Crocus seems also to have been native, or imported in very early times. But it is noted by Gerard to have been of "mixed colours—that is to say, white, striped upon the back with purple, and dashed over on the inside with a bright shining murrey colour." He says that it has small, short, grassy leaves with a stripe down the middle, and affirms that "as yet there is no known use of them in physick." He is very enthusiastic over the beauty of a variety sent to his garden by the botanist Robinus of Paris, with "flowers of a most perfect shining yellow colour, seeming, afar off, to be a hot, glowing cole of fire." This is the common yellow Crocus of our spring gardens, companion of the Snowdrop. But it has become naturalised in many places, so may be treated as a wild flower. Gerard shows them smaller than they are now; and it is curious that he shows a sketch of a fine Crocus, bulb and all, as "the Persian Daffodil."

There must have been considerable changes also among the Daffodils. Gerard describes them chiefly as white and purple, and the bright yellow flower as the Bastard Daffodil. He says of it, "the common yellow English Daffodilly, or Daffodowndilly, is so well known that it needeth no description. It groweth almost *everywhere* throughout England." This has not been my experience. Except in very favoured localities, it does not seem to have been able to hold its own. Gerard describes vaguely the medicinal value of the plant as purgative, and adds: "The distilled water of Daffodils doth cure the palsie, if the patient be bathed and rubbed with the said liquor before the fire. Proved by the diligent searcher of Nature, Master Nicholas Belson, King's College, Cambridge."

In regard to the medicinal value of these, I may note that the Wallflower, though not definitely used as a drug, belongs to that respectable order of Cruciferæ of which no one species is poisonous, and most are antiscorbutic, such as Watercress, Hedge Mustard, Cabbage, Scurvy Grass, &c. From the Dandelion we have the well-known antibilious medicine *Taraxacum*, and the Coltsfoot is used as a cough medicine. Its leaves are sometimes made into cigars, and smoked in cases of asthma. The sweet Violet is distilled into the sweetest of all perfumes.

The Mezereon (Daphne Mezereum) is a shrub which appears wild in the south in copses and woods, but is frequently cultivated in gardens. The flowers come out in February before the leaves, in groups of three, subsessile in the axils of last year's leaves, pink, lilac, or purple. They have a powerful, sweet smell. The plant is acrid and poisonous, the leaves are used as a vesicant, and the bright red berries as a powerful cathartic.

Evelyn's list of *Garden Flowers* for the month "in prime, or yet lasting," include "Winter Aconite, Single Anemones and Double, early Tulips and Hyacinths, Black Hellebore, Single Hepatica, Persian Iris, Vernal Cyclamen, white and red, yellow Violets, and the Snowflake." It is a pity that the pretty little Hepatica seems to have gone out of fashion. Its tufts of ivy-shaped leaves shelter the hardy little blossoms that peep out early, either snow-white or cobalt blue, or double in deep rose-pink, like miniature roses. One beautiful shrub this month brightens its glossy leaves with its crimson blossoms, the Japanese Quince (Cydonia Japonica); and in the Channel Islands the Camelias flower in the gardens in the open air.

From over the sea are imported all sorts of varieties of Narcissus, Violet, and Anemone, the latter generally the pink and green-tinted variety so common in Italy.

Greenhouses and hothouses pour forth relays of exotics too numerous to mention, and in the shelter of every house may be found the sweet-scented varieties of early Tulips and the adaptable and delightful Hyacinths of various tints, from purest white to the deepest crimsons and blues, growing in flowerpots or in bulb glasses. It should not be forgotten by those who grow these that roots do not like the light as flowers do, and that the darker the tint of the glass the better for the plant.

A Book of the Week.

YOUTH.*

It is said that the circle of Mr. Conrad's readers is a small one, and this is doubtless to be accounted for by the fact that his range of subject is a small one. Those to whom the "magic of the sea" is a sealed book must not try to read or to enjoy him. In fact, a good many of his tales remind one of the inimitable coat-of-arms which *Punch* prepared for Rudyard Kipling—"A ship in full sail, with a cargo of technicalities, all warranted genuine!"

Mr. Conrad does not spare us the technicalities. He writes, confessedly, for those who love and who understand the sea. His knowledge is great, his imagination is of a most original quality; there is a weirdness about his work, hanging over it like the mist concealing an unknown coast from a shipful of explorers. One feels, when one has begun, that one must grope forward farther and farther into that mist to see what really does lies beneath it. And what lies beneath, in Mr. Conrad's view, is tragedy.

All the tragedy of man as a race lies across and upon that broad-bosomed ocean. The Englishman, with the soul craving adventure, crawls in a tin-pot steamer up reach after reach of pestilential, marshy river, through tracts of country never penetrated by civilisation in any form, through the hidden lairs of primeval man, full of horrors unnameable, unspeakable, things to chill the blood and make the man lose his mental balance. It is well that we, who are apt to assume that all the world has orphanages and lunatic asylums, should know of the thousands and thousands of square miles where not only is this not so, but wherein no one in his wildest moments has ever dreamed that it could be so, far less that it should be so.

"Absurd!" say some of the listeners, to whom Marlow, who went up the fever river in command of the Company's steamboat to get ivory, is trying to tell the awful story of the man who, in the wilderness, lost his moral balance and became as bestial as the devils he controlled.

> "Absurd!" he cried. "This is the worst of trying to tell. . . . Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another—excellent appetites, and temperature normal—you hear—normal from one year's end to

* By Joseph Conrad. Blackwood.

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