

DECORATIVE GARDENING.

At the annual meeting of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, held in February last, Mr. N. Robertson, superintendent of the Government grounds at Ottawa, read a paper on the ornamentation of beds, lawns and borders, which is not without instructive hints for other keepers of public grounds. Lawns, Mr. Robertson said, were difficult things to deal with, as there was such a variety of points to be considered. To fill a border properly was also no easy task—though, in general, borders were treated as dumping grounds for all sorts of material. As to designs for beds, they should always be in keeping with the architecture of the adjacent building. If the latter is gothic, for instance, that of the beds should be the same, and so on. For bedding purposes, plants might be divided into dwarf, medium, tall and flowering. Carpet bedding is the most expensive of all, requiring a large quantity of plants and labour. He recalled a suggestion once made in a daily paper, to execute which would have required 14,000 plants. The system had, indeed, been carried to excess, but it was not for that reason to be entirely condemned. Among prominent bedding plants, Mr. Robertson commended the *Alternantheras*, the Golden and Silver Thymes, Golden Feather, *Leucophyton Brownii* (the whitest of all plants), *Salvia Officialis*, Snow in Summer, etc. The paper is illustrated with engravings of beds composed of the plants enumerated. One bed was intended to do honour to the Queen's Jubilee. In shape it was like an imperfect pyramid, with a crown just below the apex, formed of *Alternanthera—Aurea Nana Compacta*; the year "1887" and the word "Jubilee," just below the crown, was made up of *Alternanthera Parychoides Major*; "of our," of Golden Feather, and "Queen," of *Echeveria Secunda Glauca*. Some of our readers have doubtless seen this bed and know what the general effect was. In the first year after Lord Lansdowne's arrival, Mr. Robertson devised a bed in his honour. It was in the form of a circle, bordered by *Salvia Officialis*, with His Excellency's motto, "Virtute non Verbis," in *Alternanthera Amonea* (he had not yet received the *Parychoides* variety). Within the motto was a beehive, with a bee on either side, the body of darker coloured *Alternanthera*, the wings of *Leucophyton Brownii*. In honour of Lady Lansdowne, finding the crest too intricate for reproduction in a bed, he planted the name "Abercorn," making acorns do duty for the oak-tree of the crest.

Such devices always add to the interest, as well as beauty, of a public garden or park, and where they are appropriate and well brought out in form and colouring, are sure to excite pleasant surprise and admiration. We have mentioned the illustrations that Mr. Robertson gave of that kind of work to show in what way the florist's ingenuity may be exercised. We know that there are persons who, for æsthetic reasons, oppose such artificial growths. It would not do, of course, to have the whole ground covered with them, but, where the area is ample, there is room for experiments that please some without detracting from the pleasure of others. The unrelieved artificiality of a past age is no longer desirable.

THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

The following particulars regarding the inner history of the London *Times* are from an anonymous article in the *Universal Review*:—Editorial existence, with its wearying worry and intense strain, is not usually long-lived; but it is certainly remarkable that during the last seventy years there have been but four editors of *The Times*. Thomas Barnes, who succeeded Stoddart in 1817, was followed by J. Thaddeus Delane in 1841; J. Chennery succeeded in 1877, and George Earle Buckle in 1884. Mr. Buckle is still young, and may fill the editorial throne of *The Times* for many years yet to come. Delane was born in October, 1817, at the very time Barnes succeeded Stoddart as editor. . . . There was sold of *The Times* of November 19, 1852, containing an account of the Duke of Wellington's funeral, 70,000 copies, which were worked off at the rate of 12,000 an hour. The

size of *The Times* of January 10, 1806, with an account of Lord Nelson's funeral, is 19 inches by 13, having about eighty advertisements, and occupying, with woodcuts of the coffin and funeral car, a space of 15 inches by 9. Fifty years later the same journal frequently published a double supplement, which, with the paper itself, contained about 1,700 advertisements. Fifty-four thousand copies of *The Times* were sold when the Royal Exchange was opened by the Queen: 44,500 at the close of Rush's trial. But the largest sale of *The Times* was on the occasion of the Prince of Wales' marriage with the Princess Alexandra, amounting, as it did, to 110,000 copies, at fourpence-halfpenny each.

Among the persons who had an interest in *The Times* was the late Sir Robert Carden. It consisted of the income derived from the "agony column" of that journal, which was bestowed upon Miss Walter on her marriage with the late Alderman and ex-Lord Mayor. There are many romances afloat respecting this famous column, but the solid truth appears to be that it returned a yearly revenue of some £2,500 to the fortunate possessor. Some years ago it is said to have reverted to the proprietors of *The Times*. . . . Who are the proprietors of *The Times* is a question which has been often asked. In the cause known as Mr. Parnell's Scotch action, against *The Times*, a revelation wholly new to the world was made by Mr. Walter in the witness box. He stated that there were about a hundred proprietors of *The Times*; that he did not know who they all were, but that he had no objection to his agent furnishing a list; that his own share was one sixteenth-and-a-half; an arrangement had been made whereby he should be registered as proprietor. "Some of the proprietors," he said, "were minors, others of them were married women, some were resident abroad, and in some instances the interest held was of a very small amount."

IRISH ORIGINS AND CHARACTER.

Putting minor divisions aside, and keeping in mind the two grand divisions among the old Irish, namely, the imaginative, persistent, stolid, revengeful, superstitious Ugrian, and the quick-tempered but kind-hearted, generous, unsteady, quick-tongued, pleasure-loving Kelt, we can understand perhaps better than before the reason for anomalies in the national character. We may perceive in the individual Irishman, it may be, the contest still going on between Aryan and Ugrian, between Iran and Turan. Have we not here a clue to contradictions in Irish natures, their fiery threats and actual peaceableness, their turbulence and relative freedom from crime, their reputation for ferocity among those who do not know them, and the charm they exercise through kindness and hospitality when treated with regard? It is not fanciful to trace here the singular mixture of sharpness and stupidity in the peasant, nor will it be found on reflection hazardous to assert that the Irish owe to the sturdy, plodding Ugrian element their ability to support suffering and their dogged love for the soil—traits hitherto given to the Kelt, although history is full of examples of the Keltic passion for roving about the world. It is an element that gives the counterpoise to the hot-headedness natural to those in whom Keltic blood is strong; it explains the caution of many Scots and Irishmen; for both are apt to talk with violence but to act with great circumspection. It may also supply the sad poetical side of the Irish. It accounts best of all for their essential law-abiding character when humanely treated, their freedom from crimes other than agrarian, to which the latest trials in London bear testimony. It may offer an explanation for the petty though vindictive nature of misdemeanors like moonlighting, houghing cattle and destroying crops—traits which seem foreign to the Keltic genius. Moreover it affords a reason for the virulence of class hatred in Ireland and for anomalies like the siding of the Roman Catholic upper classes with the enemies of the nation, though the enemies are all that is most bigoted in contempt of their old faith. But it must also be obvious to those who have followed me through these two papers full of strange-looking names and, it is to be feared, wearisome arguments,

that the key to the Irish nation fits more or less well the lock of many other peoples. The ancestors of every one of us have fought, conquered, and suffered in that endless quarrel between Aryan and Turanian, which took place all over Europe and a large part of Asia, and which still goes on in the breast of every American who is descended from the primeval mixture of races.—*Charles de Kay, in February "Century."*

LITTLE SISTERS OF CHARITY.

Somewhere above Fitchburg, as we stopped for twenty minutes at a station, I amused myself by looking out of a window at a waterfall which came tumbling over the rocks, and spread into a wide pool that flowed up to the railway. Close by stood a cattle-train, and the mournful sounds that came from it touched my heart.

Full in the hot sun stood the cars; and every crevice of room between the bars across the doorways was filled with pathetic noses, sniffing eagerly at the sultry gusts that blew by, with now and then a fresher breath from the pool that lay dimpling before them. How they must have suffered, in sight of water, with the cool dash of the fall tantalizing them, and not a drop to wet their poor parched mouths!

The cattle lowed dismally, and the sheep tumbled one over the other, in their frantic attempts to reach the blessed air, bleating so plaintively the while that I was tempted to go out and see what I could do for them. But the time was nearly up; and, while I hesitated, two little girls appeared, and did the kind deed better than I could have done it.

I could not hear what they said; but, as they walked away so heartily, their little tanned faces grew lovely to me, in spite of their old hats, their bare feet, and their shabby gowns. One pulled off her apron, spread it on the grass, and, emptying upon it the berries from her pail, ran to the pool and returned with it dripping, to hold it up to the sunning sheep, who stretched their hot tongues gratefully to meet it, and lapped the precious water with an eagerness that made little Barefoot's task a hard one.

But to and fro she ran, never tired, though the small pail was so soon empty; and her friend meanwhile pulled great handfuls of clover and grass for the cows, and, having no pail, filled her "picking-dish" with water to throw on the poor dusty noses appealing to her through the bars. I wish I could have told those tender-hearted children how beautiful their compassion made that hot, noisy place, and what a sweet picture I took away with me of those two little sisters of charity.—*L. M. Alcott.*

COLONIAL HEAD-DRESSES.

From the illustrated paper by Edward Eggleston, on the home life of the colonists, in the *Century*, we quote the following:—"The dressing of women's hair kept pace with that of men. The 'commode' or 'tower' head-dress rose to a great height in the days of Queen Anne, and then declined to rise into a new deformity in the years just preceding the American Revolution. In 1771, a bright young girl in Boston wrote to her mother in the country a description of the construction upon her own head of one of these coiffures, composed of a roll of red cow's tail mixed with horse-hair and a little human hair of a yellow colour, all carded and twisted together and built up until by actual measurement the superstructure was an inch longer than the face below it. Of a hair-dresser at work on another lady's head, she says: 'I saw him twist and tug and pick and cut off whole locks of grey hair at a slice for the space of an hour and a half, when I left him, he seemingly not to be near done.' One may judge of the vital necessity there was for all this art from the fact that a certain lady in Annapolis, about the close of the colonial period, was accustomed to pay six hundred dollars a year for the dressing of her hair. On great occasions, the hair-dresser's time was so fully occupied that some ladies were obliged to have their mountainous coiffures built up two days beforehand, and to sleep sitting in their chairs or, according to a Philadelphia tradition, with their heads enclosed in a box."