

ON GARDEN WALLS: A LESSONS FOR TOWN GARDENERS.

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ONE of the greatest disadvantages with which the town gardener has to contend is the brick wall which usually divides his premises from his neighbour's, and which is not only an unsightly feature in itself, but appears especially contrived to preclude as much as possible the free circulation of light and air, and in other respects to add to the difficulties of suburban cultivators. Indeed, in some of those enclosures attached to residences of older date, when space was less valuable, or bricks less costly, these separating walls are so high, as to reduce the so-called garden to a coffin-like strip, equally adverse to health as to enjoyment. In such melancholy situations the borders will be found dank and water-logged, and the soil sour and utterly unfitted for wholesome vegetation; inhabited for the most part by sickly lilacs—when ill-done the shabbiest of trees—abundant crops of toad-stools in neglected corners, diversified by scrubby trees, sometimes fruit trees that never bear. We are now speaking more particularly of houses with some pretension to respectability, forming for the most part the residences of the middle-class population of large towns, although it is in the metropolis the evil chiefly prevails. Not only is the modern system of building in rows of streets, back to back, the premises being separated by a close wall instead of open palings or rails, prejudicial to the healthy and elevating pursuits of the garden, but it has a serious bearing upon the public health. In houses so built, and so shut in, often with so short a distance between the backs, the space so enclosed forms a species of culvert of stagnant air, the inhabitants virtually breathing and re-breathing each other's exhalations, and those of their closets, drains, and dust-bins, always prominent objects in such localities. The mischief is often aggravated by blocks at each end. The air in these enclosures never gets disturbed or set in motion, except some violent wind accidentally sets in in the special direction in which they lie. No wonder that fever becomes more prevalent year by year, and that its unnoted ravages are found more fatal than virulent epidemics. The legislator who would enforce a law for opening out these mischievous boundaries, and restoring the utmost circulation of the air in close neighbourhoods, would deserve the gratitude of the generation. The influence of plants upon the atmosphere is a scientific truth too widely known to admit of question; indeed, such action is one of nature's balances, which cannot be disturbed without injurious results. Restore healthy vegetation to crowded neighbourhoods, and you restore one element for counteracting disease, as well as promoting a moral tone and elevating taste amongst those who at present have little encouragement, from adverse conditions, for such developments.

But, however, our walls are there. The landlord will not

remove them, or substitute a more wholesome arrangement; and, would he do so, our next neighbours, right and left, "Churl" and "Curmudgeon," animated with the traditional Englishman's love of privacy, and jealous of innovation, would not permit it. It only remains, therefore, to make the best of circumstances, and mitigate evils that cannot be removed.

The first thing we have to do, then, is to study the dimensions with which we have to deal. If we are the happy possessors of semi-detached premises, we shall probably have a certain extent of width in our allotted strip. In such a case, we construct a border at the foot of the wall all round, and bodily plant it out with quick, strong-growing evergreens; converting blemish into beauty, and securing a screen of verdure to meet the eye all the year round, and afford an agreeable basis and background for any style of laying out our plot we may think proper to adopt; such arrangements are, however, outside our present purpose. The case we have supposed presents an unusually favourable specimen of the "garden wall;" the more common illustration will be a rough, uneven structure of coarse bricks, line upon line as far as the eye can reach, enclosing a narrow plot reached through kitchen or scullery door, a narrow stripe of tiles or stones conducting to the dust-bin of the establishment. We shall say nothing of the frequent water-butt, and other appendages which are usually found in such situations. It will be admitted that the prospect is melancholy and disheartening enough to the eye of taste. The task here will be quite as much to shut out and conceal causes of offence, as to introduce objects of interest and beauty; and yet, though difficult, both may be fairly done. A friend of ours has admirably met the untoward circumstances of such a position. The dust-bin and its associates he has shut out of sight with a neat trellis. On each side of the top of the wall he has had a wooden scantling, painted green, fixed all along the top of the wall, capable of holding three or four inches of mould—a continuous box, in fact, of which the wall forms the bottom—wherein are planted wallflowers, snapdragon, moneywort, stonecrop, and other subjects suited to flourish in such situations. Consequently, the top of the wall is always gay. At the foot he has constructed a border of clinkers, flints, quaint roots, and so on, furnished with appropriate plants, and from which different sorts of ivies and close-growing climbers—"clingers" would be a more expressive term—are made to completely cover up the obnoxious bricks.

We have also seen another way of concealing, or rather, perhaps, of utilizing walls, involving a kind of aerial application of the plunging system. At sufficient distance from the wall, to allow pots to be dropped in, somewhat after the fashion of hat-rails in railway carriages, two or three iron rods, at suitable distances apart, were fixed all round the garden. These were kept full of different plants in pots throughout the season, being changed for others as they passed out of bloom. It must be admitted that the area was not large, and that there were copious appliances for striking and forcing a stock of plants close at hand.

The ordinary galvanized wire net, with a strong rod at top and

bottom, makes an easily-fixed and effective foundation for training objects against a wall. A good deal may be done towards hiding and improving objectionable corners by an ingenious application of the new material, virgin cork. The use of this article, however, has so much extended that the subject would form a long paper of itself.

By way of parting advice for suburban horticulturists, we would say that, *cæteris paribus*, always prefer a dwelling with some sort of garden, and that, if possible, with separating partitions of open work instead of blocks of bricks.

PLANTS IN POTS.

NOTES FOR AMATEURS ON THE CULTIVATION OF PLANTS IN POTS.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

PROPGATING by seeds and cuttings will be part of the regular routine work, and the amateur who loves plant growing will be ambitious of distinction in this part of the business. It must be confessed, however, that to take a young plant from the hands of a nurseryman, and by careful management develop its full capabilities, so that in due time—it may be but a few months or it may be many years—that plant shall have become a noble specimen, is a task far more worthy of an amateur's ambition. We can always buy plants to begin with, but we must acquire by patience and perseverance the skill requisite to the development of their beauties. One of the first requisites to success in the multiplication of plants is a propagating house or pit. It is customary to enclose, by means of a glass screen, a small portion of the warmest end of a stove or greenhouse for this purpose, and to ensure bottom-heat by means of a shallow tank covered with slates, the water in the tank being heated by conducting it through the flow-pipe at the point where the latter is connected with the boiler. But almost any amount of propagating may be done without any special arrangement of this sort, especially in a garden where a hotbed is made up in spring, and advantage is taken of the natural heat of the earth in the later portion of the summer season. Frames and pits are valuable auxiliaries to the greenhouse, and, indeed, there can be but little done without them where soft-wooded plants, notable for an abundant production of flowers, are held in favour. The grower of hard-wooded plants and succulents will have much less need of them. Hand lights, bell glasses, and the propagating boxes made of cheap tile-ware, may be rendered serviceable at all seasons of the year in the multiplication of plants, and the enthusiastic plant-grower will soon learn how to make them repay their cost a dozen times over every year. The necessity for such contrivances arises out of the fact that a moist, warm soil, and a still, moist, warm atmosphere, are peculiarly favourable to the germination of seeds, and the rooting of cuttings, and if the amateur will always bear this fact in mind, the business of pro-