

The Culture of Tomatoes.

It is a mistake to suppose that tomatoes do best on poor soil. They are rank growers and great producers, and will do something in quite barren lands, but to produce abundantly large and luscious fruit the ground must be rich. A warm, sandy soil will give the earliest yield, but they will grow almost everywhere, and so far from its being true that they require nice cultivation, there are few vegetables that will bear neglect so well. We would not, however, advise neglecting them. Whatever is worth raising is worth raising in the best manner. We therefore append a few suggestions as to their cultivation.

In transplanting to the garden, cover the stem up nearly to the leaves, but not vertically, as this would place the roots too deep in the ground, when they would be too cold. By laying the stem of the plant nearly horizontal, a couple of inches below the surface, it will send out roots, and thus the plant will have an abundance of foragers actively employed in furnishing it with food, and moreover they will be near the surface, where they can receive stimulus from the sun and air. Most of our tropical plants, tomatoes among the number, want bottom heat.

For an early crop, trim closely, cutting off the shoots just above the blossom clusters. This will throw the juices of the plant into the fruit, and also let the sun in upon it. The crop will be less, of course, but a week or ten days earlier, and an early tomato is worth this amount of painstaking. We have sometimes hastened their maturity by placing a wide board edgewise on the north side of a row of tomatoes, which serve to keep off the cold winds and to radiate the sun's heat.

The Elderberry.

L. M.—Your inquiry respecting this fruit is by no means out of place, and even if some think them of no use whatever, we, along with a few others, think differently. No fruit, when converted into wine or spirits, retains the original flavor more than the elderberry does. They make an excellent pie fresh, or when dried and put away for winter. As a jelly they are hard to beat, in a medical sense; one teaspoonful dissolved in a glassful of water, and drank before going to bed, will relieve the most obstinate cough. The blossoms are often gathered and dried to make tea of for sweating purposes. Here they grow wild in great abundance, and we have observed that where they are plenty near a vineyard, the birds will feed upon them and let the grapes alone to a considerable extent.

There are several varieties here; the one with the purple stem is superior in quality. There is a cultivated variety about double the size of the wild ones and coarser in habit of tree, but for some cause or other it is not often seen; we presume because the wild ones are so plenty. We had a yellow one in the east, and brought plants with us, but lost them somehow. It was more of a novelty than of real value, however, as it had a dull sweet taste, nor near so lively as the black one. By all means would we cultivate it, if there were not plenty of volunteers around.

They should be kept in one place and left to grow as a tree. Where at liberty they sucker badly, and are a nuisance where cultivating other crops. A few cut off one fall and stuck in the ground as a mark at the end of a row of apple seeds, struck roots and made trees; and if we remember rightly, no suckers came up around them.

Tomatoes.

Mr. James H. Clarke, of Canning, Queen's County, N. B., has brought to market some good specimens of this useful vegetable. The size is unusually large of the "General Grant" variety. Mr. Clarke devotes much attention to the raising of tomatoes, and last year his fine farm yielded upwards of twenty-six tons. Mr. Clarke is always first in the market, and his vegetables afford him a handsome revenue. His business in tomatoes alone amounted to \$2,000 last season, and his plants number 3,500.—*News.*

The farmers of Manitoba were at work seeding in the second week of April. A very large average will be put under crop—not less than 10,000 acres of wheat alone, and at least as much more barley and oats. The buds at that time were much swollen on the trees, and it was expected maple and poplar leaves would be out by the end of the month.

The Story.

Ernestine.

A Story of the Little House in the Cloister House.

CHAPTER I.

The city of Utrecht may be classed amongst the quaintest of Dutch towns. During the blazing heat of summer, the snows of winter, or the dull fogs and damp of dreary autumn, alike does it preserve its aspect of having flourished in bygone ages. Its high pointed roofs and stagnant canals—as they are called there *grachten*—are at the present day just what they were a century and a half ago.

Of course, in the outskirts of the town are to be seen new and handsome mansions, especially on the Maaliban, or walk of lime trees and along by the Catherine Straat; but the town proper is, as I have said, a city of other days.

Were it not for the students who attend the University, and during the term, at least, diffuse some of their own youthful vitality into the place, its quietude would be undisturbed, save for the rattle of the milk carts at stated periods, and the occasional patter of *klompen* or wooden shoes along drowsy, echoing streets. One of the first things which attracted my notice when I arrived in Utrecht, was the hollow sound of the roads. For some time I could not understand it; but I discovered that the kitchens extend under the streets to the edge of the canals, hence the peculiar hollow echoes for which Dutch cities are noted.

The Cloister Court of Utrecht is an open square, situated between the old monastery and the cathedral. It is paved with small bricks of a bright red color, set edgewise, and inclining towards the centre, where are still the remains of a well, long since disused. Round the court is marked by massive pillars which support a groined roof of exceeding beauty. On one side is the Cathedral, or Dom Kirk, and wedged in between it and the cloister is the smallest of small houses, with low, sloping roof, and diamond shaped lattice windows. To the right of the cottage, on the upper story, is what once formed the hospital of the monastic building, which is now converted into a reading-room, for the use of the professors and students; whilst beneath the apartments of the janitor and his wife, between whose domicile and the staircase leading to the reading-room is a broad archway, with huge doors, bearing above their portals the gilded star and motto of the students. This forms a short cut from the remnant of the old university to the chief club-house in the Line Maart. Here I may as well say that in Utrecht there is no grand college, such as are to be seen in our own universities in England. The portion that remains is only large enough for one professor to hold his class there. All the other classes are conducted at the private houses of the professors, except those for medicine, which are held at the hospital. The students are not in residence, and, like those in Edinburgh, are, after certain hours, quite free to follow their own devices.

Opposite to the Dom is the pile of buildings which composed the ancient monastery, now let off as chambers for the students. The remaining side of the square is formed by the offices of a private house, built so as to preserve the perfect outline of the arcade. On this side is a second archway, similar to the one already described, which leads to the east side of the city.

The whole of the Cloister Court makes a charming surprise to the tourist of Utrecht. Approaching from the heart of the town, through the disagreeable odors of the Fisch Maart, or Fish Market, towards the western archway, there is nothing particularly striking to the eye, save the gray old Dom, mended and patched here and there with red brick; its tower, five hundred yards away, across a paved square, which is all the more incongruous by being seen in juxtaposition with the reading-room, which is daubed with hideous yellow ochre.

Pleasant it is then, on passing through the arch, to find oneself in a cool, shady court, the perfect architecture of which, with its moss-covered stones, would delight a lover of antiquarian research. But whilst English tourists go into wild raptures over this little corner of Utrecht, its plegmatic inhabitants perceive not its beauties, and pass it day after day with no notice beyond the thought of how desirable a sight it would make for a dwelling-house or a shop, or a sneering laugh at "those mad English." Ah! how stolid, how dull, how unenthusiastic is the Dutch temperament!

But, though insensible to the architectural beauty of the Cloister Court, one portion of its population, at least, could appreciate beauty of a different kind. In that little house in the Cloister Court dwelt the fairest maiden in Utrecht; and as the students passed and repassed to the Professor's rooms, many anxious glances were thrown on its windows, to obtain a glimpse of the charming face within.

Pretty Ernestine! no wonder she proved such an attraction to them, for she was as unlike in appearance to the ponderous, awkward Dutch belles, as is the graceful Arab steed to the heavy Flanders horse. The reason is soon told. Ernestine van der Weide was not a Dutch girl but a Fries. There is a general idea that Dutch and Fries are one and the same, but it is a great mistake. There is as much difference, perhaps more, between the inhabitants of South and Central Holland, and those of Friesland, as there is between that of our own southern counties and the Highlanders of North Britain. They are a distinct race—distinct in manners, dress, speech, and physical appearance; and have, especially in the last particular, very considerable advantage over the Dutch.

Ernestine van der Weide was an orphan, descended from a good but impoverished family, and though but eighteen years old, had earned her bread for upwards of two years. Like most of her countrywomen, she was expert with the needle, and marvelously skillful in the production of fine embroidery work, which was much in vogue and highly prized by the great ladies of Utrecht, which is still, as it has ever been, the most aristocratic town in Holland. There you will find no merchant princes, no vulgar, bustling manufacturers, only well bred gentle people of noble family, who, with the professors and their families, and the military, form the society of the place.

Therefore, when Ernestine left her native village in Friesland, she selected Utrecht as her abiding place, and found a home with one Jan Smits, the verger of the Dom, who, with his wife, occupied the little house in the Cloister Court.

To the old couple Ernestine was more like a daughter than a lodger. At the time of her settlement in Utrecht they were

in great affliction, having just lost their only surviving child the last of a large family, all swept away in the first bloom of youth by that terrible scourge of the Netherlands, consumption.

By trying with her whole power, no slight one, to fill the dead girl's place, she endeared herself to them with a deep and earnest love. The gentle tenderness of her kind nature served to bind the well-nigh broken heart of the old couple so closely to her, that ere she had been many months in their dwelling they had given her their undivided affection.

She took her meals with the Smits, and read or sang to them in the evening; but during the daytime she sat at the window of her little chamber, singing blithely as she industriously worked at her embroidery, now pausing to pluck a leaf, faded and sere, from the plants which formed a leafy screen at the casements, now chirping to her bird in his cage above her, and sometimes glancing down into the court, as the loud voices of the students attracted her attention, when she would return their almost reverential salutations with a demure inclination of her bonny head, and then peep at the tiny mirror which hung on the opposite wall.

Yes—Ernestine knew she was lovely. What pretty girl does not? What did she see in the glass to bring such a complacent look into her bright eyes? A perfectly oval face, with a broad, white forehead above a pair of deep, clear grey eyes—eyes that at times would dilate and darken, until they seemed almost black—shaded by dark penciled brows and long curled lashes; a straight, delicate nose; a somewhat drooping mouth, which, when she smiled, disclosed a pair of pearly teeth, so rarely seen in Holland; a complexion like the inner leaf of a rose; and, most beautiful of all, a mass of golden hair, worn in two thick braids reaching far below her waist—I say, with such a picture before her, it was no wonder that she looked self satisfied. As she was only 16 at the time of her leaving Friesland, she had not had her hair arranged in the abominable fashion customary to Fries women; so she always dressed in the simple black skirt and lilac kirtle, which is the usual week-day dress of the poorer classes in Holland.

The students came and went, and Ernestine embroidered and sang, and was happy. One brought her bon-bons, and another flowers, while a third presented her a kitten as his offering. She was friends with all, and favored none. Try as he would, no student could make any advance to her. She would take a trifling present, or his compliments up to a certain point; then would make him the most coquettish little bow in the world, and, "Good-day, mynheer!" leaving him more charmed because he was angry; more in love with her because she did not care in the least for him.

They quarrelled, and even fought about the "little cloister flower," as they called her; but she only sang more cheerily, and peeped more demurely from her screen of plants than she had done before.

I think the young students none so good as they might have been, liked her all the better for her purity of her whole life and actions. If, now and then, mistook one mistook the extent of his acquaintance with her, he never so transgressed again, but generally became one of her most jealous guardians. All loved Ernestine, all respected her; and therein lay her power.

Once Jans Smits observed to his wife:—"I like not these young fellows dangling after the maid."

To which the good wife made answer:—"Trust her, Jan—trust her; she is as pure as the angels!"

CHAPTER II.

By-and-by, there came to the university a young nobleman, named Gerard van Dorman von der Grethausse. His father had been, in his time a celebrated statesman—a man of bad morals and unholy like, who had in his old age married a Portuguese Jewess, of great wealth and extreme beauty. This lady died in giving birth to Gerard, leaving him the legacy of her own voluptuous southern constitution, in addition to her passionate, vindictive southern temper, which had ever chafed at the old forms and phlegmatic nature of the people of her adopted country.

Her old Portuguese maid, who had nursed Gerard in infancy, and at the time of which I write, was the only person who had any influence over him, used to say that the chill, damp climate and cold hearth by which she was surrounded had been the means of killing her.

These influences, together with the old superstitions which Nita had instilled into the boy's head, added to the reckless spirit with which he was endued, and at two-and-twenty, Gerard van der Grethausse was as bad a character as could well be imagined. That he was strikingly handsome, perhaps, only furthered this state of things. He had inherited his mother's large, soft, liquid, black eyes, raven tresses, and Caucasian type of features, as well as her tall, graceful *physique*, combined with the courtly grace and manner for which his father had ever been noted.

Gerard had not been many days in Utrecht before he heard of Ernestine van der Weide. At first, he was incredulous to her beauty, and still more so to the pure mode of her life and the modesty of her demeanor. He doubted the one and openly laughed at the other; but when he came to know our little Ernestine, he felt as only a bad man can feel in the presence of a pure-minded woman. He could not laugh and joke with her, as did his fellow students; but he fell desperately in love with her, and determined to win her.

Then a change came over Ernestine herself. From the bright, piquante coquette she had been, she grew into a grave, shy, almost nervous maid, much given to blushing and starting at the nearest trifles.

Even the sight of her own shadow was enough to bring the hot flushes to her cheek, and the quick impetuous blood welling to her heart, till she could hardly breathe.

This state of things continued for some time—Gerard treating her with all the winning courtesy he could well assume, she believing him to be everything that was good, true and noble. Then, he avowed, in passionate language, his love for her, and drew from the happy, blushing girl the acknowledgment of her own affection.

Costly presents began to find their way to the little house in the Cloister Court; and Gerard began to speak of bright far off lands to which he would take her—of sunny Italian lakes—of grand Alpine scenery—of gay Parisian life—the rich jewels, the magnificent dresses, the elegant carriage he would give her; but no word did he say of marriage. He had promised to make her a hundred times greater and more beautiful than the greatest ladies of Utrecht; therefore, Ernestine took it as a matter of course. Did she not trust in his honor and love?

To be continued.