

GARDEN NOTES.

THE VINERY.

Now is the time to start off the vines, and if they have been cleaned and pruned as directed they will be in fine condition, for they break much stronger when well cleaned and rested by giving plenty of ventilation in the winter. The first thing to do is to give the vine border a good dressing of manure—cow manure preferred, as it retains the moisture much longer than stable manure. When this is done, give the border where the roots of the vines are growing a thorough watering to saturate the border. Then close up the vinery. For some time little or no bottom or front ventilation will be required, except on very warm days, when the sun is bright and hot. The top ventilation must be relied upon to regulate the temperature. Open the top vents when the sun is upon the glass and the thermometer is at 70deg and rising, which will be about 9 to 9.30 a.m., according to the heat of the day, and earlier as the sun gets more power and the days grow longer. The time of closing in the afternoon should depend upon the state of the weather. If the sun is overcast close early, but if bright and warm 3.30 to 4 p.m. will be a suitable time. If a change sets in, close at once. If the surface of the inside border is kept nice and moist, no syringing will be required. Opinions differ upon this subject of syringing the vines, but I may say I never use the syringe on the vines unless on extremely hot days, and very rarely then. If the inner border is kept moist, a sufficient amount of moisture will arise when the house is closed, and no syringing will be necessary, except a little occasionally to keep the canes moist until they break into growth, as this tends to keep the wood soft and makes a better break, and also stronger.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN.

Keep the hoe and rake going freely during dry weather. It takes very little hot weather to destroy all weeds that have been cut and disturbed. Prompt attention now with the hoe will save a lot of labour and worry later on.

Take advantage of fine weather to get in all unsown crops, such as peas, beans, carrots, parsnips, onions, beet, turnips, spinach, lettuce, radish, mustard and cress.

Plant out cabbage and cauliflower.

Seakale does not seem to be cultivated nearly so much as it deserves. It is one of the easiest vegetables to cultivate, and also one of the best. The smallest piece or root will grow, but, of course, it cannot produce crowns fit for cutting the first year. To secure a good growth and a top fit for kitchen use the first season, strong crowns will require to be planted. A good rich sandy loam will suit to perfection. When planting, insert the crowns in clumps 4in apart, six or eight crowns in each clump, so that they may be easily covered up with tubs, very large pots, or cement casks cut in two and turned bottom up and placed over each clump. A little fresh stable manure should be placed around the tub to exclude the air. Growth soon commences, and in a short time beautiful white heads of kale are produced, fit for the best table in the land. The crisp and juicy stems are very tempting, even in a raw state. Seakale, when well grown, is, I think, the most delicately flavoured kale or cabbage in existence; but to grow it exposed the same as any other of the kale family, without covering, is next to useless. It may be and is grown from seed, and, of course, that is the only way to get a bed when crowns are not available. Crowns cannot be cut the first year, but they will be fine the second season. The seeds may be either sown on drills or in a bed specially prepared for them, such as a bed that has been well manured and dug. Rake the surface down, and draw drills an inch or so deep across the bed, and 9in apart, sowing the seeds very thinly—about 2in apart. Cover the seeds about 1½in or 2in deep. Make the soil firm, then all that will be required is to keep the bed and exercise a little patience the first year. In the second year the crowns will be fit for lifting and planting in clumps.

CELERIAO.

This turnip rooted celery is prized by many as a substitute for the common celery. It is a very fine vegetable when boiled and dressed up as you would the common celery, but it cannot very well be used in a raw state. So far as seed sowing is concerned, celeriac may be treated in the same manner as celery, therefore should be sown on a mild hot-bed or in a warm greenhouse or frame. As soon as the plants are large enough to handle prick them out in rich moist soil, and when sufficiently strong plant out in rows on well-manured soil, but they require no moulding or earthing up.

ROBERT BURNS, THE ARDENT LOVER.

From the day when Robert Burns vowed in one of his earliest rhymes that he loved his "handsome Nell," to the last year of his life, love and poetry were, he confesses, "at times, his only and his highest enjoyments."

In love he was ever a child of nature, giving free rein to his natural impulses, losing his heart at first sight of a bonny face and recapturing it when his brief passion cooled down—only to lose it again and again in a similar brief-lived rapture. He was only in his "fifteenth autumn" when a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass," his partner in the harvest field, first "initiated him in that delicious passion," which, he says, "I hold to be the first of human joys." The tones of her voice made his heart-strings "thrill like an Aeolian harp," and his pulse "beat a furious ratan when he fingered her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles."

"SWEET HIGHLAND MARY."

And from that day we find him pouring out his fickle heart to one bonnie lassie after another—to Mary Morison, to the nameless beauties who lived on Cessnock bank, and "Behind yon hills where Stinkar flows," to the "six proper young belles who dwell in Mauchline," and so on, through the long list of his fugitive, if ardent, adventures in love.

To Mary Campbell, alone of them all, he seems to have given his heart in full, pure, and lasting surrender—the "sweet Highland Mary" who was snatched so cruelly and tragically from his arms by death after that beautiful meeting in which, Bible in hand, they mutually pledged undying love. How deep this love was and how profound his grief is shown by that sublime and pathetic lament, his poem, "To Mary in Heaven," written on the anniversary of the day on which he heard of his loss:—

O Mary, dear departed shade,
Where is thy place of blissful rest?

"BONNY JEAN."

But though his dead love was striven for ever, sacred and unapproachable, in Burns' heart, the hot blood still raced through his veins and imperiously demanded an outlet. He seemed to be as powerless as ever to resist the lure of a pretty face and a tempting waist. There were lassies in plenty, in Mauchline aye, whose sweetest smiles were reserved for the handsome young farmer with the magnetic eyes which none of them could, or cared, to resist. But the most alluring of them all had to give place to the seductions of Bonny Jean Armour.

"Bonny Jean," indeed, seems to have had little difficulty in catching Robbie's too susceptible heart in her toils, and setting his pulses beating to a dangerous tune; for within a few months of their first ramble together, we are told, she found herself "as ladies wish to be that love their lords." The hot-blooded farmer had this time loved "not wisely but too well," though, to his credit, let it be said that, to quote his brother Gilbert, "bitter to his numerous connections had been governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty."

But, although such lapses were lightly regarded among the lower classes of Scotland in those days, so long as timely marriages averted the worst consequences of the indiscretion, Burns was not to escape thus easily. Jean's father, a highly-respectable master-mason, proud of his daughter and of his unblemished family honour, was furious at this outrage—the more that the man responsible for it was a "beggary farmer," his social inferior; a man, moreover, notorious for his loose living. He was blind to Jean's tears, deaf to her entreaties for forgiveness.

As for Burns, when he learned Jean's condition, the news "staggered him like a blow." He was desperate, and in his despair decided to leave the country. To his friend James Smith, of Mauchline, he wrote: "Against two things I am fixed as fate—staying at home and owning her conjugally. The first, by Heaven, I will not do! the last, by hell, I will never do. If you see Jean, tell her I will meet her, so help me God in my hour of need!"

AN "IRREGULAR" MARRIAGE.

What happened at the meeting that followed between the two lovers we do not know. We only know that, before they separated, Burns had huddled to Jean a written acknowledgment of marriage, which, when produced by a person in Miss Armour's condition, is, according to the Scots law, "to be accepted as legal evidence of an irregular marriage; it being understood that the marriage was to be formally avowed as soon as the consequences of their indiscretion could no longer be concealed from the family."

So far, however, from appeasing the master-mason, this acknowledgment—insult added to injury—fanned his anger into

still more furious flame; and he insisted on his daughter destroying the document, the one shield that could cover her shame.

ABYSMAL DESPAIR.

Then followed for Burns the bitterest period of his life—a time of abysmal despair, of threatened insanity; of frantic efforts to find a way of escape from this cruel dilemma. From "misfortune's bitter blast" he was about to fly to Jamaica, when the publication of his first book of poems and its rapturous reception called a halt on his way to Greenock and embarkation. The tide of fortune had at last turned for him.

He soon found himself a literary and social lion, with money pouring in from a second edition of his poems. And the day quickly came when he was able to make an "honest woman" and a loving and loyal wife of the girl his passion had betrayed; and to inaugurate on his new Ellesland farm the happiest period of his life, with a "wife o' mine aye," to whom he was soon addressing the impassioned lines:—

Oh, were I on Parnassus hill,
Or had of Helicon my fill,
That I might catch poetic skill
To sing how dear I love thee!

Thornton Hall.

MATAURY ISLAND NOTES.

August 28.—Heavy rain set in yesterday evening, and continued throughout the night. To-day has been cold and stormy, with occasional showers of hail and sleet. The rain of last night has again resulted in the ground being thoroughly saturated, thus rendering it impossible to plant small seeds in the garden.

The Farm.—There has been a growth all winter and grass is coming away now. Turnips are still plentiful and are being eaten off on most farms by dairy cows. There is not a great deal of crop being sown in this district.

Spinsters and Bachelor's Ball.—The spinsters and bachelors held their annual ball last week, when there was quite a large gathering as in previous years. The grand march was led off by the chairman, Mr Jas. Graham, and Miss M. Rule, who looked charming in a silk dress. About 60 couples took part in the grand march. Many beautiful dresses were worn, some of which were:—Miss B. Rule, white voile dress with pink trimmings; Miss Carlisle, white silk with cream flowers; Miss M. Rule, pink poplin with lace trimmings; Miss C. Scott, cream silk frock with cream flowers; Miss Mary Horne, white silk; Miss B. Swain, cream lace dress; Miss Clark, blue voile trimmed with beads; Miss N. Scott, cream silk with cream flowers; Miss M. Horne, pink voile; Miss Cartwright, white silk with artificial flowers; Miss B. Dunlop, white voile; Miss Telfer, blue voile with a spray of blue flowers. Excellent music was supplied by McIntosh's band (Waimahaka). Supper arrangements were in the capable hands of Mr Kirkland and left nothing to be desired. Fruit and cordials were handed round, and were greatly appreciated. Misses Rule and Horne made capable M.C.'s until midnight, when it was taken over by Messrs Jas. Rule and M. Richardson. Dancing was kept going until the wee sma' hours of the morning.

WAR TROPHIES.

In addition to asking the loyal co-operation of all soldiers for transport publications for the public library, we are anxious to receive on behalf of the Southland War Museum a collection of trophies. It is very important that nothing be lost that will be in any way a war trophy. Southland soldiers have played an important part in the war and we must preserve, for the benefit of those who follow, something of a tangible character.

Every part of the Dominion is seeking a collection of trophies and we must not be behind. Numbers of articles which have been brought from the battle front are being lost sight of, and we would be glad to receive anything at all. Name and address must be sent, also full particulars of article, where found, stunt, etc. Articles can also be displayed in the museum and remain the property of the sender, but can we, as representing Southland soldiers, make a direct gift to the people. Trophies can be sent to "The Digger" office direct, box 310, Invercargill; or to Mr Crosby Smith, Athenaeum Buildings, Dee street, Invercargill.

The city of Halifax, Nova Scotia, is claiming \$6,400,000 as compensation for the explosion of the munition ship which ruined half the city, killed 1200 people and made 25,000 homeless.

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