwards, rush-beds are enumerated among the possessions of the early owners. These late descendants take kindly to their reedy bed by whose side the bank is waving with high grass rich with "blond meadowsweet," and purple loose strife interspersed with saffron spikes of agrimony. The luxuriant white flowers of the wild carrot with their dark red centres and lovely green branching setting climb up the high bank and add to the dreamy wealth of nodding grasses and blossoms, over which the butterflies flit and the clouds move slowly in the deep blue.

The month wanes, and a windy day comes with hurried masses of bright-edged blue-grey

clouds in busy progress over the heavens. The air is warm, but there are many swells and rufflings in the clear river as I rest on the old stone bridge half-way to Ilminster How cool those tufts of comfrey look, hanging out their white and lilac bells with the curious sad stain on the petals, over the thick dark leaves from which they sprout. I should dearly like to find the "spotted comfrey or cowslip of Jerusalem" of which old Parkinson speaks, but "of that I told," he says, "in my former booke," and how can one house hope even to contain more than one of the delightful works of the communicative gardener of the seventeenth century? The water under the bridge flows on so silently, just as it did when the old coaches thundered over it long ago in eager rivalry. A noble old woman of more than eighty summers told me, the other day, with sparkling eyes looking more at the past than at me across the bason of peas she was shelling, about the old days before the canal was dug, when there were only two houses in the lower village and the common was not enclosed. Her father kept geese on the common and no doubt turned many an honest penny by means of it. When she was a maid she had to run out and stop the great coach as it thundered past and sell some of the geese to the coachman. How well she remembered hearing how one day two rival coaches would neither let the other pass, and dashed along for a mile abreast at a head-long pace, the gay ladies on the top shouting with laughter though in imminent danger of an overturn. The two cottages sent out their inmates to watch the race, and for once the geese were forgotten. No doubt as the winning coach rolled over the bridge where we are resting, there were merry shouts of triumph, but those gay folk are scattered long ago, and the highway is nearly turned to a by-way.

The last day of July is come. It is early yet and the morning mist lies on the garden in little puffs of down, indeed, as Keats fancifully says the—

> "Finely tapering stems,
> Had not yet lost those starry diadems
> Caught from the early sobbing of the morn."

As the sun mounts in a blue sky the air grows warm. Those yellow-and-white water-lilies under the bridge beyond that red cottage look very cool as we bicycle past them on our way to visit a lovely old stone manor-house. There is already a threat of autumn in the bright red berries of the arum peeping from the ditches, but the elderberries are still quite green, and the young oak leafage is still fresh enough to recall the spring. The red in the oak-leaves is as lovely still as when Chaucer noted the

> "Branches broad
> That sprongen out ayen the sunnê shene,
> Some very red, and some a glad light grene."

The large pink patches of rest-harrow with its woody little stems which do not speed the plough, look very gay against the strips of camomile daisy which grow wherever the turf has been taken up. When we bend into the by-lane, we find the darker pink of the red barzia in among the sweet spikes of the yellow agrimony. Another lovely pink flower is the wood-bettony; it is very common about here, and the vivid blossoms peeping from the soft leaves are so much brighter than most of the dead-nettle tribe that they are worth learning, though not quite easy at first to distinguish from wound-wort or stachys. Hampered as we are by town ignorance, these hedge-row friends are too dear not to deserve at least an effort to find their Christian names. We get farther and farther from frequented paths as we pass that cottage which is edged all along with white and pink garden mallows in a gay fringe. The road bends and brings us near a great withy field deep in summer green. The old stone bridge over the river gives us a peep of a deep bay of true bulrushes. Their swaying green forms and black plumes, the moist dark hair waving in the sea seems to us an embodiment of the water-spirit. Beyond them stretches a high bank, all motley with wild mallow, with its darker veins in the transparent pink, and great masses of wild parsnip, with its graceful leaves and soft-spreading yellow flowers, "red loose strife and blond meadow-sweet among." One more turn and we have reached the old stone gables of the midwater homestead, once a court where generations of a good old county stock lived out contentedly their quiet lives. How gay the roses are in the half quadrangle that faces the road. The kind inmates allow us to step into the cool panelled hall, where we admire the richly-wrought iron fire-back with the ducal crown, and look at the dark oil picture over the fire-place, let into the panel and stained with age, but still distinguishable as a hunting-piece of some reckless Nimrod of the past, who would hunt on Sunday while the devil showed him the way as he sat horned and hoofed in a tree hard by. But step with me through the low stone door into the rare old red-walled garden beyond. What a presence there is of Sir Roger de Coverley under that ancient speckled holly with all the stiffness vanished owing to the unpruned luxuriance of years. The young tufts grow straight upwards, quite pale lemon-white, with spots of red in the centre, out of the sloping green branches. It is a lovely tree, and our hostess tells us it makes sad work when the gales come and toss the branches about. On this still day—for the breeze has fallen—there is nothing to disturb those downy yellow-and-black guinea-fowl chicks nestling in the old pail tilted against a graceful tall stone column with a ball at the top, which is covered with roses. There are other columns further on, part of some stately colonnade of the past, but the garden can never have looked lovelier than it does to-day when random nature has decked it out, and not some gardener with ruthless scissors and broom.

We peep into the cool dairy, with its great pans of sweet milk. It was once the kitchen where, no doubt, madam was once not too fine to superintend the brewing and baking that went on in the huge brewing corner and the immense bread-oven that are pointed out to us. The library and drawing-room are low-ceiled and simple, but how pretty with their painted panels and corner-cupboards delicately gilded and ornamented with the family arms. No doubt its shelves were fragrant once with pot-pourri stored in old china, perhaps like Mrs. Tulliver's that her sisters found fault with "'cause o' the small gold sprig all over them, between the flowers." We think of the awed words spoken, perhaps, those long years ago when news was brought of the snowy day in January and the deep groan that passed through the crowd when the king's head fell on the block. History and dates seem strangely real as we stand in these old rooms, reverently kept indeed, but dwelt in no longer by the kinship who lived there in the past. The old house was alienated once for conscience sake, but the times changed and the old owner returned. We linger near the plum trees in the garden, and peep through the tall stone gate at the disused bowling-alley beyond, and think of the fair faces and old love-stories of the past. No doubt there was gay laughter here and sorrow too in this Cupid's alley of long ago.

> "It may be one will dance to-day,
> And dance no more to-morrow;
> It may be one will steal away
> And nurse a life-long sorrow.
> What then? The rest advance, evade,
> Unite, disport and dally,
> Re-set, coquet and gallopade,
> Not less in 'Cupid's Alley.'"

No one seems to suit the low-ceiled rooms like Mackenzie's "Country Dowager." Do you remember that last century word-picture? "She had buried a beloved husband and four children. Her youngest, Edward," her beautiful, her brave, "fell in Flanders, and was not entombed with his ancestors. His picture, done when a child, an artless red-and-white portrait, smelling at a nosegay, but very like withal, hung at her bedside, and his sword and gorget were crossed under it . . . . Methinks I see her seated, her spectacles on, but raised a little on her brow, for a pause or explanation, their shagreen case laid between the leaves of a silver-clasped family Bible. On one side her bell and snuff-box, on the other her knitting apparatus in a blue damask bag. Between her and the fire an old Spanish pointer, that had formerly been her son Edward's . . . . I could draw the old lady at this moment—dressed in grey, with a clean white hood nicely plaited (for she was somewhat finical about the neatness of her person), sitting in her straight-backed elbow-chair, which stood in a large window, scooped out of the thickness of the ancient wall. The middle panes of the window were of painted glass, the story of Joseph and his brethren. On the outside waved a honeysuckle-tree, which often threw its shade across her book or her work; but she would not allow it to be cut down. 'It has stood there many a day,' said she: 'and we old inhabitants should bear with one another.'"

With this quiet old picture we may say good-bye to the old manor-house and our pleasant summer memories.

"DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS."

By C. E. C. WEIGALL, Author of "The Temptation of Dulce Carruthers."

It is certainly in this bustling age of ours a far less remarkable thing to have travelled over many lands, and through many seas, than it used to be in the days of our grandmothers. So that no doubt an increased number of the girls who took THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, when first this excellent periodical started on its career (and I shudder to think how long ago that must be, since I have been a subscriber from the very commencement) are either obliged to travel from choice, or encouraged to do so from inclination.

Our grandmothers. Why, the very name brings back the thought of slim domestic girls in country gardens, busy with their *potpourri*, or their lavender bags, and content with their quiet reading of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, or the numberless stories of Miss Edgeworth, beginning with her *Purple Jar*. The very thought of crossing the channel was repugnant to the minds of our mothers' mothers, and