

## Young Folks' Department.

## The Despised Flower.

No one knew how it came there, that great ugly sunflower, with its gaudy yellow blossoms. Perhaps a bird dropped the tiny seed; perhaps the south wind wafted it from some far country, far away over the restless blue sea, but certainly the gardener did not plant such a thing amongst the lovely flowers of the garden.

In this garden were lovely daisy pink roses, red roses, yellow roses, white roses, stately lillies, drooping fuschias, graceful ferns, shy purple and gold pansies, oenothera, coxcombs, pert sweet williams and hundreds of other flowers. They looked upon the sunflower as an intruder and despised it accordingly, but in spite of their scorn it kept on growing taller and taller, till it could see over the high garden wall into the dusty road beyond.

"What are you good for, you big weed! Do the ladies ever wear your yellow blossoms?" asked a red rose gaily nodding in the wind.

"You do not smell sweet," murmured a blue violet.

"And you are not pretty," said a pink hyacinth trying to catch a glimpse of herself in the fish-pond.

"Yellow and brown—ugh!" said a tiger lily, tossing her head till the air was fragrant with her sweet breath. "What a vulgar combination!"

"You are very useless," observed a bit of sweet marjoram. "Beauty is nothing!" "Usefulness is everything." You ought to be pulled.

"Whoever"—began the jessamine—but what she was going to say is lost to the world, for just then a gay party of young people came flitting down the walk, laughing, and chatting as only young people can.

One young lady—the sunflower thought—must be the queen. But her crown was of soft fair hair, and the white hand holding up the trailing velvet robe had no jewels on it. She came slowly forward, looking up at the sunflower with eyes as blue as the fringed gentians at her feet. She broke off one of the flowers and pinned it on her belt.

"Fie, Helen," cried a chorus of gay young voices; "do you see any beauty in that gorgeous thing?"

"Yes," Helen answered. "See how it pays a mute homage to the sun. See how it keeps turning its blossoms to the giver of its life and beauty." Then she murmured softly:

The parent sun who bade thee view  
Cold skies, and chilling moisture dip,  
Has clothed thee in his own bright hue,  
And touched with jet thy glowing lip.

She caressed the flower with her soft hand, and they pass on, leaving the poor friendless thing quite happy.

"Some one loves me," it whispered, and rustled softly from very joy.

But presently there was a shout and down the path came a curly-headed boy in pursuit of a tired, frightened butterfly; but before his cruel little hands could touch it it had settled itself safely on the topmost flower out of their reach.

"Ugly old thing," cried the boy, his face red with passion. "If you weren't so tall I would get the butterfly." He caught the stalk and tried to shake the trembling insect down; when he found he could not he flung a handful of gravel at the flower and went away.

"Scarcely God put you here to help the oppressed," said the weary butterfly. Then the sunflower felt so happy. "I am good for something," it said gladly, and rocked itself to and fro in the wind, rustling its leaves till the tired butterfly folded its wings and slept.

By and by the sun went down and the moon rose, and the fairies crept out from the flower's heart to dance in the moonlight—all except one poor little fairy with a broken wing, who climbed up the stalk and sobbed out its pitiful story on the yellow blossom's heart.

"You must be God's own flower, you beautiful sunbright thing," whispered the wounded fairy. How happy the sunflower felt as it rustled its leaves and swayed softly till the fairy was lulled to rest with the murmur of the leaves as the breeze murmured through them.

When the sun kissed open the gentians' blue eyes, both butterfly and fairy were gone, but their blessing lay deep in the sunflower's heart.

There came down the hot, dusty road a barefooted child, with soft dark Southern

eyes, and she bent down the stalk and kissed the yellow flower and laid her hot, dark face against it, murmuring: "Ah, bright, pretty flower! I love you—I love you."

"Was there ever a flower as happy as I am?" cried the sunflower, nodding and swaying till one bright flower fell like a shower of gold all over the child's hair and in the road. She gathered up the scattered leaves and went on, holding them lightly in her little hands.

Now came the gardener filling his basket with flowers. "What!" he cried, "the sunflower still! How tall it has grown—what great, gorgeous blossoms!"

Now thought the sunflower proudly, he will put my flower in the basket with the roses.

But no—up—rip—rip came the whole plant, roots and all, and the next minute it was lying out in the road. "Now I must die," it said sadly—but just then a wee ragged child picked it up and carried it off; then it was planted in a dark cellar, where the sun never came, and in this dark place a little child was slowly breathing its life away.

"I am content," said the brave sunflower. "If it is God's will." Then it bloomed out new flowers that brightened up the dark room as the child actually cooed and stretched its little hands out to the bright blossoms.

"Baby will get well," cried the little sister, clapping her hands for joy. But, alas! when the morrow's sun shone over the beautiful garden a little child lay dead in the dark cellar—one more little soul had joined the angels.

After the child was buried a woman pulled the sunflower up and thrust it into a dirty alley, where it lay all day, wilted and slowly fading as the little child had. But once more the little sister found it, and the tears she shed over it seemed to put new life in it.

She planted it by a little lone grave, and every day this sad little sister would come to pray.

"Please, God take me to the beautiful Heaven where Baby is."

One day she finished her little prayer and lay down with her arms across the baby's grave. She was so white and still, and the cheeks touched by the drooping leaves were so cold, the sunflower knew that God had answered her prayer and called His little one home.

The next day there were two little graves side by side, and there the sunflower grows and blossoms all alone.

Once the flowers asked each other: "Where is the great ugly weed?"

The south wind kisses the flowers just as it used to, but it never tells of the flower keeping watch over the two little graves.

## Sea Volcanos.

Prof. Henry A. Ward relates the following interesting account of a visit which he paid to a sea volcano in New Zealand: I came from Auckland by steamer south for one hundred and twenty-five miles along the east coast to the town of Tāmanga. I hired a twenty-ton cutter, and started to visit the sea volcano.

We sailed all night, and at dawnbreak we had before us a great mountain of black scoria eight hundred and thirty feet high, from the top of which, with much force, rose white clouds of vapor to a height of fully two thousand feet. Reaching the shore, it was not easy travelling, for in places the black pebbles of the beach were all astir with water boiling up through them, water so hot that a misstep might scald the foot seriously.

At this point the crater wall has been broken down almost to the sea level, and we could look into the great hollow island. The crater is circular, a full mile in either diameter, and hemmed in by walls many hundred feet high, and very precipitous.

The crater floor was an uneven plain of volcanic ash and scoria, with many little fumaroles, or blow-holes, while every few minutes there was beneath our feet a smart trembling, and a low, dull, rolling roar.

The smoke or vapor began to thicken as we went along, and we soon found the cause. We were stopped short by a great lake of steaming water, quite filling this end of the crater, and being, as we could see when the clouds lifted, nearly half a

mile from either side. The water was too hot to comfortably bear the hand in it, and was further insupportable to either touch or taste by a strong infusion of alum and sulphuric acid which bit painfully at any scratch or sore upon our skin. On the further border of the lake, and half around its shore, was a row of the most violent solfataras (chimneys) which I have ever seen.

They had built for themselves little pillar-like cones from ten to thirty feet high and a yard or two in diameter at the base; and through these open chimneys they were trumpeting steam and roaring sulphuric gases with a violence that was frightful to contemplate, and such demoniacal screeching and din as afflicted our ears, even at the long distance where we stood.

We dragged the row-boat along the volcano's floor and launched it upon the boiling lake. The water of the lake was of a milky, opaque cast, but we could feel with our ears that it was in most places not over ten feet deep. Lines upon the shore showed that it daily rose and fell slightly with the tide of the sea outside. In many spots the water was boiling furiously with much froth and foam, while still its heat was much below the boiling point of 212° Fahr. These were dangerous places; the abundant air in the water diminished materially its buoyancy, and our boat sank alarmingly low in crossing them.

We landed across the lake at one of the solfataras nearest the beach, and proceeded to demolish it with our oars. It was a chimney about two feet in diameter, clay without, and within it was lined with crystals of sulphur of a beautiful straw yellow, splashed with vermillion spots. Pushing in the top of this chimney, the fragments would first fall down its throat and then come flying out into the air, with explosions that were amusingly like a prolonged stentorian cough.

## Great Rubies.

The finest red or oriental rubies have hitherto come from the neighborhood of Syriam, in Pegue. In Ceylon great numbers are found in the alluvial deposits but the original rock out of which they have decomposed has not been searched. Were this done, says the London Standard, there is little doubt that many more and of much finer quality, would be obtained. At Badakshan, in Bactria, there is said to be a ruby mine, and the treasures of many of the oriental monarchs contain, or did contain, gems far surpassing any known in Europe.

A former King of Aracan possessed one in the form of a six-sided prism, about an inch in diameter, and terminated by a six-sided pyramid, while, if Tavorner, a traveler of two centuries ago, and a jeweler by trade, is to be believed, the throne of the great Mogul was adorned with 103 rubies of from 100 to 200 carats each. Marco Polo affirms that the King of Ceylon owned one a span in length, as thick as a man's arm and without a flaw. This truly remarkable gem has been lost, for assuredly no man has been able to set eyes on it, and the story was an old one long before the Venetian traveler began roaming in the East. It had been floating about in India from the sixth century, and not improbably was even more ancient than the era.

For at least twelve centuries one of the nobles tried to exact another in tales of this magnificent ruby. Kublai Khan offered a city in exchange for it, and Bayan, the Moorish traveler of the thirteenth century, goes so far as to say that he saw in the city of Ohakravarte, a Tamul, a ruby bowl as big as a man's head, of one's hand. What grain of truth is in these stories it is now too late to inquire. It may be that they were altogether untrue, though we are called upon to credit Sir John Maundeville when he declares that the Emperor of China "had in his chamber a pillar of gold in which is a ruby and carbuncle."

oot long, which lighteth all his chambers by night," or Lulz Bartholomew, who relates how he saw a gem in the palace of the King Pegu so light that in a dark place it made all the bystanders' bodies transparent.

## Couldn't Read.

An old colored man known as Uncle Josh, not having lived very peacefully with his wife, determined to clear his conscience after her decease by buying her a costly tombstone. He entered a place where the owner was chipping at a granite dog, and inquired,—

"Got any fast rate monuments?"

"Yes, sir. What you want—angle, slab, or broken column?"

"Don't keer."

"Here's one that was ordered, but not taken."

"How much am it?"

"You might order one like it, but this wouldn't suit you. The name isn't right you know."

"Don't keer nuffin erbout de name. What I want am de style! My old 'ooman nebber know de difference; she couldn't read, nohow."

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

INQUIRER, City—Hanlan, the carman, was born July 12, 1855.

SAILOR, Belleville.—A flat-bottomed boat with vert sides, 8 by 20 feet, will draw about six and three-quarters inches more of water with a three ton load than if unloaded.

AUCTIONEER, Mitchell.—This business requires more than a gift of speech and general knowledge. There must be special knowledge of a class only to be picked up in an auctioneer's office. The proper course would be to enter the office of a firm doing a good business in Toronto, or some other city. The experience there gained would be of immense value to you.

Talking about busy men who leave their homes early and get back after dark and never see their children, a man of that sort was hurrying away one morning when he found that his little boy had got up before him and was playing on the sidewalk. He told the child to go in. Child wouldn't. Man spanked him and went to business. Child went in howling. The mother said: "What's the matter?" "Man hit me," blubbered the youngster. "What man?" "That man that stays here on Sundays."

Brant and Cold Water Rice Starob, unexcelled in Fine Laundry Work.

