

My Gardener—a study.

By W. R. Gilbert, Calgary.

I wanted a really first class jobbing gardener. Not that I had altogether failed at my garden, though, to quote the partner of my joys and sorrows, my attentions, to say the least, were spasmodic, and were perhaps a little discomfited by the boy who did not clean the boots and knives; but the truth is, I felt that my neighbor Dibbler was getting ahead of me, and heard that he was boasting of it accordingly; so I had determined to beat him all along the line, in fact from early asparagus to late autumn flowers and fruits, and have a garden that should be the glory of our household and a source of envy to my neighbors.

I had just determined to advertise my want in the Herald, when I was informed by the before mentioned boy that I was wanted by a gentleman. At first glance I should not have taken my visitor for a gentleman, but still it is not always the coat which makes the man. On enquiring of what service I could be, my visitor informed me he "Ad just above from Bristol," wanted



work, and was a first class gardener, and finished up by giving me a glowing account of his perfections. Concealing my delight at having the chance of securing such a treasure, and incidentally putting friend Dibbler out of conceit, I said, "I do require a gardener who thoroughly understands his business, so that I need not be always at his elbow." "I ought to understand it," he said; "seein' as 'ow you might say I was 'ead gardener to Lord Newman for five an' thirty year. Five an' thirty men under me, 'ad as yer might say winter an' summer, in a manner o' speaking. Five an' thirty shillin' a week I used to git; an' a 'ouse ar worth five an' thirty pound a year, besides perquisites."

"And why did you leave?" I asked. "Oh, why, his ludship broke up 'is establishment, as you might say. He'd ha' broke it up long before, if it 'adn't bin 'e didn't want to part with me, years an' years before 'e would. Besides fac' is, I gives 'is ludship such crops o' fruit every year as 'e couldn't stan' it no longer. It regular overwhelmed 'im, it did—'ad to store the plums an' peaches an' pineapples an' pertaters in the drowing room, 'e 'ad, and 'adn't room to move. Strorberries! Why, honly the last year I was with 'im, we 'ad to store 'em in the lib'ry, piled up seven foot six on the floor, they was, to keep to Christmas. 'E 'ad to give the place hup!"

"Grew pines, too, did you?" I said, thinking of the bulge I was getting on Dibbler.

"Ar," he said; "pines? Rayther. Why all along one side o' the kitching garden we 'ad a row o' pine trees fifty feet 'igh if they was a hinch. Used to 'ave to give 'em to the pigs."

"But I thought pines had to be grown under glass?" I said, surprised. "Them 'as don't thoroughly understand 'em may 'ave to," he explained. "Everybody can grow 'em hunder glass. That's jist what 'is ludship used to say to me. He said, 'John,' he sez, sez he, 'your'e the honly gardner I never see as could grow pines in the hopen hair in a heast wind; and here's a five and thirty pun note for yer."

I noticed that he ran much to the figures five and thirty, but at that time I concluded that it was a whim of his lordship's.

So my "find" came to work, accompanied by a very large tin bottle. He must have noticed my casual glance at the bottle; for he explained that it contained a "noo kind of patient manoor for roses as 'e 'd bin begged to give a trial to by the manufacturers, in a way o' speaking."

Being interested, I smelt it, and said it seemed to smell strongly of rum; and he replied now he come to notice it, it did, didn't it now; and there was no knowin' what queer thigs they shoved in these 'ere patient manoores.

Then he opened his chest, and looked round and said the place would "want a goodish bit of tickling with a gentle hand, an' no end of philanderin' with, in a way o' speakin'." And he must begin with a bit of manoor—seven or eight loads would do for the present." This seemed a good deal, as the garden is only an eighth of an acre, but I was determined not to starve it. He then explained that manure was very scarce on account of the green fly, but he thought he could obtain some as a favor at three dollars a load.

It was planting out time, and he set to work. His methods surprised me; but he always explained he had his own system.

For instance, when he took his seedlings out of the boxes and left them on a dry path in the blazing sun for several hours, while he dug up the beds for which they were intended, I certainly wondered, and my wife smiled, such a smile—all married men know that superior smile. When I came down to see how he was getting on, I could hardly see those seedlings until I knelt down and closely examined the path.

He was making a thorough job of preparing the beds for them; in fact he had dug up all the lillies and bulbs he come across. It struck me vaguely that as some of these were showing for bloom, his methods were drastic ones, until he explained "that it improved 'em so much to take 'em out and lay their roots in the sun to callous like a bit, and then put 'em in agen." Then he put them all in, in unadulterated new manure—the three feet plants in the front of the beds, the two feet plants in the second row, and the dwarf plants at the back. This was part of his system, as he said the tall plants being in front "give the dwarf 'uns a chance by shadowing them so nicely."

This did not work well; but this may have been owing to his planting the foremost row first; then walking on them while he planted the second row; then walking on these to plant the dwarf row, and finally standing on the dwarf row, while he picked off the broken stems of the more forward rows.

Shortly after, I said to him, "Dear me, Loafer, why all these seedlings are quite dead."

"Dead are they?" he said much concerned. "Well now they ain't a doin' as well as they ought, are they?" It's that there blight—that there south wind always brings that there blight."

The blight atoms had evidently banded themselves together to uproot most of the plants, and lay them about on the

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