

alter a superstitious practice, to suppress any part of it, or to invent one, as has been sometimes done, for the sake either of dramatic effect or of artistic propriety, these are crimes of a grave nature, to be guarded against by all who take any real interest in the subject.

It was for some time a question with me by what arrangement of materials the folk-lore of British plants could best be exhibited. Several methods suggested themselves, but at last it appeared pretty plain that the best one was what might be called no arrangement at all. Had a regular plan been carried out, and all the superstitious and other practices been grouped together in separate classes, the scientific reader might have been gratified, but the general reader would have found very sorry entertainment. For liveliness there is nothing so good as the gossiping method. Suppose, for example, I had treated first of love divination, then of harvest ceremonies, then of dreams, then of witchcraft, and afterwards, in order, of May-day customs, midsummer practices, medicinal charms, and so on, each of these heads would, likely enough, have been found interesting for a little, but they would soon have proved sadly lacking in variety.

Before proceeding farther, perhaps it is well to say that I shall not deal with celebrated individual plants, those, that is to say, to which historical events have given notoriety. It will prove a temptation, now and again, to speak of such, but I shall try to avoid it. How many interesting plants there have been in the world, from the "Cuckoo Bush" at Gotham to the "Oak of Reformation," under which Kett held his court in the Norfolk Rebellion, and the miraculous "Glastonbury Thorn," which used to blow regularly on Christmas-day.

Having said this much in a general way, I shall turn to particulars. And if the result of our discussion of the subject be that you are induced to look on the vegetable kingdom with a new feeling of liking and interest, my labour will be much more than repaid.

It is right that we should give the first place to our national emblems, the Rose, Thistle, Shamrock, and Leek. At the mention of these plants we should be, if we are not, inspired with patriotic enthusiasm, and invigorated by noble recollections. From our present point of view, however, these national plants are not all of equal interest: the fact is the Folk-lore of the rose is more beautiful and entertaining than that of all the other three put together. This is as it should be: the emblem of England is the Queen of Flowers, and as a queen has a right to be richly adorned with all the charms of popular legend and strange superstition.

THE ROSE has been extolled in all countries and by every poet, and would-be poet, from the very earliest times. In our own land what poetic enthusiasm has it excited: how have the changes been