

foliage, the lovely Madame Plantier that was brought over in the thirties, and has never been surpassed as a healthy, willing bloomer. Now, even in its leafless state, it is a giant shrub in my tangled-up child border, and will hold its place in the garden that is to be as well as mother's beds of hardy flowers. But of the perfunctory, skin-deep work combined of Aunt Lot and the four gardeners that separates mother's reign from mine, not a trace remains, save a few scars on the grassy slope beneath the study windows, that mark the location of some fantastic foliage beds, which, as for beauty or fragrance, might as well have been made of gay carpet or spotted calico.

The ingredients of this class of bed are always the same, though the beds themselves may vary in shape and compounding—coleus in vars, red geraniums, alternanthera, dusty miller, hen and chickens, with salvia or cannas for centerpieces—all worthy and innocent plants individually, but so hot and stiff when combined, affecting the color-sensitive like the sight of a stout, short-necked woman walking in the sun with a tight gown and high collar.

"You are straying from gardens," murmur the leaves of my "Garden Boke," through which the breeze is rustling and conveniently drying the ink without aid from a blotter.

Ah, yes, but the subject is so broad, and the by-paths so many, that straying is inevitable. Besides, I am not exploiting the genuine skilled gardener of the main line, the developer of Nature's resources, to whom all honor is due. The gardener to whom I take exception should always have his title enclosed in "marks," and is of the tribe that seems to launch itself at the ever-busy and guileless American of moderate means and good taste, who, desiring a garden, and having little knowledge of the necessary detail and still less time to learn, hires a "gardener," pays liberally for seed and manure, and from the combination of the three entertains Great Expectations. If the man so hired were really what he pretends to be, all would be well. But the procession marching under the Sign of the Spade is a motley crowd, indeed, especially in this land, where a knowledge of country life and its varied processes, its pitfalls, as well as its potency for good, though increasing daily, has not yet become a part of our national inheritance. As I look out over the hills, and think of the people I have known during the past ten years, who, for various reasons, have tried the glorious outdoor existence and failed to live it, and judge the cause, it seems to me that one and all they approached it wrongly.

The first difficulty is that people often think that by living in the country they can do without the comforts and necessities, lacking which city life would be doubly unbearable. Also, they begin with no sort of preparation, either hereditary or acquired. Nature simply despises people who come to her as a last resort and try to squeeze a living from her, and otherwise harry her. She must be wooed understandingly, like any high-spirited woman, not bullied, for she has a capricious temper, and is at once a spendthrift and an economist.

Why, then, should anyone expect, by a mere "declaration of intention" and a railway journey to conquer the country and learn the secrets of the life it offers, in perhaps a single season? And why should one expect to lead a satisfactory country life upon a cheap basis that would not maintain life elsewhere?

"But," again hints my "Boke of the Garden," "what has this tirade to do with gardeners?" Everything, dear, patient, unresisting confidant—everything. It is these experimentalists that cause bad service both in and out of doors, and, by putting up with incompetence, encourage it.

(To be continued.)

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