

"A WITHERED ASTER."

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A FADED flower, one of last autumn's latest, telling of that sweet, calm beauty which is the herald of decay; telling of gorgeously vested trees, of ripened harvests and of gathered crops, of dropping nuts and of withered leaves, of

"Wailing winds and naked woods,
And meadows brown and sere."

A pressed, dried Aster (*A. cordifolius* Lin.), found flowering not many months ago in a picturesque glen, maple-and elm-crowned on one, and pine-clad on the other—the southern side; flowering in soft, springy ground, flowering hard by a forest streamlet, flowering on a calm, cloudy, yet clear day of last October. And even this faded flower will interest all, will, for it can, present many features worthy of every one's admiration.

Look, therefore, at its smooth stem, its leaves, below heart-shaped and large, with winged leaf-stalks, pining away to mere little bracts above. Note its branched stem of blue flowers with yellow, purple-changing hearts. Select one of these so-called flowers, and, after slicing it through, discover that the so-called "flower" is really a head of many flowers, those of the "heart" or "disk" differing from those of the rays. Examine carefully a disk-flower, after detaching it from its friends, and note:

1. That while the calyx, or outer floral envelope, is apparently wanting, it is in reality present, its united leaves or "sepals" being so consolidated with the carpels as to be undistinguishable therefrom; and that its "limb," owing to the crowding of the florets into a "head" has become a

mere circle of down or "pappus."

2. That the corolla, or inner floral circle, is composed of five yellow "petals," consolidated at their base with the "carpels," i.e., growing from them, and united so as to form a tube-shaped or "tubular" organ.

3. That the first reproductive circle is composed of five "stamens" growing out of the corolla, and having their "anthers" or upper parts united so as to form a sheath around the "style."

4. That the second reproductive circle or "pistil," has two united and consolidated carpels, a central pillar or "style," and two feathery "stigmas" or sensitive surfaces at its summit.

Taking for contrast a ray-flower, let us note:

1. The corolla, composed of five light-blue, not yellow, petals, not tube-shaped, but strap-shaped, as if the finished tube had been slit down and pressed into a four-veined leaf.

2. The absence of the stamens, as if a large part of the plant energy had been devoted to development of the blue, strap-shaped corolla.

Consider now the exquisite adaptation of each peculiarity of our species to its home. The smooth stem, the large, thin leaves, are specially fitted for the cool, dark shade of the edge of the streamlet. The flowers, crowded into a head by the suppression of their main stem and pedicels, are by this means adapted alike to the heat of early September and to the frosts of late September and of October, a protection further ensured by the row or rows of scales or bracts surrounding the head. The coherent, superior