

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

next? After the spade comes the rake. You have but to smooth down the hard lumps, make even the soil, pick off the weeds and stones, the chips and old boots, and so forth, knock down the high places, and rake and rake until a fine seed-bed is formed, and you are ready to bury the little brown midgets whence fairy flowers come, with a sure and certain hope that their resurrection will, if you have patience, fully reward you for all your efforts at turning over the brown soil. A few days and many of your flower seeds will have sent up their first tiny leaves, and you must to work once more, at pulling up weeds which have had an even if no, a better start. Then wait patiently and yet expectantly, and watch the seedlings run up to plant-hood, and complete their work of flowerhood.

And there is lots of other fun in store for you. Your seeds have gone through the stage of sprout, and growth of plant, and flowers are coming. So are the cats, so are the bugs, so are the chickens—and last, not least, so are the boys. If you are around when the cats, and boys, and chickens, successively call, you give them a hearty welcome, in such earnest and significant style, that misunderstanding, they may not fully appreciate it. You receive them, probably, with open arms—upraised arms would be a better term—and shout glad tidings of great force, and become so energetic and vociferous, that your visitors are rather astonished than pleased, and fail to look upon your acts and words as truly indicative of genuineness and enthusiastic desire for their companionship. They generally retire gracefully from the scene, slowly, calmly, and with a look of sorrow, astonished, it may be, at your excitement, and wondering why you so readily lose your self-possession.

Nay, under such circumstances, I have seen them precipitately jump over the garden wall, or fence, evidently impressed with doubts of my sanity. I didn't blame them, but would gladly have been afforded opportunity for fuller explanation, and demonstration of my actual desire for company. It is likely, however, and it is more often so than otherwise, that you are not at hand to receive your well-intentioned visitors, and they do not foolishly bewail your absence. Assured of it, they set to work to make the best of the situation. Their efforts of rendering themselves at home differ somewhat, for the boy, pomologically inclined, but assured that there is no fruit tree to investigate, becomes botanical at once, and freely selects specimens of the flower stalks of the tulip, or rose, or carnation, or stock, or condescendingly bestows his admiring attentions upon the pansy or verbena bed, and gathers posies while he may. While the chicken is less scientific, he is as close an observer as the boy, and is at once a vegetarian and an entomologist. If the plants are not up, he wants to know the reason why, and, in a spirit of enquiry, scratches up the soil; if they are up, he nibbles the fresh shoots, and scratches again; if they have progressed towards seeding point, he plucks the pod, and scratches some more. As a practical gardener, he is a firm believer in a well-stirred surface, even if you do not agree with him as to its propriety at that particular time and place. Grimalkin has more peculiar tastes, and roams in the garden plot on summer nights when a bright moon reminds him of Juliet, and the perfume of the verbenaceous family arouse his luxurious instincts. Then it is that he delves with more than Adamitic ardor, in the soft garden mould,