

"Oh, wouldn't her? Sims to me, her looked at 'ee pretty considerable just now, but you men be so blind as bats where your own interest's concerned."

"But you've always been telling me I'd no business to be thinking about a wife at all, when I'd got a mother to keep house for me."

"No more you hadn't till you'd come to years to choose sensible."

"Well, sensible or not, I've made my choice, and I'll abide by it; that is, if Leah will have me. But you've shown her pretty plain you don't like her, mother, and she's too proud to go where she isn't wanted. I tell her I want her badly enough," he added, with a sigh.

"Too proud! And what's she got to be proud of, I should like to know? A fine match to make with a maid that's scarce got a second gown to her back!"

"That's no fault of hers, mother. She works hard and has always kept herself respectable. And left an orphan so early as she was, too, 'tis all the more credit to her."

"Ah, well! I reckon she'll soon be taking my place and sitting in my chair by the fire. 'Tis natural that I should feel having to turn out to make room for her."

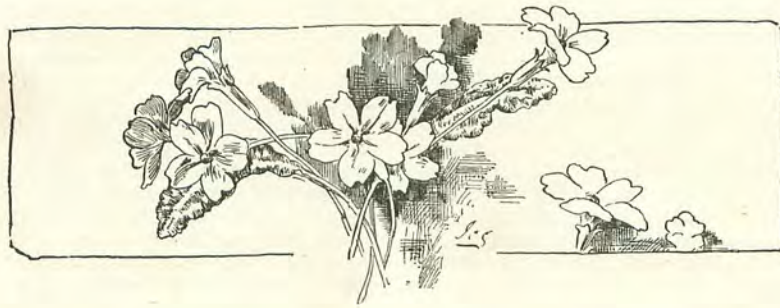
"There's no question of turning you out, mother. And how would it be any better if I married Liza Baker instead of Leah?"

But Robert had yet to learn that a woman with a grievance does not listen to reason.

"I never thought my only son, him as I've worked hard and denied myself for, would turn against me in my old age," she said, as she entered the cottage and sat down on the settle. "There, don't mind me. Go and court your young woman and leave me to get a bit of supper ready for 'ee by the time you come home from church. You'd like a few spring onions pulled, with the bit o' cold pork left from dinner, wouldn't 'ee, my dear?"

So Robert left her, telling himself that he had been a brute; he seemed to have a genius for being made to feel in the wrong.

(To be continued.)



GARDENING FOR GIRLS: A SPRING EULOGY.

By GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M., R.N. ("MEDICUS").

I WANT in this paper to sing of the spring, so to speak. Why shouldn't a man sing with a pen in his hand? The fact is that if one has health of body and music in his soul, one's life may be pretty much all song. All happiness, anyhow, unless one gets nervous and low from having disobeyed all the laws of health and reason.

The first gardener, we are told, was Adam, and a nice time of it he must have had in that beautiful garden of Eden, where the only afternoon callers would be angels. And no doubt Eve, still young and beautiful, would have helped him a little—and maybe hindered him a little sometimes—only there is one thing sure and certain, and that is, her presence there must have made things bright and cheerful for him. If there is any one place in which a young and innocent-minded girl looks better than another, it is in a garden on an early morning in spring.

But this is not altogether an article on beauty, but on health as well, for if a young girl of, say, sixteen or seventeen has fairly regular features, and has health and brightness of intellect, the advice I am going to give, if taken seriously, will soon bring her a good complexion without any cosmetics, bring the ready smile to her lips, and the glad sparkle to her eyes as well.

Says the poet—

"Better to hunt in fields for health unbought
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.
The wise for cure on exercise depend,
God never made his work for man to mend."

There is a considerable amount of truth in these lines.

Exercise is a marvellous thing for scores and scores of complaints. But the girls I have in my mind's eye to-day are not to go and hunt in fields for health. I'm not sure that grumpy old Farmer Hodge might not turn you back if

he found you tripping over his spring-green leas, no matter what you might be hunting for. And if he didn't, perhaps his bull might. Besides, isn't there always the chance of catching a chill even when trying to catch butterflies or gather buttercups?

I won't permit you to go to the field at any price else that nauseous draught that Dryden speaks of may become a necessity.

Delicate girls in sweet spring-time can find all the health they can desire without going beyond their own garden gates to look for it.

Now a very large number of girls languish because they do not get enough fresh air. If their bedrooms are not thoroughly ventilated all day long and the window left open at the top at night, I don't see how they can get it.

The lungs need fresh air, else the blood spread out therein is not half vivified. If it is not so I'll tell you what happens: the nerves are starved, the liver becomes inactive, you don't get good sleep at night, you become peevish, perhaps lazy and a lie-abed, then of course your complexion becomes sallow, and when you look in the glass, which most girls do about once a month perhaps, you will not feel at all on good terms with yourself.

So much for the want of fresh air.

Now cycling, long walks or drives, would bring you out into the fresh air, but these are not the kinds of exercise a girl who is delicate needs. Cycling in such a state of body is dangerous and uncertain; walking is no good unless you have a girl friend with you, and very likely she will make you walk till you are fatigued or breathless, so that although the talking and exchange of ideas may have been agreeable enough, there will be a relapse—you'll be worse than ever.

But alone in your garden, the exercise is just exactly what, if delicate, you require, because it is not fatiguing, it is pleasurable. You have your friends all around you in the shape of plants and flowers, and you are breathing oxygen all the time.

One secret of health in gardens in this: human beings inhale oxygen and exhale carbonic acid, and plants and flowers do just the reverse, so that while gardening you benefit by coming near to them, by handling them or touching them, and they benefit themselves by your presence. Indeed, you will be erring on the right side if you believe that your favourite flowers come to know you, and to feel your gentle touch. But that is going to the realms of romance.

Well, gardening exercise need never be hard. If you are a little tired, you have only to lean on your hoe or rake and look pleasant and pretty, and lo! you are all right again in a few minutes. If fatigued you can go inside and rest on the sofa, or sit in the summer-house, but this you must not do if your frock or any part of your dress seems damp with perspiration. You may perspire a good deal the first day. Don't discourage this, because sweating to a certain extent always purifies the blood. You will sweat less when the blood is purified, and after about a week of gardening, if you have taken the exercise regularly, it will exhilarate instead of tiring you.

Well, now I should like to recommend you a book that would be really handy and useful, but although there are many in the market, I think the best is Nicholson's *English Flower Gardening*. Upcott Gill, publisher of that paper, has also a large *Dictionary of Gardening*, which is wonderfully excellent and complete, and probably shilling handbooks. I want you to get nothing that will puzzle your brains, because that in itself is tiresome, but just a good useful amateur's handbook. I would not even advise you to take a paper devoted to gardening, because it would tempt you to try too much. Probably your father has a garden and a gardener too. If so, I am sure you might get a piece of ground for your own particular delectation, with little walks—gravel, of course—bordered with flints or bricks, because they are so easily kept clean, and clear from weeds. You might have a summer-house here too, with roses trailing over it, or other climbing things.

A rockery is very easily built, but however small your garden is, the rough work must all be done for you, by one who knows the best soil, and how to lay down the walks and spread the gravel. The soil must be porous, not upon clay, well manured, and not sour. A rich and happy soil. Tell the man he must be most careful about the manure, else he may put down stuff that will take a year to rot, and bring up a crop of weeds that you will have to be constantly making war upon.

Don't go in for intricately-formed flower-beds. What you do want is the flowers themselves, and most of these will grow on the borders, close to the walks, so that they may be easily gathered for a bouquet or button-hole.

I don't approve of children's gardens. I want you to have one a bit above that, a garden that will grow in beauty and sweetness every year, just like yourself, and I am very good to say so. Well, you must not expect too much the first year; just be satisfied with a few nice old-fashioned flowers which you can either buy cheaply or buy as plants. Bulbs you can't have the first year, you know, because they must be put down in November; so, too, must roses. And oh, the delight of a rose-garden, and the romance of it as well.

Let me tell you what tools you require for a simple flower-garden. (1) A spade, of course, but that you can always borrow, (2) a small push hoe, sometimes called a Dutch hoe, (3) a small garden rake with a good long handle, (4) a handy knife, (5) a trowel and (6) a gardener's small trident. It is a little fork with very short handle and three flat prongs. These will be enough for a start, only put them away every night when you are done with them. A small watering-can is "a hextra," as my landlady used to say in the days of my landladyhood. You should get a middling sized watering-can. (And here is "a hextra"

which, as I give it to you gratis, won't cost you anything, but is really a good wrinkle. When, then, you have taken this garden-exercise up, and in, say, two months' time grown bonnie and healthy over it, then have your photograph taken, in that sweetly pretty gardening apron of yours, bare-headed with the watering-can in one hand and your hat or a hoe in the other.)

Well, that "hextra" is what editors call a digression, so *revenons à nos moutons*—let us go back to our flock.

Our flock are our flowers, and if you desire to have any sort of success, you must have a nice soft friable soil to plant them in. It is surprising how easily spring flowers can be transplanted if you go the right way about it, and that right way is to take them up carefully from the parent ground with plenty of their native earth about them, carry them right away to the place where they are to grow—the holes having been already dug—and place them carefully in. Do this early in the afternoon, and give a sprinkling of water. If you have an edging of flints, tiles, or brick, place your first row nine inches back from this. Have a small garden line which you can make yourself, so that the rows shall be even, and each plant, say of forget-me-not, six or nine inches apart, according to the size of the plants, and you must understand that they must be all of one size. Behind these, and at the same distance, you can have primulas, the old-fashioned double and single auriculas (most charming in perfume), etc., and behind these bigger flowers to bloom in summer.

You are a happy girl if you can have flowers given to you, but if not, you are to go to a nursery. You must have a few shillings in your pocket. But don't be rash. Buy no flowers that grow very tall, they would look ridiculous; such as hug the ground are better, and that are all about one size. Don't purchase flowers in actual bloom because they may soon begin to fade. Look more to the future—that is, to summer—than to the present, else you will have a child's garden and not the garden of a maid of sweet sixteen.

Fuchsia, geraniums, blue lobelia, feather-few, asters, etc., will do for either window-boxes or flower-beds.

A nice summer show can be had very easily from a florist, who will sell you annuals very cheaply. Get dwarfs, no long straggling creatures of a foot and over, and get them of specified colours, although a bed of mixed flowers may look pretty enough. Asters may be planted close together, and some other flowers so as to give a complete bed of colour.

As a rule, however, overcrowding is to be avoided. But sunshine is a necessity to all the most beautiful of plant-life. What, for instance, would our pansies be like if grown in a shade?

Beware of weeds. It is best to pull them up with your gloved hands when they are no bigger than a pin. Choose a day when the soil is damp for this work. Wear th'c's shoes if you please, but no goloshes. If you attempt to pull weeds from a dry soil you only break them, though your small push hoe would then come in serviceable.

Learn how to use a garden rake. The little clods should be broken, and the ground that is raked should be as smooth as a billiard table, not pulled together in heaps here and there as if a hen had been scraping it.

Use your little trident to keep the earth from getting hard and baked by the sun. Water frequently after sun-down, but remember that summer flowers are not water-creases.

Next season you will attain to rockeries, to clinkers and creepers, to the rose garden and the window-garden.

A garden hammock is a delightful haven of rest, especially if stretched between trees, so that the sun shall not fall upon your eyes, nor upon your book or "G. O. P."

I must draw to a close somewhat sadly, because I have so much to say.

All the most beautiful thoughts come to one while alone in a garden.

In a garden you cultivate soul or mind as well as body, and together both grow beautiful.

The garden draws us nearer to Nature and Nature's God.