

A DEVONSHIRE GARDEN

A DEVONSHIRE GARDEN
Sonnets written there in 1922

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DEDICATION

To My Wife

HELPER and more than helper! In this
sphere
You are supreme and I subordinate.
Yours was the artist's eye with vision clear
That made imagined colour-schemes
appear,
While in the garden winter held his state.
Early and late
You planned, and even when the days were
drear,
You saw a wealth of fragrant blossoms here,
Which at your asking Nature would create.

And we have toiled together, you and I,
Through autumn and through winter that
outstayed
Its time; but we have made
A garden fair enough to gratify
Our hearts. It shall be fairer by and by;
For were perfection thus to be attained,
If nothing more remained
But to sit idle and enjoy,
Perfection soon would cloy,
And all be lost as soon as all was gained.

Better, so long as we are left alive
Upon this earth, to strive
After a beauty more entrancing still,
Each year attempting to contrive
Fresh beauty. So, God helping us, we will;
For those who climb the hill,
Though steep and rough and toilsome be the
way,
Enjoy delights unknown to folk who stray
Along the easy road, content to stare
At distant heights instead of climbing there.

The almost level rill
Of the flat plain is not a tenth as fair
As the white water tumbling through the air
In the rock-fastness of a mountain gill.

Yes, we have toiled together, you and I.
Can we forget the labour we went through,
As the rose-garden out of chaos grew
In that October which was like July? Good
work, although now hidden from the eye,
Like much good work that other workers do,
Whereof but few
See aught save the result when all is done;
It is not in the power of every one
To see the finished thing and guess
The work that laid foundation for success.
The nearer perfect the result, the more
Was the unnoticed toil that went before;
The nearer perfect the result, the less
Will it the volume of that toil express.

But we have had reward, and have it still,
Joy of possession, joy of labour done,
Joy in the rain and pleasure in the sun,
The joy of observation, and the thrill
Of seeing Nature patiently fulfil
Our hopes and our ambitions, one by one;
Or if in certain things
She hath not given full measure of success,
Yet, as a balm for disappointment's stings,
In others past all our imaginings
She hath been lavish in her graciousness.

This garden is our own,
And all the beauty it contains hath grown
From our endeavour, Nature lending aid.
Sweet is the fruit to them that sowed the
seed,
And beauty thus by patient labour made
Is to the maker beautiful indeed
Beyond all beauty which by wealth alone
May in a lordlier pleasance be displayed.

Growing Hyacinths

HYACINTHS dormant in their peaty bed;
For months no change, no progress to be
seen;
And then these small excrescences of green,
Which wax so slowly and so slowly spread
Upward and outward round the tiny head
That is to be,-ah no! that might have been,
Impatience sighs,-a flower of snow-white
sheen,
Of fairy yellow, or of magic red.
Yet slowness is not failure, and success
Oft gains an added sweetness from delay.
That which it needs small effort to possess
May in as brief a moment pass away.
Meanwhile be patient, and with
thankfulness
Regard this green that brightens winter's
grey.

Winter Aconite

I

THE year hath turned, and daily grows the
light:

The garden stirs and wakens from its sleep,
And tiny spikes of green begin to creep
From the brown earth. With these doth
Nature write

Her bond and obligation to requite
Our labour: we have toiled and we shall
reap.

See here, as earnest that she means to keep
Her word, she sends the Winter Aconite.

'Tis the first blossom that the year hath
seen,

This little globe of yellow's brightest shade,

As though upon a nest of scanty green
A fairy bird its magic egg had laid.
Almost the smallest flower the garden
grows,
And yet a flower when not another blows.

||

'Tis only little minds that dare despise
The little for its seeming littleness.
Not seldom Nature labours to compress
The choicest product of her alchemies
Into a jewel of the smallest size;
Nor is the beauty so created less
Because she also with the like success
Can bid an oak-tree tower toward the skies.
For Nature is no modern workman, bound
For ever to monotonous routine
And reproduction of a single thing.
At different times she witches from the
ground
Such varied forms and colours: even her
green
She alters day by day from spring to spring.

III

For little gifts then let us thankful be,
Which come when gifts are rare. As much
delight
From these we gather as when appetite
May feast on plenty. Rich, we scorn the fee
Which is so welcome in our penury.
This little flower is like the widow's mite,
And should be fair and precious in our sight
As the June flowers on this now naked tree.
But wherefore should we argue and debate
About the values of the great and small?
Let us rejoice that we are nowise bound
To choose this flower to love and that to
hate;
For every flower that issues from the ground
Is beautiful, and we can love them all.

Arabis

SNOW on the Mountains! 'Tis the country
name

Of this white flower that hangs adown the
wall.

The snows that on Helvellyn's forehead fall
On winter nights no purer white can claim:
The loftiest Alpine pinnacle of fame
Can match but not surpass this graceful pall
In its unsullied comeliness. The small
Vies with the great and is not put to shame.
The stainless drifts upon Helvellyn's head,
Fair as they are to the beholder's eye,
Speak of the season when the year is dead;
But this fair flower proclaims that spring is
nigh.

'Tis a betrothal wreath, to signify
That earth and summer shall anon be wed.

Daffodils

I

O FLOWER whose beauty Wordsworth with
delight
Beheld and sang a hundred years ago,
Still hast thou golden loveliness to show,
Still is thy twofold yellow fresh and bright.
Though winter still with scarce enfeebled
might
Strives for his place, and his retreat is slow,
Thou art a champion that defies the foe.
Bear up, brave flower: for succour is in
sight.
Bear up, brave flower; the sun is thine ally,
And day by day his power will lengthen out.
Winter is beaten; winter needs must yield.

Thy oriflamme betokens triumph nigh;
Soon will this rearguard action be a rout,
And spring will hold possession of the field.

||

Ah that so soon thy loveliness must fade!
How oft the bearers of the burden die
Ere they can taste the sweets of victory,
Yet happy if their passing be delayed.
Till they have seen the thing that they
 essayed
Change from a prospect to a certainty!
No fairer sight can cheer the closing eye
Than this, no richer recompense be paid.
So when the plenitude of summer fills
The garden with a rich array of flowers,
Let us think lovingly of daffodils
That were our comrades in the trying hours,
When amid equinoctial winds and showers
With them we bore the last of winter's chills.

The Greenhouse in Early April

I

STILL do the garden's half-awakened beds
Wait for the passing of the wintry cold;
But in this fairy palace we behold
The sheltered blossoms lift their comely
heads.

Fragrance the newly opened Freesia sheds
From its white trumpets with the splash of
gold;

And here the Polyanthus doth unfold
Its blooms, and colour with gay colour weds,
Colours of brilliant or of subtle hue;
Bright orange with fair yellow for its mate;
Pale yellow margined with a fairy blue;
Crimson and gold in almost regal state;
Soft pink and brown, ethereal to view,
Matched with a yellow not less delicate.

II

And here, most faithful of all blossomed
friends,
The Primulas their witchery display.
Spring will depart and summer pass away,
But for these happy flowers one summer
ends
Only when Nature's operation sends
The next succeeding summer's opening day:
In drear December they will still be gay,
As though for winter they would make
amends.
So should true friendship be,-a constant
thing
In sunshine or beneath a gloomy sky,
Not waking only with the breath of spring
And ready at the winter's touch to die,
But bright and helpful and encouraging
When days are dark and other comforts fly.

An Indian Azalea

CHILD of an ancient Himalayan line,
Whose cousins thy ancestral home adorn
Nigh where the snow-peaks greet the
 coming morn
With pink as vivid as these flowers of thine,
If thou wert human wouldst thou not repine
For mountain fastnesses, and look with
 scorn
On these green hills, which we in England
 born
Think of such fair and exquisite design?
Yet though upon no Himalayan height
Thy lot is cast, but in a Devon glen,
The sunshine lights upon thee now and
 then;
Thy leaves are verdant and thy flowers are
 bright;
Thou still hast beauty, still canst give
 delight,
And still show forth God's handiwork to
 men.

Rustic Urns

TWO rustic urns, of flint and mortar made,
Each on a homely, rounded pillar placed;
But man's rough handiwork hath Nature
 graced
And with enchanting loveliness arrayed.
In each a clump of tulips is displayed,
Shapely of form, radiantly golden-faced
As Phoebus' self; and either clump is based
On mauve Aubretias of a charming shade.
Never did Flora in the days of old,
When to the feast her worshippers were led,
A fairer stone of sacrifice behold
Or altars with more beauty garlanded,
Than these, where wreaths of growing
 purple spread
Around the central flames of living gold.

Fruit Blossom

THE buds of bloom are opening on the pear;
The plum with promised blossom seems
 alive.

Oh, if these tender things can live and
 thrive,

There will be wealth of fruitage and to spare.

Forbear thy wrath, good Aeolus, forbear;

If thou and thy prerogative survive.

For Auster and for Boreas contrive

A prison in thy cave's remotest lair.

Keep cruel Eurus in a dungeon fast,

And only loose the gentlest of thy race,

Mild Zephyrus, to breathe upon the face

Of spring, until the setting-time is past;

And then, if not unkindly thou wouldst be,

Forget for months to set his brothers free.

The Vegetable Garden

I

FLOWERS are poetic, vegetables prose,-
So it is said; yet music may there be,
Though in a lower, less ecstatic key,
In common things, and every flower that
grows
Hath elements of beauty to disclose
To eyes that have not lost the power to see;
And poetry is not of one degree,
Hut many more than learned scribes
suppose.
Beauty of hue is here less often seen
Than in the flowers we grow to please the
eye;
But when did Nature not delight in green?
Beauty of form and grace of symmetry
Are shared by plants the world considers
mean,
And therein lies a wealth of poesy.

II

What leaves are here, so delicate and fine,
Like green lace ruffles, fashioned to adorn
A dress by Oberon or Titania worn?
Can these be carrots? And these plants that
twine
Round their supports, with leaves of such
design
As Bacchus in his chaplet might have borne,
And flowers as red as poppies in the corn?
Are these no more than beans whereon we
dine?
And what fair flowers are these that we
behold,
Such as a monarch well might deign to wear,
Imperial purple round an eye of gold,
And these of gold and white, but not less
fair?
Whence came such beauty? Let the truth be
told:
These are the blossoms that potatoes bear.

Wallflowers

THE power of spring is waxing. One by one
The Wallflowers show their comeliness at
last

In token that the winter months are past,
And victory rests with the returning sun.
Yellow and crimson, orange, mauve, and
dun,

Each colour hath its own enthusiast
To praise its beauty, but my vote is cast
For this, and surely 'tis outmatched by none,
A fairy crimson with a tinge of brown
Of rich and restful unobtrusiveness.
If e'er Titania wears a velvet gown,
Such petals form the fabric of her dress;
And when did mortal princess ever wear
Robes of such texture and a hue so fair?

Mid April

STILLNESS and sunshine after stormy days;
Familiar beauties reproduced anew,
But with an added charm of shape and hue
That seems to grow in glamour as we gaze.
With gold the early tulips are ablaze,
Such gold as former seasons never grew:
More graceful are the daffodils; a blue
More heavenly yon grape-hyacinth arrays.
Surely to winter gratitude we owe,
Not only for his ending. He hath been
For months the nurse and tutor of our sight.
Could the whole year no other season show
Than summer, would the leaves be half as
green?
Would flowers bestow such delight?

Rose "Reine Marie Henriette"

ROSE of the queenly flower and royal name,
That like a breastplate wrought of filigree
Deckest the house-wall, and art soon to be
Jewelled with blossoms, each a fairy flame
Of vivid crimson, hither when we came
For the first time our future home to see,
Half-opened buds of promise showed on
 thee,
To our affection laying instant claim.
Nor was the promise of delight belied:
All through the summer to its tardy close
This wall was crimson diapered on green,
And so through autumn; for November died
Ere the "Red Glory" lost its latest rose;
And now once more are buds of promise
 seen.

The Rescued Wistaria

FORTUNE hath altered since a year ago.
The Cinderella of this sunny bed
Wast thou, neglected and dispirited,
With not a flower and scarce a leaf to show.
Then came the Fairy Godmother, and lo!
Thy foes were banished and thy hunger fed:
Thy stems are living which had else been
 dead,
And soon wilt thou have blossoms to
 bestow.
Yes, from the pale green clusters even now
The lilac loveliness begins to peer.
May we not dream that thou hast made a
 vow
With flowers to prove thy gratitude sincere?
Or doth an Ariel wish to sojourn here
Under the blossom hanging on thy bough?

The End of April

I

THE season falters: our desires outrun
Its progress. Winter, though it yield to
spring,
Like a dead wasp hath venom in its sting,
And freezes yet, with April almost done.
May is but two days distant, and the sun
Is still a laggard: March is loitering
That should a month ago have taken wing,
And April ends with spring but half begun.
But we are too impatient, and desire
Swift magic: Nature's sorcery is slow.
Unless the plant is noticeably higher
Than yesterday, we think it fails to grow.
More faith, more hope, more patience we
require,
If we would earn what Nature can bestow.

II

What if the eastern genie, who could rear
A princely palace in a single night,
Should ere to-morrow make the garden
 bright,
And bid a thousand blossoms there appear
Long ere the time for even buds were near?
How long would such enchantment give
 delight?
Would not the swiftness breed an appetite
For change? Would beauty for a day be
 dear?
Nay, of all marvels Nature's are the best
Because they are not sudden. Toil and care
Add to the humblest flower an interest
Lacking in blossoms, howsoever rare,
By others' work of perfect growth possessed,
Wherein our efforts have not borne a share.

The Coming of May

I

CHILL was the midnight at the birth of May,
And yet ere long the infant month declined
To wear the rags that winter left behind,
And smiling drove the laggard frost away.
Now there is warmth even when the sky is
 grey,
And heat when it is azure. Oh to find
Some perseverance in May's present mind
Without a lapse for even a single day!
She is a wayward fairy, and can be
At times forgetful of her true intent.
Too oft a single night's inconstancy
May bring disaster on the innocent
And tender plant. Next night she may
 repent,
But not repair the sad catastrophe.

II

But hearken not to prophecies of woe:
Rather rejoice; for May, true May, is here.
Predicted evils never may appear:
Clouds still below the horizon should not
 throw
A shadow. Sweet is pleasure that we know,
Despite the chances of the thing we fear.
Through every summer must our hearts be
 drear
Because July once brought a shower of
 snow?
When God lets Nature and the garden smile,
'Tis His good gift, and should not be
 dispraised
Because some seasons for a little while
He gives less freely. We should be amazed,
Not at the little which we may not touch,
But rather that our Eden holds so much.

The Border by the House

A NARROW border by a wall of white
Attired with softness of a greyish green:
Where pinks and campions will anon be
 seen;
Yet this is but the background of delight
That comes from colours delicately bright,
Great double Wallflowers of a golden sheen,
A patch of mauve Aubretia, set between
Pansies like yellow dawn or purple night;
And long-stemmed Tulips that are named of
 May,-
Beauty of form and loveliness of hue,
Soft pink and softest crimson side by side,-
Each bending forward in a graceful way
Sunwards, as though Apollo came to woo
A throng of nymphs, and they were
 gratified.

The Beginning of Summer

SPRING triumphed, but hath meekly
stepped aside,
Like a good warrior to his lawful lord
Yielding the laurels purchased by his sword,
With the achievement amply gratified.
So spring hath yielded unto summertime
The spoils of battle, victory's reward.
'Tis summer sunshine that of late hath
poured
Its radiance on the garden, summer's bride.
The garden hastes to don her bridal gear,
Green raiment woven by the bridegroom's
might;
And soon will he command a coronal
Of fair and fragrant blossoms to appear:
The rosebuds wax and redden on the wall;
Ere long the pinks will be a shower of white.

Falling Fruit Blossom

SNOW falls, but not the snow of winter's
chill:

'Tis white pear-blossom petals that have
done

Their herald duty. Now the kiss of sun
Bids them depart and frolic where they will,
And give their parents leisure to full
Their summer task. See, here it hath begun;
For here are pears in little, fit for none
Save fairies' mouths, if there be fairies still.
Nay, but there are. Why else should Nature
make

So many of these tiny bulbs of green,
So many more than she can rear for us?
The fairies have her leave and ours to take
A festal offering for their King and Queen
And for themselves. 'Twill not be ruinous.

The Growth of Roses

IN the Rose Garden all is youthful green
Of growing shoots and leaves, save that a
few
Are in attire of almost russet hue.
Anon will come the hour when we shall
glean
A brighter beauty that is yet unseen,
But here already there are sights that woo
Our wonder, simple pleasures to pursue,
If eyes be open and the heart be clean.
Look at this shoot: a little while ago
'Twas but a tiny bunch of tender leaves.
Now mark-the magic of a sunny hour:
The leaves have spread; a bud begins to
show,
Which, if its share of sunshine it receives,
Shall in due season be a queenly flower.

Apple Blossom

I

THE pear's white reign of loveliness is done,
But now the apple's carmine buds uncloze,
And fair white blossoms, faintly tinged with
 rose,
Display their beauty to the friendly sun,
Promising, when the summer's course is
 run,
An ample harvest, if no tempest blows,
Nor harm be wrought by more insidious
 foes,
Which often mar a work so well begun.
The world of Nature is a world of strife,
Insect on plant and bird on insect preying,
One by the other's death maintaining life,
Each Nature's common ordinance obeying.
Even in the garden is the struggle rife,
Now this way and now that for ever swaying.

II

And we must share in this three-sided fray,
Unto each party being oft a foe,
A friend but seldom, fighting weeds that
 grow,
And finding insect enemies to slay.
Seldom with these our warfare can we stay,
Or we may see a cherished plant laid low;
Just when its beauty is about to show
A single snail may gnaw its life away.
But we are Adam's children, and with pains.
And patience our intent we must pursue,
Enduring losses and acquiring gains,
Even from losses learning something new,
Never imagining that nought remains I
For even a master-hand to learn and do.

Wistaria in Blossom

WISTARIA in full blossom,-pendent sprays
Of lilac shading almost into white,
And golden green of foliage soft and bright!
Well might one be content to Sit and gaze
For hours or, if 'twere possible, for days,
Soothed into one long reverie by the sight
Of this idyllic beauty and delight,
This poem worthy of a critic s praise.
Too soon alas I the loveliness must fall:
The fairest blossom only blooms to fade;
And yet it shall not die without an heir.
See this long shoot that clammers up the
 wall,
Flowerless now. but it shall be arrayed
Another year 'with beauty no less fair.

Anchusa Italica

ANCHUSA, blossom of celestial blue,
Is it of thee that ancient writers speak,
To thee ascribing power to bring the cheek
Of faded beauty to its pristine hue?
Or had thy healing influence more to do
With the dark eyes of Roman or of Greek,
When the fierce southern summer made
 them weak,
And love had still his conquests to pursue?
A simpler magic dost thou use to-day:
The eye that looks upon thee groweth bright
Not by the touch but merely by the sight
Of thy blue flowers in exquisite array,
So fresh, so fair, so graceful, and so gay,
So full of inspiration and delight.

The Rose on the Wall

FULL tide of summer, though it still is May!
Out of a cloudless azure shines the sun.
The tulip's life of loveliness is done,
The wallflower's splendour all but passed
away.

But compensation doth the summer pay
With new delights; for roses have begun
To deck the wall, not blooming one by one,
But like a regiment marshalled for display.
How finely Nature's artistry is seen
In this fair arras which her craft hath made!
How well the crimson matches with the
green!

Had leaf or flower been of a different shade,
Each part in beauty might have been
arrayed,
But in the whole less beauty had there been.

Views from the Garden

I

NOT only in the garden may be seen
The garden's beauty. Many a tree and field
Beyond its bounds a touch of beauty yield,
Closing a vista with a natural screen
Of youthful verdure, or a deeper green
Where yon great ilex and its fellows shield
Another paradise that lies concealed
Behind their foliage, westward down the
dene.
Behind those sombre boughs the sun will
sink,
Leaving a legacy of mellow light,
Orange or yellow or a magic pink,
Which the dark tracery renders yet more
bright
And lovely, so that one might almost think
The sky would fain protest against the night.

II

But not alone with green of many a shade
Doth Nature deck the background of the
view.

Yon field is almost of a golden hue
With buttercups; yon hedge is overlaid
With hawthorn blossom like a white
brocade:

Still to its name the ending month is true.
There blows pink may, and lilac almost blue,
And chestnuts still in countless plumes
arrayed.

Garments of spring the summer still doth
wear,

Hut soon his own apparel he will don,
Greens richer and more gorgeous, though
less fair.

Unto full manhood grows the year anon,
And when the days of youthfulness have
gone

He must not twine spring blossoms in his
hair.

Rose "Margaret Dickson Hammill"

JUNE is the month of roses, and to-day,
On June's first morn, this blossom doth
 enclose
Its fragrant yellow. 'Tis a perfect rose,
Its single self sufficient to repay
Our toil, were all its fellows swept away.
Flower of delight, methinks thy beauty
 grows
With every glimpse, so graceful is thy pose,
So rich and soft a hue dost thou display.
Is it not always nobler to achieve
One single thing of beauty so complete
Than to achieve half-beauties by the score?
But Nature is no niggard, nor will leave
Thee unattended: she prepareth more
To be thy peers, as comely and as sweet.

The Herbaceous Border

WHAT widely sundered regions may we
trace
In this delightful border! Here we see
Anchusas of Italian pedigree;
Here the Cheiranthus of Siberian race
Shows its rich orange; here is yellow grace
Of Iceland Poppies. Can this Iris be
American, and this of Italy,
Whose forbears bloomed by Dante's
dwelling place?
These others are the progeny of Spain:
From France these tall Delphiniums are
derived;
These Lilies first in far Japan were grown.
But is there nothing of an English strain?
Yes, all are English: England hath contrived
To make the adopted foreigners her own.

Roses

I

QUEEN of all flowers! Though others
costlier be,
And praised more loudly by the curious few
That value nought save what is dear and
new,
With thee remains the garden's sovereignty,
Despite those blossoms, brought from over
sea,
Which daring men in tropic glades pursue.
At least in England let our hearts be true
To beauty's old ideals and to thee.
What other flower can such delight bestow
Of comely shape, rich colour, fragrant
smell?
Far back as history's recollections go,
In all the tales that poets have to tell,
No other blossom can the garden show
Which men of every age have loved so well.

II

Which of these blooms is fairest? Easier far
Was Paris' task, when he was bidden to
choose

Among three goddesses; for here are hues
So many and so very fair they are.

Shall we choose gold that from Apollo's car
Seems a reflection? How can we refuse
The prize to crimson such as monarchs use,
Or this soft pink from due preferment bar?
Yet happier we than Paris; for to all
In equal shares the prize may we assign.
Sometimes all shades of equal beauty seem:
The yellow triumphs when the sun doth
shine;

But later, when the night begins to fall
And light is waning, crimson is supreme.

III

We two are judges, and divide the prize
Meetly among these roses of our own.
In other gardens blossoms may be grown
Of subtler colour or of larger size,
But none are half so lovely in our eyes
As these which from their childhood have
 known,
These queens for whom our hands prepared
 the throne,
Whose splendours from our hidden work
 arise.
We toiled, and know we laboured not in
 vain;
We toiled, and lo! the issue is success.
The toil is past; the visions still remain,
Embodied here in actual loveliness.
Are we rewarded? Shall we toil again?
Each asks the question, and each answers
 "Yes!"

Elecampane

HERB with the broad green leaves and
flowers of gold,
Elecampane! These syllables recall
A chapter of the greatest tale of all.
If truth by ancient herbalists be told,
Thine were the flowers which Helen deigned
to hold,
When forth she passed from Menelaus' hall
With Paris unto Ilium, doomed to fall
Through him and her when ten long years
had rolled.
'Tis but a legend: yet to deem it true
Is pleasing to the fancy; for the mind
Can catch a glimpse of that far distant day,-
Laconian flowers, seas of Aegean blue,
The dust and turmoil of the deathless fray,
And all the heroes Homer hath enshrined.

Drought

SUNSHINE and ever sunshine! Day by day
Well nigh with fierceness on the earth it
beats.

If clouds come near, the darkest soon
retreats,

Promising moisture which it fails to pay.

Hard task it is to keep the garden gay:

Summer his own beneficence defeats

By his excess; too soon the beauty fleets

From flowers that feel his too oppressive
sway.

Ah the poor flowers! They cannot voice their
need:

They can but suffer, faint, and droop, and
die;

Yet with a silent eloquence they plead

For help. Shall we, who reared them, help
deny?
Though we have toiled and fain would sit at
ease,
We are less weary and less faint than these.

Homecoming

WE have been absent two and forty days:
Flowers have we seen most exquisitely
 grown
In many a northern garden, but our own
Are dearest still, and still deserve our praise.
Their beauty now is in a different phase;
But if some forms of loveliness have flown,
Here are new shapes and colours to atone
For such bereavement in a hundred ways.
And here, to greet our travel-sated eyes,
Is many a friend of forty days ago,
Grown beyond expectation, both in size
And beauty. Is it fanciful to trow
That we receive a welcome from the flowers,
Which have been lonely for a thousand
 hours?

Hollyhocks

THE azure-plumed Delphiniums are at rest;
The tall Anchusas bear but pods of seed;
But here are beauties of another breed,
And who can say which race is loveliest?
Even Solomon himself might have confessed
His wisdom useless, had it been decreed
That he should solve the problem; nor
indeed
Would he be wise that durst attempt the
quest.
Fair was the azure glory, but as fair
Are these tall spires of Hollyhock that show
An equal beauty of a different hue.
This fairy pink, like sunset's afterglow,
May with the earlier brilliancy compare,
And compensate us for the vanished blue.

Begonias

SOME say the age of miracles hath fled,
But surely it continues now and here.
How else could such magnificence appeal
From those brown lumps that seemed so
dull and dead?

Is not this flower a miracle of red,
And this of pink, and this of yellow clear,
And this of white that hath no cause to fear
The whitest cloud that wanders overhead?
Yellow and pink and scarlet all ablaze!
Surely this splendour is of God's design,
Who would not have us cheerlessly repine
Over the drab of ordinary days,
But gives us colour, which no less than wine
Gladdens our spirits. Unto Him be praise!

Sweet Peas

I

"HERE are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a
flight."

How aptly that immortal poet sings
Of these and of all other lovely things
Which move the heart to rapture through
the sight,

As though these flowers, so shapely and so
bright,

Were fairies, poised on half-expanded
wings!

And still the fragrance of a garden clings
To every page that Keats was spared to
write.

For of all poets of whatever clime
None ever loved the garden more than he,
Who was himself a flower that ere its prime
Perished untimely. Ere the bud could be

Brought to full splendour by the April sun,
A glimpse of beauty opened, and was done.

||

Surely the poet's vision must be true.
Pixies are these, by Oberon's command,
Sent on a mission here from Fairy Land,
Winged and attired in red or purple-blue,
White, or maroon, or pinks of subtle hue;
But unto those who do not understand,
And would have all imagination banned,
Just sweet pea flowers, and nothing strange
or new.

But in a garden undiluted prose
Is surely wrong, and poesy is right;
And one thing gives us courage to suppose
That in our garden fairies take delight;
For though they stand on tip-toe for a flight,
There they remain, and not a fairy goes.

Sweet William

FLOWER of the homely but poetic name,
Loved by our fathers' fathers long ago,
Unchanging beauty thou hast yet to show,
A beauty ever fresh and yet the same, -
Here a deep crimson, here a scarlet flame,
Here a soft pink, and here a white like snow,
Setting this border's margin in a glow
Of colour that no lordlier flower can shame.
Whence came thy title? Is it wrong to dream
That Shakespeare loved thee in the olden
days,
And in a garden bordering Avon's stream
Honoured thy beauty with a word of praise,
And some good friend of flowers and poesy
Bestowed this title upon him and thee?

Early September

I

Is Autumn here, or doth the Summer's reign
Continue still? The sun that hath as yet
Paid but a portion of his August debt,
Late though it be, endeavours to regain
A reputation which the clouds and rain
Through many a week of gloominess and
wet
Have in some measure caused us to forget,
And still his radiance and his warmth
remain.

Tarry, O Autumn ! It is yet too soon
To give up thoughts of summer. After rest
The roses are in blossom as when June
Was at its brightest and its loveliest.
Are not our hearts with Summer still in
tune,
And of all seasons is not Summer best?

II

But now is Summer like a guest that stands,
Busked for a journey, by the open door,
Re-saying things that he hath said before,
That so the final clasping of the hands
May tarry till necessity demands
An end of his reluctance; and before
The farewell words are spoken yet once
more,
And he departs to visit other lands,
Hard by the threshold waits another guest,
And cheerful Autumn greets us with a smile,
Yet in some fashion seems to hesitate
Ere claiming hospitality's behest,
Being content to linger for a while,
Lest the leave-taking be inadequate.

Second Bloom of Roses

LIKE friends who have been absent for a
space
(Absence whereby our hearts yet fonder
grew),
The roses come to visit us anew,
And add enchantment to our dwelling place.
Do they indeed in shapeliness and grace,
In fragrance and in brilliancy of hue,
Surpass those blooms which in the garden
grew
When early summer showed a smiling face?
So we imagine, hoping that the thought
Is true; for so doth friendship love to dream,
And it were pity if the dream were nought:
We love to think the faces we esteem
At each successive interview are fraught
With added charm and show a brighter
gleam.

The Gladiolus Bed

NO fairer sight hath in the garden been
Throughout the summer since the birth of
May
Than the tall blossoms which these plants
display,
Set among sword-like leaves of lightest
green.

Yellow are these, whose ancestors were seen
First in Zambesi forests far away,-
This lemon-pale, this like a sunset ray
When clouds are pink and there is gold
between.

But fairest and most graceful of them all
Is this, which was but thirty hours ago
A bud that promised still unseen delight,
And now shows radiance pure and virginal,
Scarce to be equalled by the mountain snow.
Yellow is fair, but fairer still is white.

Mid September

I

ALREADY signs of Autumn have begun
We see his herald in the misty morn:
Yonder is yellow stubble, whence the corn
Was lately gathered. This September sun
Hath given attire of russet, brown, or dun,
Or mellow red to apples that have worn
Green raiment since the day when they were
born,
When May had still some pleasant hours to
run.
The elm-tree yonder shows a plume of gold
Amid the verdure. In this sunny bed
Michaelmas Daisies shall we soon behold,
In garb of gold and lilac habited.
The imminence of Autumn is foretold,
And Summer's last farewell must soon be
said.

Loth as we are to see the Summer go,
Shall we not greet the Autumn with delight?
Though the days shorten, they may yet be
 bright,
And have a dower of beauty to bestow,
But little short of Summer's bravest show:
Even Summer cannot gratify the sight
With richer colours on the wooded height
Or in the sheltered paradise below,-
Rich hues that as with triumph mark the
 crown
Of Nature's yearly toil, and decorate
The leaves of plant and tree for duty done,
So that in red or gold or crimson-brown
They sit a while in splendour and in state,
And share the autumn glory of the sun.

Early October

OCTOBER! Autumn's empire hath begun;
Yet here are blossoms that seem loth to
fade.

New spikes of blue have these Delphiniums
made:

Hard by is yellow like a golden sun;
For here the first Chrysanthemums have
won

The prize of beauty. What a tender shade
Is by these pink Anemones displayed!
This Monkshood's blue hath been surpassed
by none.

God grant us that the autumn of our lives,
Now that the summer of our prime is past,
May be like autumn in this garden fair,
A season wherein beauty still survives,
Mellow and placid, and with clouds of care
Seldom, and then but lightly, overcast.

Apples and Pears

I

PEAR-TREES, once white with April's
garlanding,
And apple-trees, whose blossoms pink and
white
When May was young were pictures of
delight,
Have not belied the promise of the spring;
And now hath come the time for garnering
The gold and crimson harvest. Ah, how
slight
The labour was that Nature doth requite
With such a fair and ample plenishing!
And yet we gather with a kind of shame:
To rob the trees of ornament so fair
Is so like stripping from a comely dame
The jewelled trinkets she delights to wear.

Yet we may gather and be free from blame;
For if we tarry, Nature will not spare.

||

Apples less large and beautiful are these
Than the immortal fruit of golden hue,
Which in the old Greek story Gaea grew,-
Those which from Atlas' daughters Heracles
Won after travel over fearsome seas
And lands more strange than other heroes
knew,

And that adventurous battle when he slew
The dragon-guard of the Hesperides.

But these are better, being all our own,
The produce of the garden we love best,
Which from the bud and blossom we have
known.

No apples that heroic strength might wrest
From an enchanted garden in the west
Can match with fruit that we ourselves have
grown.

Late-Flowering Larkspurs

FOR weeks we struggled with the summer
drought

To save the lives of sundry scraps of green,
So small that they were hardly to be seen,
And scarce seemed worthy to be thought
about.

Could such things blossom? Reason seemed
to scout

The fond idea. Surely there hath been
Some magic here: each mite is now a queen,
Whose grace and beauty none shall dare to
flout,

Tall stems and feathery foliage, crowned
with flowers

Deep purple, lilac, white, or rosy pink,

Radiant as though the summer still were
here;
A picture to remember in the hours
When seeming failure makes our spirits
sink,
And it seems foolishness to persevere.

Starworts

NOW is the garden's pageant all but past.
How many a sight of beauty have we seen
Since spring put forth the herald leaves of
green!

And here to-day we look upon the last,
These blooms in gold and purple splendour
massed,

Showing a glory of imperial sheen,
To close the long procession that hath been,
When other flowers are dead or fading fast.
Michaelmas Daisies, -'tis their common
name,

But rather call them Starworts; for they
show

A beauty as of stars that softly flame
In the blue heaven when sunset's after-glow
Has faded, stars that seem to bid us know
A morrow comes with beauty still the same.

Autumn Work

AUTUMN grows old, but still the sun is
bright,
As though he wished that summer should
remain.
Yet every day is shortening his reign;
Lower and lower grows his noonday height.
But though the year is waning, 'tis not right
Over departing glory to complain.
Let us look forward, and by faith attain
A time of planned and prophesied delight.
Now comes occasion for productive toil,
For fresh ideas and preparations new:
The season ends but doth again begin.
Now is the time to feed the hungry soil,
To cleanse the fairy palace through and
through,
And make it fit for Spring to enter in.