

a princely establishment, worthy of its regal neighbourhood, to the pretty rural gardens at South Warborough, not forgetting our own most intelligent and obliging nurseryman (Mr Sutton of Reading—Belford Regis, I mean) whose collection of flowers of all sorts is amongst the most choice and select that I have ever known; hundreds of magnificent blossoms did we see in our progress, but not the blossom we wanted.

There was no lack, heaven knows, of dahlias of the desired colour. Besides a score of "Orange Perfections," bearing the names of their respective growers we were introduced to four Princes of Orange, three Kings of Holland, two Williams the Third, and one Lord Roden. We were even shown a bloom called the Phœbus, about as like to our Phœbus "as I to Hercules." But the true Phœbus, "the real Simon Pure," was as far to seek as ever.

Learnedly did I descant with the learned in dahlias, over the merits of my lost beauty. "It was a cupped flower, Mr Sutton," quoth I, to my agreeable and sympathising listener (gardeners are a most cultivated and gentlemanly race); "a cupped dahlia, of the genuine metropolitan shape? large as the Criterion regular as the Springfield River, perfect as the Mary with a long bloom stalk like those good old flowers, the Countess, of Liverpool and the Widnall's Perfection. And such a free blower, and so true! I am quite sure that there is not so good a dahlia this year. I prefer it to 'Corinne' over and over." And Mr Sutton assented and consoled, and I was as near to being confirmed as any body could be, who had lost such flower as the Phœbus.

After so many vain researches, most persons would have abandoned the pursuit in despair. But despair is not in my nature. I have a comfortable share of that quality which the possessors are wont to call perseverance—while the uncivil world is apt to designate it by the name of obstinacy—and do not easily give in. Then the chase, however fruitless, led, like other chases, into beautiful scenery, and formed an excuse for my visiting or revisiting many of the prettiest places in the country.

Two of the most remarkable spots in the neighbourhood are, as it happens, famous for their collections of dahlias—Stratfield-saye, the seat of the Duke of Wellington, and the ruins of Reading Abbey.

Nothing can well be prettier than the drive to Stratfield-saye, passing, as we do, through a great part or Heckfield heath, a tract of wild woodland, a forest of rather perhaps a chase, full of fine sylvan beauty—thickets of fern and holly, and hawthorn and birch, surmounted by oaks and beeches, and interspersed with lawny glades and deep pools, letting light into the picture. Nothing can be prettier than the approach to the duke's lodge. And the entrance to the domain, through a deep dell dark with magnificent firs, from which we emerge into a finely wooded park of the richest verdure is also striking and impressive. But the distinctive feature of the place (for the mansion, merely a comfortable and convenient nobleman's house, hardly responds to the fame of its owner) is the grand avenue of noble elms, three quarters of a mile long, which leads to the front door. It is difficult to imagine any thing which more completely realises the poetical fancy, that the pillars and arches of a Gothic cathedral were borrowed from the interlacing of the branches of trees planted at stated intervals, than this avenue, in which nature has so completely succeeded in outwitting her hand-maiden art, that not a single trunk, hardly even a bough or a twig, appears to mar the grand regularity of the design as a piece of perspective. No cathedral could be more perfect; and the effect, under every variety of aspect, the magical light and shadow of the cold white moonshine, the cool green light of a cloudy day, and the glancing sunbeams which pierce through the leafy umbrage in the bright summer noon, are such as no words can convey. Separately considered each tree (and the north of Hampshire is celebrated for the size and shape of its elms) is a model of stately beauty, and now just at perfection, probably upwards of thirty years old. There is scarce a single tree in the kingdom such another avenue.

On one side of this noble approach is the garden, where under the care of the skilful and excellent gardener, Mr Cooper, so many magnificent dahlias are raised, but where, alas! the Phœbus was not; and between that and the mansion is the sunny shady paddock, with its rich pasture and its roomy stable, where, for so many years, Copenhagen, the charger who carried the duke at Waterloo, formed so great an object of attraction to the visitors of Stratfield-saye. Then came the house itself, and then I returned home.

Well! this was one beautiful and fruitless drive. The ruins of Reading Abbey formed another as fruitless, and still more beautiful.

Whether in the "palmy state" of the faith of Rome, the pillared aisles of the Abbey Church might have vied in grandeur with the avenue at Stratfield-saye, I can hardly say; but certainly, as they stand, the venerable arched gateway, the rock-like masses of wall, the crumbling cloisters, and the exquisite finish of the surbases of the columns and other fragments, fresh as if chiselled yesterday, which are re-appearing in the excavations now making, there is an interest which leaves the grandeur of life, palaces and their pageantry, parks and their adornments, all grandeur except the indestructible grandeur of nature, at an immeasurable distance. The place was a history. Centuries passed before us as we thought of the magnificent monastery, the third in size and splendour in England, with its area of thirty acres between the walls—and gazed upon it now!

And yet, even now, how beautiful! Trees of every growth mingling with those grey ruins, creepers wreathing their fantastic garlands around the mouldering arches, gorgeous flowers flourishing in the midst of that decay! I almost forgot my search for the dear Phœbus, as I rambled, with my friend M Malone, the gardener, a man who would in any station be remarkable for acuteness and acquirement, amongst the august remains of the venerable abbey, with the history of which he was as conversant as with his own immediate profession. There was no speaking of smaller objects in the presence of the mighty Past!

Gradually chilled by so much unsuccess, the ardour of my pursuit began to abate. I began to admit the merits of other dahlias of divers colours, and actually caught myself committing the inconstancy of considering which of the four Princes of Orange I should bespeak for next year. Time, in short, was beginning to play his part as the great comforter of human affliction, and the poor Phœbus seemed as likely to be forgotten as a last year's bonnet or a last week's newspaper—when, happening to walk with my father to look at a field of his, a pretty bit of upland pasture about a mile off, I was struck, in one corner where the manure for dressing had been deposited, and a heap of earth and dung still remained to be spread, I suppose, next spring, with some tall plant surmounted with bright flowers. Could it be?—was it possible?—No!—Yes!—Ay, certainly, there it was, upon a dung-hill—the object of all my researches and lamentations, the identical Phœbus! the lost Dahlia!

THE SEA.

The mean depth of the sea is, according to La Place, from four to five miles. If the existing waters were increased only by one-fourth, it would drown the earth, with the exception of some high mountains. If the volume of the ocean were augmented only by one-eighth, considerable portions of the present continents would be submerged and the seasons would be changed all over the globe. Evaporation would be so much extended, that rains would fall continually, destroy the harvest, and fruits, and flowers, and subvert the whole economy of nature.

There is, perhaps, nothing more beautiful in our whole system than the process by which the fields are irrigated from the skies—the rivers are fed from the mountains—and the ocean restrained within bounds, which it never can exceed so long as that process continues on the present scale. The vapour raised by the sun from the sea, floats wherever it is lighter than the atmosphere; condensed, it

falls upon the earth in water; or, attracted to the mountains, it gathers on their summits, dissolves, and perpetually replenishes the conduits with which, externally or internally, they are all furnished. By these conduits the fluid is conveyed to the rivers which flow on the surface of the earth, and to the springs which lie deep in its bosom, destined to supply man with a purer element.

If we suppose the sea, then, to be considerably diminished, the Amazon, and the Mississippi, those inland seas of the western world, would become inconsiderable brooks; the brooks would wholly disappear, the atmosphere would be deprived of its due proportion of humidity; all nature would assume the garb of desolation; the bird would droop on the wing, the lower animals would perish on the barren soil, and man himself would wither away like the sickly grass at his feet.

He must indeed be incorrigibly blind or scarcely elevated in the scale of reason above the monkey, who would presume to say, or could for a moment honestly think, when duly informed on the subject, that the machinery by which the process of evaporation and condensation has been constantly carried on upon earth for so many centuries, exhibits no traces of Divine science and power, and especially of benevolence towards the countless beings whose subsistence and happiness absolutely depend upon the circumstance of the waters of the ocean, earth, and air, uniformly preserving the average of their present mutual proportions — *Quarterly Review.*

THE PICTURE OF REPENTANCE.—She is a virgin, fair and lovely; sorrow might seem to stain her beauty, yet indeed, increaseth it. You shall see her ever sitting in the dust, her knees bowing, her hands wringing, her eyes weeping, her lips praying, her heart beating. She comes out before God, with meat between her teeth, but her soul is humbled with fasting. She is not gorgeously attired—sackcloth is her garment. Not that she thinks these outward forms will content God but only are the remonstrances of pure sorrow within. And indeed, at that time, no worldly joy will down, only pardon and mercy in Jesus Christ. She hangs the Word of God as a jewel at her ear, and binds the yoke of Christ as a chain about her neck. Her breast is sore with the stocks of her own penitent hands, which are always lifted up to heaven, or beating her own bosom. Sorrow turns her lumina into flumina, her eyes into fountains of tears. The ground is her bed, she eats the bread of affliction, and drinks the waters of anguish. Her voice is hoarse with crying to heaven, and when she cannot speak, she delivers her mind in groans. The windows of all her senses are shut against vanity. She bids charity stand the porter at her gates, and she gives the poor bread even while herself is fasting. She could wash Christ's feet with as many tears as Mary Magdalen, and, if her estate could reach it, give him a costlier unction. She thinks every man's sin less than her own, every man's good deeds more. Her compunctions are unspeakable, and known only to God. She has vowed to give God no rest, till he have compassion upon her, and seal to her feeling the forgiveness of her sins. Now mercy comes down like a white and glorious angel, and lights on her bosom. The message which mercy brings to her from the King of heaven is, "I have heard thy prayers, and seen thy tears." The Holy Ghost descends as the spirit of comfort and dries her eyes. Lastly, she is lifted up to heaven, where angels and cherubins sing to her tunes of eternal joy, and God bids immortality set her upon the throne of glory.—Adams.

What avails all the pomp and parades of life which appear abroad, if, when we shift the gaudy flattering scene the man is unhappy where happiness must begin, at home! Whatever ingredients of bliss Providence may have poured into his cup, domestic misfortunes will render the whole composition distasteful. Fortune and happiness are two very distinct ideas; however some who have a false idea of life and a wrongness of thinking may confound them. —Seed.