

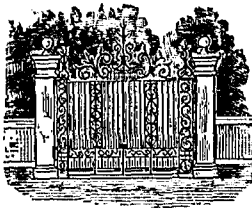
Outside the Gates.

FLOWERS OF THE SEASON.

CHAPTER XI.

By MRS. C. CARMICHAEL STOPES.

NOVEMBER.



November has always been reckoned the dreariest month of the year. Beside its fogs, and short days, and chill weather, we have the peculiar Novemberish exhalations from dead leaves that are no longer crisp and curly after their gambols in the October winds, but are weighted with damp, and lie sodden and decaying in moist hollows of woods and roads. Yet sometimes, especially when we have had cold or late summers, November distinguishes himself and grants us spring temperatures and genial breezes. That tells very much on the flowers. If we only escape a severe frost, there are many survivals to be seen abroad, some even reckoned peculiar to the month.

The small bluish-purple flowers of the lesser Scabious, beloved of the late Mother Butterfly, come out under November's ungenial skies; the wreathed Pipe-wort grows in northern lakes, with its seven-angled stalks, its nearly transparent leaves, and its terminal heads of flowers, white petals with black spots, and purple anthers; and the Water Horehound, or common Gipsywort, still grows in sandy soil on the banks of streams and ponds. The gipsies used to dye their tanned skins the darker by the juices of this plant, hence its name. The Pyrola, or Wintergreen, though flowering in September, continues blooming till the frosts grow keen. Many of our common plants remain, all the more noticed now because fairer rivals have succumbed to inclement weather.

I once found in an ordinary wood near London quite a large handful of November flowers, including the white and red arched corollas of the Dead Nettle, Cranesbill, Self-heal, Veronica, Vetch, Agrimony, Feverfew, Honeysuckle, Stachys, Buttercup, and, of course, our beautiful everlasting, the field Daisy.

The naked flowering Crocus grows in great profusion in October and November by the River Trent. The flowers, perfectly destitute of leaves, brighten the meadow, but fade before the frosts of December, when the leaves begin to spring, paler and more upright than those of the Saffron or the Vernal Crocus.

The Colchicum, or Meadow-Saffron, also frequently survives in mild seasons in western meadows. I spoke of its powerful medicinal qualities in my September article, but, beside that, this plant has a peculiar botanical interest. The seed-vessel in all other plants is situated within the flower-cup, or just beneath it, but in this case, because the flower blooms too late to allow of the ripening of the seeds before winter, the tube of the style is continued down through the stalk underground to the root, and there, in shelter from rain and frost, the seeds are perfected during the dull months. But they cannot vegetate without being exposed to the air, so in the spring they push out their capsules or seed-vessels, somewhat egg-shaped, with three very blunt angles,

surrounded by several spear-shaped leaves. These capsules contain innumerable seeds. These gradually become developed, and fruit-stalks raise them, sometimes three inches above the ground, to receive the nourishing influence of sunlight. They ripen about the time of hay-harvest, when the capsules crack and the seeds are carried abroad by winds. This is the solitary plant that flowers in the autumn, seeds underground, and fruits in the spring.

Many of the summer flowers still brighten November hedges by their seeds or fruit. The Clematis, which is called Traveller's Joy and Virgin's Bower in the summer, through the beauty of its trailing stems and clustering flowers, now receives the name of Old Man's Beard, because of the hoary appearance of the tufted, downy seeds. The bright red berries of the Black Bryony or Lady's Seal, the more orange-tinted crimsons of the Wild Rose Doghips, the scarlet spikes of the Arum and of the Iris, the black clusters of the Privet, and the pink, flower-like seeds of the Spindle Tree still can brighten the late autumn bouquet. People err by not seeking the woods even in this month

"When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."
(Shak., S. 73.)

They see in interlacing branches the origin of Gothic architecture.

The vanishing of the leaves gives us an opportunity of learning the artistic set of the branches, that to a skilled eye is sufficient, even from a distance, to decide the name of a tree; of seeing the undergrowth, the grass, the mosses, the lichens, that are preparing to take advantage of the modicum of light to stimulate their growth to new activities in December.

The close of the year makes us more and more content with the flowers of the garden. There you may find sweet Violets springing up in sheltered nooks, and China Roses blooming in the arbour. In favoured localities you may find, as Evelyn says, "Flowers in Prime or yet lasting, Anemones, Antirrhinum, Gilly-flower, Clematis, Pansies, Carnations, Spanish and Indian Jessamines, Myrtles, and Musk Rose." A new favourite has arisen since his day, the Chrysanthemum. The hardier varieties bloom in the open until the frosts come, and the finer ones, in the shelter of greenhouses, keep up the supply of beautiful plants for table decoration.

A Novel Dinner.

A novel dinner is one which is to take place at Prince's Restaurant, on November 25th, on behalf of the Home and Hospital for Sick Children, Maida Vale, when the office of stewards will be discharged entirely by ladies. The Duke of Connaught, President of the Hospital, has promised to take the chair, and amongst those who have consented to act in the capacity of stewards are the Duchess of Marlborough, the Marchioness of Granby, Countess Annesley, the Countess of Kilmorey, and others. Women have already given proof of their ability for the organisation of dinners in connection with those held by the Matrons' Council, the Women Writers, the London School of Medicine for Women, and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. We wish all success to the new venture.

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