

OUR SCENT BOTTLES.—The world would be but a dreary place without flowers. Long tracts of brown moors or stretches of pure green, unbroken by the changeful colors and varied forms of flowers, soon weary by their monotony; and the summer air which brings no sweet scents of blossoms on its warm breath is robbed of half its charm and all its tenderest associations. Without flowers too, where would be the poet, and where the painter? Strawberries and cream would not compose so well in the description of Amanda's charms as the typical roses and lilies; though on the other hand sapphires would do for her eyes nearly as well as violets, and with more truth in the likeness; and lips are more often spoken of as coral than as carnation. Nevertheless, the loss of flowers would be the loss of a large portion of the poet's decorative stock-in-trade; and the painter would be troubled to express his idea on canvas, so that all men should understand his meaning, if he had no flowers as dumb depicted words of explanation. Fair young Dorothea without her roses would tell a tale as little, and be as far removed from her historic self, as Saint Cecilia deprived of her organ, Saint Catharine without her wheel, Minerva stripped of her ægis and her helmet and with not a feather of her owl left as her sign manual, or Juno without her peacock. Were flowers to be suddenly eradicated from the world, half the light and loveliness of life would be lost; and among other things that would suffer—by that form of speech known as an anticlimax—our ladies' toilet tables would be impoverished to a frightful extent, and their scent bottles would be empty.

Now scent bottles are useful things. *Eau de Cologne*, when you have a headache, is a medicament by no means to be despised; and there seems to be an antiseptic quality about perfumes that adds a weightier value to their mere deliciousness. This was found out ages ago—so long ago, indeed, as the days when the embalmer was as necessary a member of Egyptian society as our own undertaker or gravedigger; and when the spices and aromatic herbs wherewith he helped to arrest decay owed as much of their preserving powers to their odoriferousness as to any other quality. This quality of odoriferousness, by the by, is one of the undiscovered mysteries of nature—one of the stone walls which science has not yet leaped, but which has to be got over somehow, and the thing that is on the other side discovered. No one knows anything about it; whether it is an infinitely fine, and so far as we have yet got, an imponderable and invisible but material substance, or whether it is what we call, for the want of a better word, a dynamic force, which acts on the atmospheric waves in the manner of light or sound. The cleverest analyst has been baffled and turned back at the problem of what constitutes the true nature of aromas. A piece of musk will last for years, powerfully impregnating every substance with which it is brought in contact, and these in turn never losing the odor and always imparting it to fresh substances, and yet the original bit will never lose in weight nor potency. What is it that gives this peculiar odor? An emanation, or a force? No one knows! Why, too, some flowers exhale their perfumes only in the day, and others only at night; why some have a morning fragrance and others an evening; why the musk plant should pour out its odor best in the rain which kills the perfume of the lily and indeed of almost every other flower, all these are questions which have been put by the great sphinx at whose feet we stand; but questions which no *Œdipus* of the laboratory has yet been found to answer. Perfumes are divided into orders, one list, drawn up by Linnaeus, making nine classes, beginning with the aromatic typified by pinks, laurels, and all the labiate, and passing through the "sweet"—such as the rose, lily, jasmine, crocus, etc.; the ambrosial, such as amber, musk, and several exotic geraniums; the alliaceous, of which the chief type is garlic, *assafoetida*, and several resinous gums; the fetid, like the goat; the repulsive, like the French *marygold*, and several of the solanaceæ; and finally the nauseous, like the flowers of the *veratrum*, etc. The other and newer list has eighteen distinctive odors of perfume, beginning with the rose as the type which includes also the geranium and the *eglantine*; the jasmine including the lily of the valley and the *ihlang-ihlang*; and going on through the orange, tuberose, violet, vanilla (balsamic), cinnamon, etc., to the fruity, as pear, apple, quince, and pineapple.

The first step in the art of perfumery was simply to burn such sweet-smelling woods and gums as gave off a perfumed vapor, by which the gods were

to be propitiated, inasmuch as by this they were fed. The last has been the thousand and one pretty applications put out by the leading perfumers of France and England; the French being in our day what the Athenians were in olden times, the great masters of the art, with both more taste as well as more skill than any of their rivals. All that they make in the way of perfumery proper, or of any description of scented toilet necessaries, is of a better kind than any one else can accomplish. Their soap is superior; as much superior as the German is inferior. The Germans make theirs with coconut oil, the rank, evil odor of which penetrates every disguise of scent that may be mixed with it, and remains as the tell-tale and disgusting base, perceptible enough to all who have any sense of smell and any refined appreciation of odors. Speaking of soaps, it may be as well to add that pure cold soap is the least offensive to the skin if the least delightful to the senses. With some tender skins it is the only soap that is possible without pain and irritation; but to those who are in the habit of using perfumed soap it is displeasing, at least in a negative form, the peculiar soapy odor, fugitive and faint as it is, not refreshing one like the odor of brown Windsor, bitter almond, lettuce, or the like. The fancy prices paid for soap are entirely unnecessary, with respect to the greater merit of the article. Soap of equal value as soap, but not perfumed with an extravagant scent, can be had cheaply enough; and as we want the material chiefly to cleanse and not to hurt the skin, it seems a waste to give an absurdly high price for a tablet of soap on account of a special odor which is of no intrinsic value.

But it is in perfumery proper, that which fills our scent bottles and scents our handkerchiefs, that Frenchmen, of all flower distillers, have made the greatest improvements. Thirty years ago there were neither so many extracts, nor so many flowers from which to extract, as now. *Eau de Cologne* from the city, of a hundred odors, and lavender water from the fields, formed the staple of the liquid scents in use. *Rondeletia*, sweet, cloying, sickly; *millefleurs*, more delicate; *verbena*, coarse and overpowering; *ess. bouquet*, simply perfection, to this day unsurpassed—these were the principal extracts in the days when some of us were young; but since then their name has become legion, and a new perfume is now as much *de rigueur* for the season as a new color or a fresh costume. The range of materials has been increased by the introduction of new flowers from abroad. A few years ago, *ihlang-ihlang*, *frangipani*, *vitiver*, to mention no others, were as little known as the minor planets to the Greeks, or the spectroscope to the Chaldeans. With the marvellous facilities of distillation and the preservative properties of glycerine, both of present time and use, and with the naturalization of so many new exotic characteristics of the floral world of to-day, a far larger field is open to the perfumer; and he has made his best of it. Yet there are certain things which baffle him. Not only that question of what is the real essence of odor, which we spoke of before, but also the power of fixing it in certain cases eludes the skill of the deffest distiller. The *heliotrope* is our best example. No process known can imprison the fugitive scent of this delightful flower; and the only approach to it that can be had is by a combination of *heliotrope* and bitter almond, which imitates it *tant bien que mal*. In spite of all that art and science can do, the only solid base of floral extracts remains with six flowers—orange flowers, roses, jasmine, violets, *acaëta*, tuberose, and we may add lavender. Of course there are the perfumed woods, such as sandal wood; the animal odors of civet and musk; the aromatic odors of cloves, cinnamon, and the labiate; but in spite of certain extracts got from geraniums, jonquils, *mignonette*, etc., the real mothers of our scent-bottles are the six we have detailed above.

In a Sussex churchyard may be seen the following curious epitaph: "Richard Basset, the old clerk of this parish, who had continued in the office of clerk and sexton for the space of forty-three years, whose melody was warbled forth as if he had been thumped on the back with a stone, was buried on the 20th of September, 1666."

"Is your house a warm one, landlord?" asked a man in search of a tenement. "It ought to be," the painter gave it two coats recently," was the reply.

THE BEST COSMETIC.—Clean linen, and plenty of it.