

ROSE GROWING AND ROSE SHOWING

It is a true instinct which turns to the rose garden for an anodyne to the stress of war and strain of peace. Many a weary warrior has there first found solace listening only to the perfect orchestration of a feathered choir. Nor is it only those broken in the war who have in these surroundings won surcease from terrible memories and gloomy forebodings. Many a rosery again, if not swept away to make room for potatoes, has suffered dire havoc from plague, pestilence, and famine. Some are still little more than a wilderness, a joy only to the entomologist and his quarry. Here, too, reparation is only possible by slow degrees. Few of us nowadays can, with careless insouciance, order a bed of this novelty or that. Most people, nevertheless, would like to see the effect of bedding out the blood-red *Victory*, the hybrid tea of 1919, or try for themselves the new semi-single hybrid *Pax*, for its symbolism as well as for the chaste beauty of its milk-white petals, even if, as rumour goes, it is, typically, doubtful whether it has 'come to stay.'

We need not, however, dwell upon the dark side of things. In the unkempt luxuriance of our roses many of us have found a new beauty. In a Sussex garden, *Rêve d'Or*, that incomparable noisette, climbed rampantly on an east aspect, in unpruned exuberance, and bloomed gloriously right over the roof of an old farmhouse. Its companion *Madame Jules Gravereaux*, the climbing tea, made an equally riotous holiday in the absence of knife and shears, and threw amazing sprays drooping heavily with large flesh-coloured blossoms. They have both been brought into order now that their custodian has abandoned the Lewis gun for the pruning hook, but one wonders whether they will do better than they would have done if they had been again largely left to Nature. Climbing *Caroline Testout* in semi-shade; *Boule de Neige*; and the Bourbons, *Souvenir de la Malmaison* and *Zéphirine Drouhin*, on a south wall, never did better than when left to themselves of necessity. *Laurent Carle* too, grew into a glorious bush and now, with its long sprays pegged down, fills a bed six feet by four. *Léonie Lamesch*, that incomparable

polyantha pompon, for all her irregularities in floral form, redeemed by her distinctive colouring of orange, red and yellow, now that she has had the chance has proved that she is anything but dwarf in natural habit.

The National Rose Show is now again a hardy annual. But for all its floral and its social glories the question springs to the mind, whether there is not a great deal to say for a new canon of rose-growing. It may be hazarded whether the prevailing fashion of growing not merely exhibition roses, but most roses, more or less, with an eye to the show table, is an unmixed good. Everybody knows the drastic method of the exhibitor, concentrating on show blooms regardless of consequence, with that accelerated propagation, and above all stimulated or retarded development which appear to be inevitable as part of the show ritual. There is, as it seems, a total indifference to the welfare of the tree, often destined to be thrown away when it has fulfilled its reproductive functions. The claims of the garden are relegated to the background altogether. It is only relatively that a bed of exhibition roses can come into any garden plan at all. Many experts frankly deny that the rose should be considered except for its own sake; that the begin-all and end-all of rose culture is to produce exhibition blooms.

The name of the Rev. A. Foster Melliâr stands high in the hierarchy of the cult and in the familiar *Book of the Rose* he thus expounded his creed :

I do not [he says] consider the Rose pre-eminent as a decorative plant; several simpler flowers, much less beautiful in themselves have, to my mind, greater value for general effect in the garden. . . . So with all the best roses I should not wish for or expect any general display at a distance but come close and be content if I can find but one perfect bloom.

This will serve as an example of the heresy which has for so long a time led to the rose being mainly regarded apart altogether from the garden-scheme. Show roses are still grown for the most part under much the same conditions as prize vegetables.

There are of course roseries innumerable which represent the very highest development of the gardener's art. We are all of us grateful for the achievements at Kew, where, for a quarter of a century, we have had an object-lesson in the decorative possibilities of the rose in nearly all its species and in most of its best forms. But in spite of all this 'garden-roses'—a term which connotes all non-show varieties—have continued to be regarded as in an inferior class, owing to the altogether exaggerated vogue for exhibition sorts and prize blooms. It is all very well for those who have the time and money to devote themselves to rivalling

others in like case. It is, too, partly a question of temperament. But for each rose-exhibitor there are hundreds if not thousands of rose-lovers, and the question may be asked again, as it has often been asked before, whether the show mania has not been overdone. The strict rosarian would regard it as almost an act of sacrilege to grow show varieties in garden form. To him the joys of pruning-time, with its slaughter grim and great, the anxieties of blooming-time, the little tricks of acceleration and retardation, which are the essence of the showman's art, represent the apogee of rose growing. It may be conceded that this has been brought to a pitch of perfection with us not excelled if it is equalled in any other country. Our English shows beat the French hollow. Yet to many of us the vogue has usurped a pride of place which it does not deserve. It is no doubt a brave sight to see a bed of *George* or *Hugh Dicksons*, for example, all cut hard back, throwing up fantastically huge blooms. But *Hugh Dickson*, at any rate, is pre-eminently the one crimson and scarlet hybrid perpetual one would choose for pegging down or growing as a bush, and a bed of fifty would stock, let us say, 250 square feet of ground. *George Dickson*, with his heavy head, is much more the showman's flower.

This brings us to the question whether it should not be admitted that the highest point of rose-culture is to grow the perfect tree in full health and vigour according to its natural habit. Many exhibition roses if grown naturally, preferably, on their own roots, would make grand garden roses and have a long life of luxuriance and beauty instead of the brief and hectic glory of, it may be, a single season. The fashion has reacted upon the roseries of many country houses, not always, by any manner of means, well placed or well planned. Too often they consist of little more than serried rows of 'cut-backs' well or ill kept, clean or dirty, as the case may be, grown in some out-of-the-way corner. In days when summer flowering sorts predominated and the season was measured by weeks there might have been some excuse for this sentence of banishment. But the rose is now perpetual in fact as well as in name, and can boast a blooming season which equals that of any other flower. If grown under natural conditions it is capable of meeting all demands of colour and form. It can adorn every natural advantage any garden may possess. It can redeem ugliness and endow the bare and bizarre with a beauty where art can achieve its greatest triumph, which is to conceal itself.

We cannot leave it all to Nature, it is true. But the limits within which we can assist Nature are perfectly well established. There is a mean between the artificiality of the show-bloom and

the perfect flower, the fruit of that moderated restraint and indispensable disbudding which corrects the prodigality of reproduction, the one predominant outcome of the bounty with which the industry of the husbandman is ever rewarded. The truth is that roses need to be grown each by each with a severe eye to its natural habit and not by rule.

It would be foolish to dogmatise, especially when one is acutely conscious of the limitations of one's own experience. But, nevertheless, it may be suggested that many a rose reaches its fullest beauty and fulfils its functions as part of the garden scheme infinitely more completely in natural form. Grown freely the teas take on an added beauty of their own. Their foliage is itself so distinctive in its charm.

We come now, naturally, to the utilitarian consideration of the rose in the gardens of the future. We need not hesitate to admit that the English garden is in dire jeopardy. Ways and means decree with inexorable force that the hundreds, or, possibly, thousands of bedding plants regarded as the essential furniture of all gardens, public or private, large or small, cannot be bought or stocked in these days except at prohibitive cost. The rose seems destined to come to the rescue. The wichuraianas and their hybrids have given us a race of all but continuously blooming ramblers and trailers, which will clothe beds and banks with a feast of flowers. The polyantha pompons, with their tiny fairy-like blooms, make perfect edging plants. Roses innumerable—teas, chinas, rugosas, briars, and their hybrids—are asserting their decorative uses. Bedding-out will soon become a memory of the Dark Ages.

For all her royal lineage the rose is pre-eminently the poor man's flower. Briar-cuttings and briar seedlings are still within everybody's reach. Their market cost is up, it is said, 1000 per cent., but happily the trade cannot prevent us from going to the hedgerows and thickets where *Rosa canina* luxuriates in careless forgetfulness of the profiteer. Buds, thanks to the freemasonry which makes all rose-lovers akin, can be had for the asking. Rose cuttings, too, grow like weeds. It is, in short, within the compass of the poorest of the new poor, as well as those of the old that remain, to make his plot of ground a bower worthy of Paradise. Not that he will not have to put in plenty of hard work. It may be a labour of love, but to bud a briar below ground, for instance, on a hot July day, is—it must be confessed—an act of penance. The rite is best observed, if not by proxy, in a privacy safe and secure from the eye of the camera. But if the *devoir* is devoutly paid, abundantly will it be rewarded.

Bush roses planted four or five feet apart would fill up bare

beds with amazing rapidity. The hybrid tea *Madame Léon Pain*, for instance, grown by a tyro in a villa garden, as a bush four feet high, had a wreath of silvery flesh-coloured blooms which would not have shamed an expert. *Mélanie Soupert*, with her almost indescribable colouring of pale fawn and gold shaded by a delicate peach, and, sometimes, amethyst, and her large glossy foliage; that old favourite *Caroline Testout* (the 'slave of the garden'); *Maman Cochet*, all make glorious bushes from four to six feet high, while *Hugh Dickson* and *Frau Karl Druschki* grow much higher than that without suffering deterioration in form. But the field to choose from is inexhaustible. Bush growing is, naturally, only a question of adequate nourishment being supplied according to the vigour of the tree. *Pharisäer*, that tall upright grower, with its blush white and salmon shadings, one of the loveliest of hybrid teas, so often mutilated by exhibition pruning, and the *Duchess of Wellington*, seem naturally to rebel against their fate. It is always difficult to keep their exuberance within bounds when they are grown as bedders. The teas *Safrano* (which is over eighty years old) and *Marie von Houtte* and the hybrid tea our old friend *Papa Gontier* have long been grown to huge dimensions. Natural bushes of the hybrid teas *Gustave Régis* and *Killarney* make a picture in any garden.

The National Rose Society gives in its all too abbreviated list of good roses for growing as bushes the climbing polyanthas *Adrian Riverchon* and *Trier*; the sweet briars *Hebe's Lip*, *Janet's Pride* and *Lady Penzance*; the rugosas *Blanc double de Coubert*, the whitest rose we have, blooming the whole summer through and well into the autumn; *Fimbriata*, with its fringed petals; and *Conrad F. Meyer*, now an old favourite, with its clear silvery rose tint; and the indispensable hybrid tea *Gruss an Tep-litz*. *Rosa Moyesii*, that epoch-making single of 1909, with its unique colour of 'dull powdery-looking brick red,' is reported by the Reverend Joseph Jacob as making a splendid bush on the wide border at Glasnevin. Bushes of Austrian Copper and Austrian Yellow, if all too fleeting, are glorious harbingers of the rose festival. In an ancient Kentish garden a bush of each, of unknown age, some six or seven feet high was a blaze of glory like a red sunrise. The little yellow Banksian is still incomparable. Dean Hole speaks of a tree at Toulon which covered a wall seventy-five feet in breadth and eighteen feet in height and bearing 50,000 blooms at once. The same authority answers for it as a sound stock on which to bud teas and noisettes, and so making its fertility in surroundings suitable to its habit illimitable. The veteran expert Mr. William Robinson has vouched for a double white Ayrshire rose which was thirty years old and covered an

area of seventy square feet. New climbers innumerable are continuous bloomers.

The rosery can, too, be made permanent as well as beautiful. We have long since bidden good-bye to the days when it was only a summer joy, if we shall always regret the old English rose garden with its old-fashioned favourites beloved of our childhood. The Provence, and Provins, the Damask, the old common Moss, seem to have ceased to be, if they have left behind them a worthy progeny. You can see the pink monthly and the Cabbage in many a cottage garden, but nearly all of those dark crimson velvety Damasks of forty or fifty years ago, many of which were nameless, seem to have passed into oblivion. It is the same in France. As M. Jules Gravereaux, the prince of rosarians, puts it :

The Gallic roses, the centifolia of perfect form, the provins of dazzling colour, the alba so dainty, the damask of exquisite perfume, the pompons so charming, all these roses were the delight of our grandparents, but they have gone out of fashion because they do not happen to be perpetual flowering. What injustice! and what ingratitude!

In the roseries of the future it may be hoped that room will be found for some of the old English types, especially the wild briars. To the showman they may present little attraction, although among them are the parents or grandparents of many a prize bloom, but there is no reason why we should treat even a summer rose as deserving of a shorter shrift than other flowering shrubs.

The claim of the rose to take its true pride of place in all our gardens now rests, however, upon the fact that it is pre-eminently the flower of flowers in any garden scheme, however modest or ambitious. It lends itself more than any other to the continuous display of an ever-changing charm. You can have roses for seven months in the year. You can, if you wish, ring the changes on the whole gamut of colour from May to December. We are, too, rapidly approaching a time when most greenhouses will perforce be cool. It would be better far that they should be devoted to rose-growing than left derelict or be demolished altogether. For to rose-growers the possibilities of the cool greenhouse are almost inexhaustible. There are hardly any conceivable garden conditions under which the rose could not vindicate her decorative capabilities. The necessary expense is altogether exaggerated. A rose garden is susceptible of being run, relatively, much more economically than perhaps any other. Given the essential intelligence and care, it can be a joy for years

at a moderate cost for replacement and maintenance. We have too long been misled by the amazing industry of rosarians. We have all of us read accounts of those labours of Sisyphus which seem to be the inevitable preliminary to the art of rose culture. A perverse fate has, it appears, decreed that many growers should live under apparently hopeless conditions as to soil, aspect, and climate alike, and one and all are not backward in their testimony to their own industry, if not prodigality, in overcoming triumphantly these and other obstacles.

A rose garden is, it is true, more often made than found. You can find in any book on rose culture endless recipes for the medium in which roses should be grown. It generally sounds a pretty hopeless proposition, especially nowadays. It is one thing to improve the conditions by careful cultivation. You can dig and trench and bastard-trench if you like. You can fertilise and bring your rose-beds into good condition. All that is in the day's work. And you would not deserve and certainly would not get roses if you didn't. But it is altogether another matter to make huge excavations and fill them up with tons of artificial compost. If ways and means permit it may be questioned whether anything of the kind could have any real permanence if it were not periodically renewed all over again, since sooner or later the subsoil would work up to the top. The experiment of attempting to establish rhododendrons in a chalk country by planting them in huge pits of peat proved a disastrous failure. For, sure enough, the chalk soon got the better of the peat.

To fit the roses to the habitat and not the habitat to the roses is a counsel of common sense. A good rose country may not be within everybody's reach, but wherever briars can grow you can be sure of the rose. For the rose is ubiquitous. It grows amidst ice and snow; in the sands of the desert; on the tops of mountains; in the depths of the valleys; in wood and forest glades; in the marshes; and on the sands of the seashore. If the Queen of Flowers she is also the handmaiden of humanity ever ready to serve for the slender guerdon of love and care in return. There is no soil so poor but possesses its natural rose. Such, too, is the wonderful compensation of Nature that the roses of the arid wastes drive their tap roots down deep into the soil and subsoil so that they can live and thrive where their more gorgeous fibrous-rooted sisters would inevitably perish.

Every spring, we are told, the sandy shores of the Gulf of Bengal and the mountains of Nepaul are alike carpeted with the snow-white rose blossoms. There is authority for the fact that the belles of the Esquimaux, like true daughters

of Eve, adorn their hair with the clear rose-coloured blooms of *Rosa nitida*. Hudson's Bay and Labrador boast *Rosa blanda* with large pink flowers and free habit; Iceland has *Rosa rubiginosa* as its indigenous sweet briar, and Lapland the hybrid *Rosa rubella* with its red blooms. In Siberia *Rosa acicularis*, with its bright pink blooms and glaucous foliage, is a thing of beauty; while *Rosa altaica*, the beautiful garden bush with lemon-white flowers, flourishes in Northern Central Asia. Even Abyssinia claims *Rosa eca*, with its small yellow flowers, sometimes seen in our own south-country gardens.

The hunt for new varieties may seem to be a matter for experts. Artificial cultivation has been looked upon as largely a secret art. But hybridisation is not now, as it has too long been, a mystery left in professional hands and is coming more and more within the amateur's grasp. It is being realised that it offers a field pre-eminently suited to those whose happy lot it is to spend their days amongst their roses. There is no earthly reason why the humblest garden should not produce its annual crop of seedlings, any one of which may prove a pearl of great price. We need not tell anew the already twice-told tale of the birth of the hybrid teas, of which, perhaps, *Cheshunt Hybrid* was the *avant-coureur*. It would be an interesting exercise to trace the result of crossings of species and sub-species and their hybrids. But a few familiar examples must suffice. Thus *Frau Karl Druschki* was a seedling from *Merveille de Lyon* and *Caroline Testout*, the latter of which was itself the offspring of the prolific *Madame de Tartas* and *Lady Mary Fitzwilliam*. Mr. H. R. Darlington established the parentage of the hybrid tea *Gustav Grünerwald* as *Safrano* by *Caroline Testout*; *Hugh Dickson* as a seedling from *Gruss an Teplitz* and *Lord Bacon*, and *Lady Hillingdon*—that indispensable tea, of bright fawn yellow suffused orange—as a seedling from *Papa Gontier* and *Madame Hoste*. Much has been accomplished but there is here an inexhaustible field to be tilled. What is wanted is less reticence on the part of the experts as to the true lines on which hybridisation should march. Many amateurs would do yeoman service if they had right guidance. We seem to have reached a stage when, after a reasonable interval, the parentage of a rose should no longer remain a trade secret. Why should that, for instance, of *General McArthur*, the hybrid tea of 1905, still be sedulously concealed?

Whatever may be the limitations of eugenics in the social domain, its truths are abundantly evidenced in the plant world. Much of our trouble in fighting the diseases of the rose is due to ill-assorted unions and over-propagation which lessens vigour

and leaves a tree a ready prey to the spoiler. Susceptibility to that blighting pestilence which M. C. Cooke¹ designates 'rose-leaf blotch,' commonly called 'black spot'—a term which is misleading as it involves confusion with similar maladies of other plants—is undoubtedly hereditary. There are proofs and to spare that delicate parents have given us a range of roses of extreme susceptibility. Many of the new colour types however lovely will prove costly luxuries. Thus *Persian Yellow*, itself an easy victim, has transmitted its failings to *Soleil d'Or*, which, in turn, handed them on to *Soleil d'Angers*. *Juliet* and *Lyons*, perhaps more liable than any to a fatal attack, are of the same ancestry. Incidentally, it may be remarked, that if crippled *Juliets* and *Lyons* be potted up and grown in a cool greenhouse they will prove themselves capable of growing foliage of absolute cleanliness. It is exactly the same thing with mildew, like parent like child. *Crimson Rambler* is a chronic invalid, when mildew is in the air. It is coming to be questioned whether we shall not pay too dearly for some of our new favourites and only grow them at the risk of a devastating epidemic. Obviously it would be a gain if we could bring ourselves to sweep away all our weaklings and go in for a more sturdy stock. We shall lose more than we shall gain by the infinite variety of tints which reckless breeding to colour has called into being, if it be established that we have thereby infected our gardens until they have become plague-spots. Mr. Courtney Page, however, predicts a time when we shall get a race of immune roses once more. In varieties of the type of *Mermaid*—the offspring of the Macartney Rose (*R. bracteata*) and a double yellow tea—he believes we shall find the solution of this pressing problem. As things are, whole beds of exhibition roses are defoliated, and so weakened in constitution, if not killed off every season. But to breed to type and not to colour is, in these days of colour crazes, a counsel of perfection. It would be more practical if our bio-chemists and plant pathologists would be kind enough to devise some measures of prevention or cure. Specifics are legion but have so far proved little but nostrums.

It has been left to M. Jules Gravereaux in *La Roseraie de l'Haÿ*² to show the world what can be done by private enterprise to reduce rose culture to a science. His botanical collection, giving the species, sub-species and varieties, hybrids and sub-genera, and his garden collection, which contains between seven and eight thousand varieties, are incomparable. But to many people what

¹ *Fungoid Diseases of Cultivated Plants*, London 1906.

² 'La Roseraie de l'Haÿ,' by M. Jules Gravereaux, *Rose Annual*, 1914.

he calls his 'retrospective collection' will make the strongest appeal. This is best described in his own words :

Here is exhibited a series of characteristic types showing the different aspects of the Rose throughout the ages. On one hand are the wild Roses, classified according to a new standpoint, the probable order of their dispersal on the face of the earth and according to their general physiognomy.

Firstly the most imperfect Roses, which must have been the earliest comers. *Rosa berberifolia* with simple leaves, *R. maracandica*, *R. minutifolia*, *R. microphylla*, etc. ; then the Roses with prickles, the epidermis covered with hairs and fine acicules, whose habitats are the high altitudes, *R. Webbiana*, *R. sericea*, *R. acicularis*, etc. ; then the Roses without prickles of the lower mountains, *R. alpina*, *R. ferruginea*, *R. cinnamomea*, etc. ; the Roses of the forests, needle-prickled, *R. canina*, *R. rubiginosa*, *R. oxyodon*, etc. ; then the Roses of the warm climates with shiny foliage, as *R. bracteata*, *R. laevigata*, etc. ; and lastly the Roses with perfect organs, probably the most recent, *R. indica*, *R. moschata*, *R. multiflora*, etc.

Facing these wild Roses are the cultivated ones which we can, starting from the Greek civilisation, know with some certainty. Beginning with the Roses of Theophrastus, the centifolia and the Rose of Mount Pangæus, and concluding with the most recent races, *wichuraiana* and *Pernetiana*, about fifty types show the successive stages of our garden Roses.

The history of these Roses comprises three periods—viz. : From the earliest times to the end of the eighteenth century is the reign of the centifolia and Provins Roses ; at the end of the eighteenth century was the period of the importation into Europe of Roses altogether different, those which came from the Far East ; and finally in the nineteenth century appeared the new races, the results of crossing the latter with our ancient varieties.

What an incomparable vista of the history of the rose is thus offered us ! The rose-world has been laid under a debt of gratitude by M. Gravereaux in thus preserving much that would have otherwise been sacrificed. But he has given us an example as well as a warning.

It is an amazing reflection that the rose as our national flower should have had so little national recognition. Many of our old English favourites have been lost to art and commerce already, and many more will soon follow them into the limbo of the has-beens. Few of us would care to see the garden follow the farm into the net of the Ministry of Agriculture. We have little reason to be enamoured of State management, and, fortunately perhaps, little reason to fear it. But there must be rose-lovers enough to make a National Rose Garden a practicable project. There is nothing new about the proposition. It has been advanced over and over again. It is appropriately put forward in the *Rose Annual* for 1920 as a suitable War Memorial. In any case the reproach that our growers should have to go to the rosery of the municipality of Paris at *La Bagatelle*, or to those at Washington or Cornell, to get a hall-mark of trustworthiness for their novelties

should, in common decency, be removed. If this established as the test, not merely the exhibition value of the individual bloom grown under exhibition conditions, but the true natural habit of the tree itself in its most perfect garden form, it would put the art of rose culture on a rational as well as a national basis.

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