



IN  
PLEASANT  
PERFUMES.

By Faith Fenton.

But flowers distilled, thought  
they with winter meet  
lose but their show, their es-  
sence is more sweet.

Thus wrote Shakespeare, in a day when perfumes were not confined to my ladies' boudoir but were the toilet essentials of the court exquisites who stepped forth from their valet's hands, curled, powdered, beruffled and scented as daintily as a sachet.

An interesting study lies in the history of perfumes. As we run thought back to seek their earliest mention, we are brought to pause in the old old Bible, when we find in Exodus that Moses was commanded by Israel's great Jehovah to "Take unto thee sweet spices stacte and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense; and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy."

That lifts the making of sweet scents to a holy service and their use to a religion, an attitude which has been retained only in the incense offering of the Roman Church; but to which modern dissentients are slowly returning in the fragrant blossom that they twine about their church altars, in the lilies of Easter, and the sweet cedars of Christmas.

And why not? the myrrh and frankincense should be no less acceptable now, than in the days of the Christ child, or those earlier ages of temple building and sacrifice.

But to dwell longer on this interesting topic would take us away from the subject of our article, which is a brief chat concerning the making of perfumes in Canada for Canadian people.

There are not more than two or three perfume manufactories in the Dominion, and these are of comparatively recent establishment; but a visit to anyone of them is interesting, especially at this season of the year, when orders are being filled for the Christmas trade.

"The difficulty we have to contend with at present" said the manufacturer, "is the prevalent

belief among citizens, especially those of the better class, that the choicest perfumes must be imported. This may have been true in the past, but now, if they are willing to pay the price, we can provide them with the domestic article quite as delicate and fine."

Ascending a dim stairway from the first floor of the warehouse, an opened door ushered us into a room redolent with sweet odors. At a long table were seated young girls, with a gleam of dainty bottles, bright ribbons and delicate silk-lined boxes spread before them.

It was light and pretty work that engaged their fingers; one filling the bottles, another capping them with bits of soft white or lavender kid, a third polishing the crystal with linen dusters, until every crevice and faucet sparkles, a fourth labelling, a fifth tying on the dainty colored ribbons, manufactured especially for this purpose, then the dainty bottle, all dressed and garnished, passes to other deft fingers that fit them in the pretty boxes.

All this we noted half consciously as we talked.

"Here," said the perfumer, "is the pomade from which many perfumes are made; it comes direct to us from the south of France." He opened a tin which was closely fastened, and showed us a delicate green, almost translucent lard—just that; only it was lard highly purified, and holding the scent of ten thousand violets. For the French perfumer had imprisoned his violets, layer after layer in this lard; and the fat had absorbed the delicate volatile essence, until now, as we stooped over it, the vision of stretching fields of the lovely little flower rose before us.

"Certain flower perfumes are gathered by absorption," said the perfumer, "chiefly roses, violet, jessamine, and tuberose. Others by essential oils. But many of the perfumes of to day are synthetic—that is artificial, inasmuch as they are secured from coal tar. No, absolutely," in answer to our incredulous look as we bent over a strong essence of mignonette, "not a solitary flower enters into the composition of this, yet these synthetic perfumes are often more genuine than that of the flower itself. I cannot tell you how it is secured; it is a secret process; and only two or three manufacturers in the world possess it.

"Now," he continued, "let me show you how our perfumes are made. This pomade, violet, rose, or whatever it may be, comes to us direct from France, with the perfume locked in safe keeping within the lard. What we have to do is extract the fragrance; and to accomplish this we have to 'churn' it." He showed us the number of churns, cylindrical affairs with a specie of dasher inside. "We put a certain quantity of the pomade in, together with alcohol, about a pound to a pint. It is left for a week or more, at a temperature of eighty degrees, the dasher continually beating out the imprisoned flower odor. Then it is put through a freezing process, the lard drops to the bottom, and the spirit, which now holds the perfume is poured off.

"This liquid is called 'washing,' and the first of it is very strong and fine, the most expensive of essences.

"Afterward comes the 'fastening' of the perfume, and combinations of perfume are devised by the specialist. Few flower essences are individual; they are nearly all combinations; and therefore a new and successful combination is eagerly sought for."

In one corner of the great warehouse flat was a caged room, with barred door, lock and chain.

"I should like to have taken you in here," said the manufacturer, "but its only opened by the Excise officer. I will send over for him, if you wish."

"Oh, no! this will do, we answered poking our noses flatly between the bars, and peering in. "Why do you keep it locked?"

"It is the bond room," was the reply. "Every ounce of our perfume is made in bond. Every pint of alcohol used is duly certified to by the officer, who not only knows by our books, just how much we use, but supervises the using. We buy our alcohol at manufacturing rates; but on the condition that our perfumes should be made in bond, so that the Excise Department are cognisant of the use made of every pint of liquor.

"In there, on those covered shelves we keep our fine oils, which must be kept in the dark. There are the scales for weighing. Those are the urns or cylinders containing the 'washings' ready to combine; and that is a still.

"This supervision compels us also to keep up the standard of the perfumes."

We turned our attention to sachets, and toilet waters. The sachet is made of coarser grain now, than in the past. It holds the perfume better. Toilet waters are manufactured now largely by percolation; some delicate root and alcohol being the basis. The weaker washings of the pomade also forms an essential.

One of the difficulties of the perfumers, art is that it cannot be hurried. Musk for instance must be kept nearly a year, while orris must be kept six months, before they can be utilized as essences. Musk and Ambergris—both animal scents—enter into the composition of nearly every other perfume.

This of course makes them expensive. Otto of roses is perhaps the most extravagant odor yet known, as it takes two thousand roses to yield one dram of the essence.

There are fashions in perfumes of course; sometimes one odor is in demand, sometimes another. At present the fancy is for violets, and there are a dozen varieties and combinations," said the proprietor. "The fashion usually starts in London or Paris, and a mere trifle is sufficient to give the craze. If the Princess of Wales affects a certain perfume or some other royalty; or perhaps some celebrated actress pronounces upon it in an interview. Again a book that becomes a fad, is sufficient to start a fashion. If Trilby had had a favorite perfume it would have leaped at once into popularity.

Nothing is prettier or more expressive as a gift than a perfume. It may be offered by acquaintance, friend or lover, and is always acceptable. But we should see to it first that the perfume is of the best—one that clings in delicate sweetness. A cheap perfume is one much diluted and therefore untenable. Besides, a cheap perfume is repellent because of the amount of alcohol perceptible.

A fine perfume, then, the recipient's favorite if he or she has one, and afterward one as daintily bottled and boxed as you choose.

Just such a charming little gift we lifted from the hands of the quick-fingered girls at the close of our visit—a very cosmopolitan trifle, for the bottle was Bohemian, the soft kid capping, Parisian, the tinted ribbon, English, and the dainty case, German; which goes to prove again how all countries are laid under contribution for even the pretty perfumed trifle of my lady's toilet table.

