

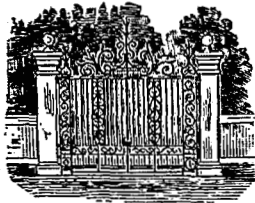
## Outside the Gates.

### FLOWERS OF THE SEASON.

#### CHAPTER III.

#### MARCH.

By MRS. C. CARMICHAEL STOPES.



The unusual mildness of the February of this year will probably discredit any predictions as to the Floral Calendar of "blustering March." Nevertheless, we may consider its usual products. In general, the flowers that have timidly ventured forth in February attain to fuller perfection and grow in greater numbers by March—notably the Daffodils, which may be almost said to be the flower of this month, as the Snowdrop is of February. Shakespeare notices this, and speaks of

"Sweet Daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty."

A very common plant blooms early this month, before its leaves come out, the Butter-Bur (*Petasites vulgaris*), otherwise called "Tussilago Petasites." The flowers are purplish or white, in a panicle, the leaves are reniform, and grow sometimes very large, from three inches to three feet in diameter, the stem growing sometimes five to six feet. They grow in clusters by river banks, wet meadows, or road banks, and are called by children "umbrellas," which their name, "petasites," records. The root-stock is fleshy and stout, and creeps widely. The bees haunt the flowers much for their sweet nectar and early flowering. The roots have somewhat of the virtues of colts-foot in allaying coughs. Gerard gives quite a list of virtues believed in at his time: that the roots "stamped with ale and given to drink in pestilence or burning fevers mightily abated the heat thereof," because it procured sweat and killed worms. It also cured ulcers. The most abundant of wild flowers is the common Violet (*Viola Canina*), of various shades of blue, and with many sub-species, growing on sunny banks and in shady woods, in hedgerows, and on mountain cliffs; hardier than its sweet-scented brother *Viola Odorata*, but, though lacking in scent, quite as beautiful. Its medicinal properties are emetic and laxative. As companion to the woodland Violet appears the Wood Anemone or wind-flower (*Anemone Nemorosa*), white starred, sometimes pink or brown-tinted, with their tall stems and many-cleft leaves. Beautiful and delicate are they to behold, and to paint as they grow, but they do not lend themselves well to bouquets, as they do not carry well. All their parts have acrid qualities. In early seasons appears an even more fragile flower, the Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), snow-white, with a texture more delicate than snowdrops, hanging its white-veined head on its slender stalk. Its light green leaves are trefoil, hence it has often been mistaken for shamrock. They may be eaten as a refreshing salad in the woods, as their juice is pleasantly acid. An infusion of them makes a cooling drink in ardent fevers, and when boiled in milk they make a pleasant whey. If the juice is carefully extracted and evaporated, it yields a crystalline powder called oxalic acid, which is employed in taking iron-moulds out of linen or in cleaning straw

hats. It is sold under the name of "the salts of lemons." The ivy-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica Hederifolia*) appears early in the month, and the Shepherd's Purse (*Thlaspi Bursa-Pastoris*). The old herbalists considered that it was good to stop bleeding, used either internally or externally. A beautiful sight in the hedgerows by the middle of the month is the greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria Holostea*), with its large star-like flowers weaving their way in and out of the thorns, on its delicate, creeping stem, and lanceolate leaves. There are many varieties, but their qualities are unimportant. They, too, like the Wood Sorrel and Anemone, are difficult to keep fresh in carrying home from a day's outing, but the buds that grow further up the stalk generally open the next day in water. A frequent companion of the Stitchwort, generally bright blue, but sometimes white, is the Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), creeping over the banks under the hedgerows, and brightening its ever-green leaves. It has no scent, but it has always been a great favourite with children, who make garlands of its trailing stems. In French the name is *Pervenche*. I never knew how the English name arose until I saw an old use of the word *Pervince*. Gerard calls it "*Vinca Periunca*, and with the change of the *v* into the *u*, one can see how both the English and Latin words are derived from *vincere*, to bind. It was supposed in olden times to cure the cramp, and wreaths of its twigs were wound round the limbs for that purpose. Gerard says its qualities are "something hot, dry, and astringent," and that it cures bleeding. The *Vinca major*, or larger Periwinkle, generally blooms later in the season, and is not so common. Brilliant by the middle or end of March are the marshes adorned by the Marsh Marigold (*Caltha Palustris*), a species of the Ranunculaceae, but larger, finer, and more juicy than any buttercup which flowers about the same time. The green flowers of Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis Perennis*) brighten their green tufts in this month.

In this month flowers the Aspen (*Populus Tremula*), the Laurel (*Prunus Laurocerasus*), the Elm (*Ulmus Campestris*), the Spurge Laurel (*Daphne Laureola*), the Rose Willow (*Salix Helix*), which grow in the woods; and in the gardens the Almond tree (*Amygdalus communis*) throws its delicate pink blossoms over its leafless twigs. The profuse blossoming of the Almond tree used to be considered as the promise of a good harvest. The Peach blossom (*Amygdalus persicus*) has a similar flower, though white. Evelyn's list of garden "flowers in prime, but yet lasting," include "Anemones, Spring Cyclamen, Winter Aconite, Crocus, Snowdrop, white and black Hellebore, single and double Hepatica, Leucoion, Chamædris of all colours, Deus Caninus, Violets, Fritillarias, Chelidonium, Tuberos Iris, Hyacinths, Jonquils, Mezereon, Auriculas, Narcissus (double and single), Primroses, Tulips, yellow Dutch Violets, Crown Imperials, Rubus Odoratum, Arbor Judæ." Sweet Hyacinths fill the air with perfume in the gardens and in the parks, and the scented varieties of Tulips are now much cultivated. Its name comes from the Persian "Thoulyban," a kind of turban. Though it grows wild in the East, it was much admired and cultivated in gardens. It was introduced into England about 1557, and during the next century became so wonderfully popular that during the Tulip-mania fabulous prices were given for rare bulbs, and fortunes gained and lost.

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