

VIII. Papers on Flowers, &c.

1. FLOWERS AND THEIR TEACHINGS.

All the prophets were devout students of God's works, and warm admirers of the beauties scattered through them: as a proof of which, they have hung unfading garlands, which they gathered in their lonely walks, in various parts of that Temple of truth, which they helped, as God's instruments, to rear and beautify. And He to whom they all bear witness, and point out as the "Plant of Renown," "the Righteous Branch," "the Rose of Sharon;" He who gave these flowers their lovely tints, and moulded their faultless forms; He talked to man of the flowers, teaching him to "consider the lilies," and to learn from them to trust that Providence which overlooks nothing, to which nothing is impossible, and which is pledged to fulfil all the purposes and promises of God's excellent loving-kindness. Flowers also are emblems of those graces of the Spirit which believers in Jesus derive from Him. The sunflower sets forth faith, and bids us to be ever looking unto Jesus. The violet is the well-known teacher of humility; it hides from view, yet sheds a sweet fragrance around. The snow-drop, battling with the wintry cold, is the symbol of hope. The honeysuckle, clinging to its strong prop, and filling the air with its odorous perfume, sets forth love; while the lily, in the softest tones, repeats the words of Him whom it represents, and says, "Trust implicitly your Heavenly Father's care."—*Sketches and Lessons from Daily Life, by Felix Friendly.*

2. THE MARVELS OF A SEED.

Have you ever considered how wonderful a thing the seed of a plant is? It is the (mystery of mysteries). God said, let there be "plants yielding seed;" and it is further added, each one "after his kind."

The great naturalist, Cuvier, thought that the germs of all past, present and future generations of seeds were contained one within the other, as if packed in a succession of boxes. Other learned men have explained this mystery in a different way. But what signify all their explanations? Let them explain it as they will, the wonder remains the same, and we must still look upon the reproduction of the seed as a continual mystery.

Is there upon earth a machine, is there a palace, is there even a city, which contains so much that is wonderful as is enclosed in a single little seed—one grain of corn, one little brown apple seed, one small seed of a tree, picked up, perhaps, by a sparrow for her little ones, the smallest seed of a poppy or a blue-bell, or even one of the seeds that are so small that they float about in the air invisible to our eyes! Ah! there is a world of marvels and brilliant beauties hidden in each of the tiny seeds. Consider their immense number, the perfect separation of the different kinds, their power of life and resurrection, and their wonderful fruitfulness!

Consider first their number. About a hundred and fifty years ago, the celebrated Linnæus, who has been called "the father of botany," reckoned about 8,000 different kinds of plants; and he then thought that the whole number existing could not much exceed 10,000. But a hundred years after him, M. de Condolle, of Geneva, described 40,000 kinds of plants; and at a later period he counted 60,000, then 80,000, and he supposed it possible that the number might even amount to 100,000.

Well, let me ask you, have these 100,000 kinds of plants ever failed to bear the right seed? Have they ever deceived us? Has a seed of wheat ever yielded barley, or a seed of poppy grown up into a sunflower? Has a sycamore tree ever sprung from an acorn, or a beach tree from a chesnut? A little bird may carry away the small seed of a sycamore in its beak to feed its nestlings, and on the way may drop it on the ground. The tiny seed may spring up and grow where it fell, unnoticed, and sixty years after it may become a magnificent tree, under which the flocks of the valleys and their shepherds may rest in the shade.

Consider next the wonderful power of life and resurrection bestowed on the seeds of plants, so that they may be preserved from year to year, and even from century to century.

Let a child put a few seeds in a drawer and shut them up, and sixty years afterwards, when his hair is white and his step tottering, let him take one of these seeds and sow it on the ground, and soon after he will see it spring up into new life, and become a young, fresh, and beautiful plant.

Mr. Jouannet relates that in the year 1835, several old Celtic tombs were discovered near Bergorac. Under the head of each of the dead bodies there was found a small, square stone or brick, with a hole in it, containing a few seeds; which had been placed there beside the dead by the heathen friends who had buried them, perhaps, 1,500 or 1,700 years before. These seeds were carefully sown

by those who found them, and what do you think was seen to spring up from this dust of the dead!—beautiful sun flowers, blue corn flowers, and clover, bearing blossoms as bright and sweet as those which are woven into wreaths by the merry children now playing in our fields.

Some years ago a vase, hermetically sealed, was found in a mummy pit in Egypt, by the English traveller, Wilkinson, who sent it to the British Museum. The librarian there having unfortunately broken it, discovered in it a few grains of wheat and one or two peas, old, wrinkled, and as hard as stone. The peas were planted carefully under grass on the 4th of June, 1844, and at the end of thirty days these old seeds were seen to spring up into new life. They had been buried probably about 3,000 years ago, perhaps in the time of Moses, and had slept all that long time, apparently dead, yet still living in the dust of the tomb.

3. HOW THE JAPANESE RESTORE FADED FLOWERS.

After a bouquet is drooping beyond all remedies of fresh water, the Japanese can bring it back to all its first glory by a simple and seemingly most destructive operation. A writer at Nagasaki says: I had received some days ago a delightful bunch of flowers from a Japanese acquaintance. They continued to live in their beauty for nearly two weeks, when at last they faded. Just as I was about to have them thrown away, the same gentleman (Japanese gentleman) came to see me. I showed him the faded flowers, and told him that, though lasting a long time, they had become useless. "Oh, no," said he, "only put the ends of the stems into the fire, and they will be as good as before." I was incredulous; so he took them himself, and held the stems' ends in the fire until they were completely charred. This was in the morning. At evening they were again looking fresh and vigorous, and have continued so for another week. What may be the true agent in this reviving process, I am unable to determine fully; whether it be heat driving once more the last juices into the very leaflet and veins, or whether it be the bountiful supply of carbon furnished by the charring. I am inclined, however, to the latter cause, as the full effect was not produced till some eight hours afterward, and as it seems that, if the heat was the principal agent, it must have been sooner followed by visible changes.

4. LICHENS.

As the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to it. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and grey lichen take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time, but these do service forever. Trees for the builders' yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave. Yet, as in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honored of the earth-children. Unfading, as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark eternal tapestries of the hills; to them, slow pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip gold—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, starlike on the stone; and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.—*Ruskin's "Modern Painters."*

5. THE TOMATO AS FOOD.

Dr. Bennett, a professor of some celebrity, considers the tomato an invaluable article of diet, and ascribes to it important medical properties:—1st. That the tomato is one of the most powerful aperients of the liver and other organs; where calomel is indicated, it is probably one of the most effective and the least harmful remedial agents known to the profession. 2d. That a chemical extract will be obtained from it that will supersede the use of calomel in the cure of disease. 3d. That he has successfully treated diarrhoea with this article alone. 4th. That when used as an article of diet it is almost sovereign for dyspepsia and indigestion. 5th. That it should be constantly used for daily food; either cooked, raw, or in the form of catsup, it is the most healthy article now in use.

IGNORANCE.

It is impossible to make people understand their ignorance; for it requires knowledge to perceive it, and therefore he that can perceive it hath it not.—*Bishop Taylor.*