

The Garden

When one thinks of a farmer's garden he has a vision of a sunny patch of ground, where the earth is fine and soft, where weeds appear not at all, and where from mid-May to mid-September a succession of lucious vegetables is to be found. Crisp cosy radishes and young onions, the very breath of spring, tender heads of lettuce and dark green spinach, then as the sun grows warmer and the garden matures come the peas, so sweet and delicious when served with thick cream or stewed with the first tender carrots, and the new potatoes, delicate white balls as truly a real delicacy as were the first imported "batatas" to our English forebears. The beans come next, green or yellow "string-beans" and heard as their braces the real staid-by of an American garden, the sweet-corn which in successive plantings holds the stage for almost two months. Unfortunate natives of Europe! to whom this lucious vegetable is familiar only in cans, who have never enjoyed its incomparable flavor nor experienced the mental anguish produced by the attempt to eat it from the cob with elegance. Green lima beans, Kohl-kabi, cabbage and cauliflower, each lucious and flavoursome as even the seed catalogues could claim, water melons and cantaloupes in some corner hidden from the eye

of the stranger, holding, as it were, a middle position between fruit and vegetables, and the erstwhile "low-apple" which our grandfathers grew only for its beauty, but whose acid flavor delights ^{our palates no} less than the deep crimson fruit ^{the pronunciation of} delights our eyes, and whose name divides its adherents into the common-sense "tomato" and the superfine "tomato" groups.

Such a tempting sequence! and if one is ambitious and daring there are other vegetables which may be reared, celery, the huge purple globes of the egg-plant or the aristocratic globe-artichoke. In the fall what a heaping of root cellars! carrots, beets, turnips, potatoes and cabbage, golden pumpkins waiting their transformation into golden and delicious pies, rough skinned squashes, brant, beloved of the Germans, bags of dried beans, jars of cucumber pickles, cans of beans and tomatoes, in short a comfortable picture of all the allurements of the table, a promise of high living for all the winter months.

The bare enumeration of these dainties fills the bosom of the city dweller with bitter envy, how poor and flavorless, how tough and wilted are the vegetables of the markets! Now do we need to stop with vegetables, surely we may widen the word garden to include the fruit trees which frame it, ruddy cherries and

golden red plums, apples of all sorts from the Snow apple. truly "snow white" and rose-red" to the big late ripening greening, currants and gooseberries in abundance. all these are found in our ideal garden and grace, in form of jams, jellies and preserves, the well filled cellar and store room.

Such opulence is within the reach of every farmer, but very many disregard its possibilities; disregard them in varying degrees. it is true, since there are some who come very close to our pictured garden of paradise, while others cultivate their gardens with a care of never, picking their peas and corn from certain receptacles marked "Early June Peas" and "Sugar Corn" and decorated with pictures which represent the apotheoses of the vegetables mentioned. For these latter we must feel not scorn but pity, for we recognize an abysmal ignorance like that of the farmer's wife who announced that she was happy to know that the house-wives in her neighborhood had learned to save work by using only canned vegetables. One can feel nothing but pity for the misguided individuals who sacrifice the intellectual satisfaction of one's own garden and the physical satisfaction of the evanescent and delicious flavors of one's own fresh vegetables for those

savortless wraiths which issue from the ubiquitous tin can.

The absence of a garden on the farm means not merely that the farmer has overlooked one source of gratification for the family palate, but that he is likely to be careless and indifferent in other respects since he has neglected so obvious a means of increasing his pleasures and decreasing his expenditures. It is, to be sure, very unusual to find a farm without a garden of sorts but not infrequently the horizon of the farmer is bounded by potatoes or by potatoes and sweet corn at most, and while potatoes are pleasing and indeed necessary vegetables, they are the merest prose amid the poetry of a well kept garden. One reason for this rather surprising indifference to the luxuries of the garden may perhaps be found in the amount of hoeing and weeding, hard labor in short, which is essential to the successful garden. Now the ⁽²⁾prairie farmer, like the mounted Knight of the Middle Ages, holds that a man on foot is but a poor thing, and he relishes only such work as may be accomplished with horses and machinery. The difficulty is sometimes removed by planning the garden with rows sufficiently far apart to be cultivated with a corn plow, and in the favoring climate a very fair garden may be achieved with two or three cultivations and almost no

hoing at all. There is another solution which would doubtless appeal to the leaders of the feminist movement and which is frequently adopted by the former, that is, to leave the entire question to the women folk. They select the seeds, start the necessary plants in the house, plant the garden, hoe the garden, water the garden, gather the vegetables when they are ready for the pot and cook them into the bargain.

Those who thus reduce the pleasure of gardening to its lowest terms are not those who derive real satisfaction from it. A garden does not represent the mere pleasure of the palate, but the satisfaction of real achievement; to be a successful gardener one must take pride in the products of one's industry and find satisfaction in the changing varieties of vegetables that develop their selectable selves under our eyes. There is the stimulus of the earliest vegetables or the largest or the best and the country and state fairs cater to this quite simple and human impulse. Let not the inexperienced fancy that a flourishing garden is to be attained without much effort, beside the flowing and hoeing, the preparation of a smooth and tempting seed bed, there are unnumbered enemies to fight. The weeds are present in unbelievably great numbers requiring constant activity with hoe and rake, but the most insidious and persistent opponents of the

gardeners are the insects; from the early spring day when the cut-worm slashes your most flourishing cabbage plant at the root to the autumn day when frost puts an end to the ravages of the last cabbage worm, there is always some pestiferous insect to be destroyed with spray or powder. The cut worm is one of the earliest arrivals in the spring and with a persistence worthy of a better cause he makes his way unswervingly from one end to the other of your proudly guarded cabbage bed or row of tomato plants. His attacks are difficult to combat since he works beneath the surface of the ground. This first representative of the hostile band is very far from being the last or the most serious enemy of the growing garden. In amazing variety and numbers they come; potato bugs, squash bugs, melon bugs, army myriads of the dainty white butterfly whose larva are the odious green cabbage-worms. Blights and plant lice without end, while in the orchard the codling moth, the plum curculio and the San Jose scale make merry.

The remedies are more numerous than the diseases and in the height of the season conversation between ardent gardeners consists wholly of froiss of Paris green, of lyric rhapsodies over Peacock emulsion, of unmeasured commendation of Bordeaux Mixture. Sucking insects and biting insects, insects which run,

insects which crawl, insects which fly and insects which, like the San Jose scale, sit tight and let their progeny do the traveling, must be combated severally with the mixtures most obnoxious to the insect in question, and even so the choicest vegetable, the finest fruit is likely to be attacked.

It is noticeable that the farm which shows the most carefully tended British garden, shows, too, the most beautiful flowers. The average farmer does not go in for landscape gardening as advocated in our most popular "country life magazines" but he likes "a pretty yard" and "a few flowers". His idea of the proper arrangement of trees and flower-beds is likely to be a bit too mathematical, and since he has usually a perfectly level field for his operations, unbroken by hills or trees, the result is often decidedly formal, trees in straight rows and flowers in regularly spaced beds. Occasionally one sees the old-fashioned arrangement, charming from association, of a walk running from front gate to front door with bordering beds of such flowers as aconites, now-a-days generally neglected, sweet-williams and snapdragons, nigella, verbenas and marigolds, portulacas and petunias in spicy confusion. Somewhere in the yard there must be a tiger-lily, and in June some rose bush which displays the faint pink of

the cinnamon rose. There should be other bushes, too, the single yellow rose, the shrub roses, which seldom show a perfect flower, the tiny, friskily sweet briar and the moss-roses. At one side grow the "juneys", deeply loved of the country folks, sturdy of growth and brilliant, flaunting some people say, in color, but always wholesome and dependable.

Sweet herbs are seldom seen nowadays, few are the gardens where even such common savories as parsley and sage, dill and mint flourish, and for more seldom does one find a grandmother who dries and preserves these herbs for flavoring and others, such as catnip and borage for their medicinal purposes. With the vanishing of the still-room from our household economy went a wealth of fascinating lore and of pleasant customs, of household science and garden poetry which extracts and essences in bottles can in no way bring back.

With the end of September the story of the garden comes to an end, but its memory abides in the well filled root-cellar and in the bottles, jars and glasses on the shelves of the preserve closet, until Billings frost comes there is still something to be saved; green tomatoes for preserves and pickles, ripe cucumbers to be made into sweet pickles, and peppers to be dried or eaten

clipped with mist and broad sunbeams. Everything is
fresh and green from the fall rains and we fancy
that these mild days, this briefest abundance
might last forever, but no day, always with some
word of surprise and shock no matter how late it
comes, we wait to find our precious garden links
and thickened, thus, only half regretfully, we
waken from our dream of an unending succession
of halcyon days, resign this splendour of departed
summer and settle ourselves for the slower household
intimacies of the winter.