THE GENTLEWOMAN’S BOOK OF GARDENING.

CHAPTER I.

THE GARDEN IN ROMANCE.

The garden has ever been the headquarters of romance. It is at once the type of the Hebrew Paradise and of the Greek Elysium. On the one hand we have Milton, who sings—

“Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gather’d, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world; nor that sweet grove
Of Daphne by Orontes, and th’ inspired
Castalian spring, might with this Paradise
Of Eden strive.”

Nothing in literature has surpassed the poet’s description of the virginal pair enshrined therein.
2 THE GENTLEWOMAN’S BOOK OF GARDENING.

On the other hand, Homer—a veritable chronicler of primeval joys—has chosen the garden as the setting of some of his tenderest scenes. What garden is there to equal that of Nansicaa?

“There in full prime the orchard trees grow tall—
Sweet fig, pomegranate, apple, fruited fair,
Pear and the healthful olive.”

Less pleasing in its associations, but equally delightful in its details, was that of Calypso, where

“All about a meadowy ground was seen
Of violets mingling with the parsley green.”

And there is no tenderer and more touching scene in all the grand old poem than that in which Ulysses, after long years of absence, finds his old father labouring humbly in his garden, and gently chides him with caring more for its adornment than his own.

The Thracian kings had rose-gardens on the sheltered slopes of the snowy Bernicus; and the garden of the Hesperides, with the dragon-guarded fruit, was on the northern coast of Africa. The hanging gardens of Babylon (one of the wonders of the world) were constructed for a home-sick Median queen by her Assyrian lover. Now, where once these were, there blooms only
THE GARDEN IN ROMANCE.

one strange and solitary tree, brought ages since from some alien shore.

Tasso tells us of “Armida’s enchanted realm,” and Schiller relates how “Die schönen Tage in Aranjuez sind nun zu ende.” It was in Aranjuez that, for the delight of Queen Isabella, the desert was forced to blossom as the rose, and the barren soil of Castile made splendid with flowers.

Two pretty and pathetic legends of garden-queens we may recall. At Tacubaya, in Mexico, exists still, beside a clump of trees, the “Fountain of the Queen.” Once there was a lovely garden round the fountain, and daily Queen Malinche and her maidens repaired thither to bathe. One day, just after they had laid aside their white robes, a party of Aztec hunters surprised them. Malinche did not hesitate. Rather than endure their gaze she plunged headlong into the fountain, never to rise again. At noon, however, “people of acute vision” see her gold and vermilion head-dress floating there, and know that for a moment she has risen from her crystal home below to gaze again on the garden she once loved.

The other is a pretty story of a beautiful Moorish maiden named Galiana, whose father built for her a “lordly pleasure house,” sur-
rounded by delicious gardens made quaint with fantastic kiosks and cool with marble baths and splashing fountains. But amidst all its beauty Galiana was unhappy, for a great and gruff Moorish giant would persist in wooing her. But one day a gallant young Frankish prince came riding along, saw and loved the maiden, slew the too importunate giant, and won Galiana for his own.

Many a garden has been laid out to give pleasure to beauty. Gabrielle d’Estrées had a noteworthy garden, and Fair Rosamond was imprisoned in another. Marie Antoinette lived in the golden age of gardens, and had the Petit Trianon, with its dairy, farms, chapel, and cottage for the curé, reconstructed to please herself. Here, clad in dainty white, with bewitching gauze fichus and flower-wreathed straw hats, she and her ladies played like children on the edge of the volcano. They fished in the lake, superintended the milking of the cows, and tried to make butter in the dairy.

Almost as pathetic is the child-garden of Mary Queen of Scots, whose traces may still be seen in the placid islet in Lake Menteith. Here, at least, her memory is pure and beautiful and innocent, for here she lived only as a child.
The garden in romance.

The gentlewoman is associated with the garden in fancy more than in reality. It was in a garden that the ill-fated lovers of Verona met and loved; it was in a garden that Paolo and Francesca learned the love they immortalised; it was in the garden of the King of Navarre that certain merry lords and ladies were of scorned, derided, and conquered each other. There was also the garden tended "from morn to even" by

"A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind,
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean."

And here it was that the "sensitive plant" and other lovely and ethereal flowers grew. Linked closely with the garden, too, is the thought of "simple Isabel," and the poor remains of her lover, hid within a garden-pot, with a plant of basil growing over them. Rose, the gardener's daughter, lived within a garden; roses grew over its porch, lilac perfumed the air, whilst a privet hedge sheltered it from the road, and a green wicket gate admitted Eastace and his friend.

It was in Windsor garden that James I. of Scotland got the first glimpse of his lady love,
6 THE GENTLEWOMAN'S BOOK OF GARDENING.

"the fairest and the freshest younge flower of all." "Ah sweete!" he says,

""are ye a warldly creature,
Or heavenly thing in likeness of nature?

""Or are ye god Cupid's own princess,
And comen are to loose me out of band?
Or are ye very Nature, the goddess
That have depainted with your heavenly hand
This garden full of flowers as they stand?"

As lovely as any was the garden of Schalimas,—

"With foot as light
As the young musk-roes out she flew,
To cull each shining leaf that grew
Beneath the moonlight's hallowing beams,
For this enchanted wreath of dreams—
Anemones and seas of gold,
And new-born lilies of the river,
And these sweet flowerets that unfold
Their buds on Camadene's quiver."

Nor must we forget Saccharissa's walk in the garden of Penshurst. Penshurst was Sidney's home, and there stands

"The taller tree, which of a nut was set
At his great birth, when all the Muses met."

Saccharissa was, of course, Lady Dorothy Sidney, the inspirer of much of Waller's verse.

It is only of late years that women have
assumed their right place as the presiding genii of the garden, and have even attempted professionally to grow and care for flowers, to arrange and look after window-boxes, to design home and table decorations. They could not well find a more agreeable pursuit, for surely all true women will agree that the fragrant air of the garden is sweeter than the dim and dusty atmosphere of the lecture-room, that the cult of flowers is more befitting and more enjoyable than the frenzied pursuit of a vote. Gardening soothes and calms the mind, whilst public strife unsettles the temper and destroys tranquillity. Women, like the “great Diocletian,” should know when they are well off. Cowley says—

“Methinks I see great Diocletian walk
In the Salonian garden’s noble shade,
Which by his own imperial hands was made.
I see him smile, methinks, as he does talk
With the ambassadors, who come in vain
To entice him to a throne again.
‘If I, my friends,’ said he, ‘should to you show
All the delights which in these gardens grow,
’Tis likelier much that you with me would stay,
Than ’tis that you should carry me away.’”

There are still many ways in which a gentlewoman might occupy herself in a garden more than she does at present. It is a pity that the pleasant
old institution, the still-room, has been allowed to fall into disuse. In the old days the country dame was her own chemist and apothecary. She grew her own medicinal and culinary herbs, and distilled or dried them, as the case might be. Why should this charming and useful pastime not be revived? Chemistry is a common item in education nowadays, and here is a way in which the girl-scientist may apply her new knowledge for the good of her household. The object of the enlightened woman of to-day should be not to discard household and domestic duties, but to apply to them the results of recent researches in hygiene, economics, science, and art, so as to elevate what was once mere domestic drudgery to an honoured and honourable occupation. In a later chapter we hope to show how the still-room may be advantageously and scientifically revived.

Another pleasant old use of the garden was the cultivation of “strewings.” As everybody knows, carpets are a modern innovation; and, by comparison, “strewings” are apt to seem to us barbaric and unattractive. But under good housewives the “strewings” (which seem to have included wall decoration) were carefully chosen. At Christmas rosemary, bay, mistletoe, and holly were used.
THE GARDEN IN ROMANCE.

"Rosemary and rose—these keep
Seeming, and savour all the winter long,"
says Shakespeare; and at Christmas, when the
customary reunion reawakens the sense of loss, what
more fitting than that rosemary, the garniture of
graves, the type of remembrance, should strew the
floors and scent the rooms?

At Candlemas these were replaced by box and
Easter yew; and at Whitsuntide they, in turn,
gave way to the freshly budded twigs of birch.
In summer rushes and cool oaken boughs were
considered the best covering.

Many another fragrant herb was used as well,
however, and Drayton gives a comprehensive list
of these:—

"Sweet Lavender—with Rosemary and Bays;
Sweet Marjoram, with her like, sweet Basil, rare for smell;
The heathful Balm and Mint,—
The scentful Camomile, the vertuous Costmarie;
Clear Hyssop, and therewith the comfortable Thyme;
Germander with the rest, each thing then in her prime:
Among these strewing kinds some others wild that grow,
As Burnet, all abroad, and Meadowwort they throw."

Herrick also details at length the succession of
plants used for strewing the floors and walls.

It was about the beginning of the sixteenth
century that house-decoration by plants first began,
10 THE GENTLEWOMAN’S BOOK OF GARDENING.

Oleanders, myrtles, etc., being then placed about the rooms.

It has been suggested by one writer that a Shakespearean garden might be laid out, where the devotee of the “swan of Avon” might muse at will concerning the flowers and their associations. There would be pansies and rue for Ophelia; pleached honeysuckle for Beatrice, and all Perdita’s bouquet—daffodils, violets, primroses, oxslips; with love-in-idleness for Oberon and Titania; red and white roses, like those that grew in the Temple gardens, and fantastic box trees, such as they affected in Illyria. This idea might be carried further; amaranths, daffodils, and “cowslips wan” might once more unite their tears in memory of Lycid, and

“Violets blue,
And fresh blown roses washed in dew,”

proclaim the sovereignty of “mirth and youthful jollity.” In some favoured and sheltered spot—if necessary, under glass—the companions of the sensitive plant might again range themselves around her; and in another, roses, lilies, and larkspur might once more look and long for Maud.

The change in the spirit of gardening within