

Flowers.

BY MISS B. RAYCROFT.

EMERSON, in his Essay on Nature, makes the statement that were the stars to shine but once in a thousand years, men would preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown. He might have said the same thing of the flowers, which are the "stars which in earth's firmament do shine." If the flowers bloomed but once in a thousand years, the memory of that one year would be cherished by generation after generation down through the ages. With what delight, what awe, would man regard each flower in meadow, moor or glade, as for the first time it stood before him, like Ruth amid the golden corn, to charm with its fresh beauty his soul, aweary with the dull things of life! His idea of the Creator, his whole soul, would expand with each unfolding bud, his hopes would be brightened, and his fears assuaged by the radiant loveliness of the new creation, and his life would be made redolent with the delicate and ravishing odors for the first time floating upon the tremulous breeze.

But the stars keep their appointed vigils every night, and by day the flowers unfold their blossoms in the sunny wilds. From one end of this vast continent to the other the earth is carpeted with multitudinous flowers, each coming in its due season, living its pure life and passing away. From the stunted pine bending beneath its burden of almost perennial snows, to the graceful palmetto, flourishing beneath an almost vertical sun; from the slender poppy, which braves the boreal climate of bleak coasts and dreary barrens, trodden only by the Esquimaux, to the delicate southern orchid daintily clinging to oak or cypress, the continent of North America affords such a variety of plants, that not even one who makes

them a life study, can hope to know them all.

It is in some respects surprising, but none the less true, that while man is thus surrounded in this favored land by such a variety of flowers, he is, in many instances, like the idols mentioned in Scripture, which "have eyes yet see not." The cultivated flowers of gardens and hot houses are known to some whose tastes and wealth enable them to make a hobby of this branch of floriculture, but those whose duties are too exacting to allow them such pleasures, do not sufficiently realize that nature has planted for them myriads of wild flowers, as beautiful and interesting as their pampered cousins, and Nature asks in return for all her work nothing but that we should keep our eyes open.

The dome of her conservatory is the boundless azure, and the sun itself supplies the necessary warmth and light. A hundred centuries are not too long for her to devote to the development of a single plant, yet she will bend her whole energies to the perfection of a blossom which fades an hour after maturity. No bolt, no bar shuts out even the poorest from the enjoyment of Nature's floral creations. Surely so generous a giver is entitled to man's appreciation of her bounty.

One requires no special education to enjoy the beauty of flowers. As we stand in our Canadian forests, which are literally carpeted with beautiful wild flowers, or as we gaze on rare productions in hot houses or gardens, what lofty, unspeakable thoughts thrill our souls, and in our intercourse with flowers we learn not less our greatness than our littleness. A deep study of nature hushes the voice of flattery and censure, and causes us to realize better our true place in the universe.

But though the beauty of flowers influences the most heedless soul to some extent, one must be a lover and a student of flowers to enjoy them to