

June, till September. The leaves of this violet are larger, of a bright green, and less decidedly the heart shape than any of the British violets.

The heart's-ease, with all its different shades of colour and form, belongs to the tribe *Viola*. The heart's-ease has one advantage over the violet, that its blossoms seldom quit us; even beneath the snows of winter it flourishes. I have seen a plant of the small deep blue heart's-ease bloom thus for eighteen months; during that period I never sought the plant without finding a blossom to reward me.

The culture of the heart's-ease is simple; it may be propagated by roots, or slips, or seed; but to have fine and perfect flowers, the soil should be very rich light mould, and the plants of different varieties, set far apart, or the colours will be mixed, the blue and yellow forming streaky shades, very derogatory to the beauty of the original.

Shakespeare alludes to the heart's-ease, or pansy, as it is often called by the old poets. In his *Midsummer Night's Dream*,

Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell—
It fell upon a little flower, before milk-white,*
Now purple with love's wound, and maidens call it
"Love in idleness."

Milton calls it—

The pansy freaked with jet.

The violet is easily cultivated, either by parting the roots in the spring, or the seed sown on a bed of light mould. Left to the hand of Nature, we have them multiplied without our thought or labour, and so quickly do they increase, that the seeds of a single plant, on a grassy bank or lawn, will, in the course of a year or two, set it thickly with the loveliest and most delicious of our flowers. It is a matter of curiosity to observe the capsules of this plant. When ripe, they burst with a sudden spring, and fling their contents to some distance on the sod, where their own weight sinks them into the ground. The infant plants soon appear, with their tender round leaves, among the grass, or on the parterre.

Those who in childhood delighted to rove through the woodlands and meadows in April, when the grass is studded with violets, daisies, and cowslips, will think of Milton's

Violet-embroidered vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale,
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well.

The *Viola odorata* retains its fragrant scent even when completely withered. Beaumont and

Fletcher, in a little poem addressed to a young maid weeping, say :

Violets pluck'd, the sweetest rain
Make not fresh or grow again.

Many, indeed, and beautiful allusions have been made to this modest blossom by the older poets, in all ages and countries, wherever this gem of spring's dainty wreath has been scattered.

The Persian poet, Sadi, likening his mistress's eyes when weeping, to dewy violets, is exquisitely tender :

When I beheld thy blue eyes shine,
Through the soft drops that pity drew,
I saw beneath those lids of thine
A blue-eyed violet dropping dew.

The violet ever scents the gale—
Its hues adorn the fairest clime;
But chiefly through a dewy veil
Its odours breathe, its colours shine.

Our own Byron appears to have appropriated this idea in one of his *Hebrew Melodies*, the first stanza of which runs thus :

I saw thee weep—the big bright tear
Came o'er thy eye of blue;
And then, methought, it did appear
A violet dropping dew.

Sir Walter Scott has also some elegant verses on the same subject, which begin :

The violet in her green-wood bower,
Where birchen boughs with hazel mingle,
May boast herself the fairest flower,
In forest, glen, or copse-wood dingle.

From the pen of Sir Walter Raleigh we have a sweet sonnet, the first part of which runs thus :

Sweet violets, love's paradise, that spread
Your gracious odours, which you conceal'd hear
Within your paly face,
Upon the gentle wing of some calm breathing wind,
That plays amidst the plain.

* * * * *

You honour of the flowery meads, I pray,
You pretty daughters of the earth and sun,
With mild and seemly breathing straight display
My bitter sighs that have my heart unloos'd.

England's Helicon.

Mrs. Hemans flings violets in our laps wherever we meet with her sweet poems. She has always some beautiful reference to this favoured flower, to render its beauties yet more interesting to us. In her *Voice of Spring*, she says :

"You may trace my steps o'er the waking earth,
By the winds that tell of the violet's birth."

Also, in her beautiful poem, *Bring Flowers* :

Bring flowers, bring flowers, o'er the hier to shed
A crown for the brow of the early dead;

* The wild white heart's-ease, very common in clover fields in some parts of England.