

A Swedish Bayreuth in Kansas

Under this title in the current *American-Scandinavian Review*, Ernest Frederick Pihlblad, president of Bethany College, claims that Lindsborg, Kansas, a hamlet of scarcely two thousand souls, is the musical center of the southwest.

Lindsborg is the center of a Swedish colony covering some forty square miles. Its only boast above the neighboring Kansas towns is the presence of Bethany College and the annual musical festivals.

While waging an unremitting fight for sustenance and material prosperity, the sturdy Swedish families of the town have found time to cultivate the higher forms of musical art, until now they have made their town a musical Mecca whither the devotees of the divine art for hundreds of miles about are accustomed to make a pilgrimage to attend the annual festivals. Each Easter Week for more than thirty years Handel's "Messiah" has been given with a chorus of 500 and an orchestra of forty pieces. With the exception of the soloists, who are stars of the first magnitude, imported for the occasion, it is entirely a home affair. Many of its members participated in the first performance, and from the bass section more than one grandfather hears the voices of his daughter or granddaughter singing among the sopranos or altos. One of the unique features is a children's chorus of 300, membership in which is a distinction to which every boy and girl in the community aspires. The repertory of the chorus has now been expanded to include all the standard oratorios.

"The Messiah" is given three times each season—Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Each afternoon and evening of the week are given over to musical entertainments by the visiting artists. On the "Messiah" days the railroads run special trains to Lindsborg; this spring a single train brought over 1200 people.

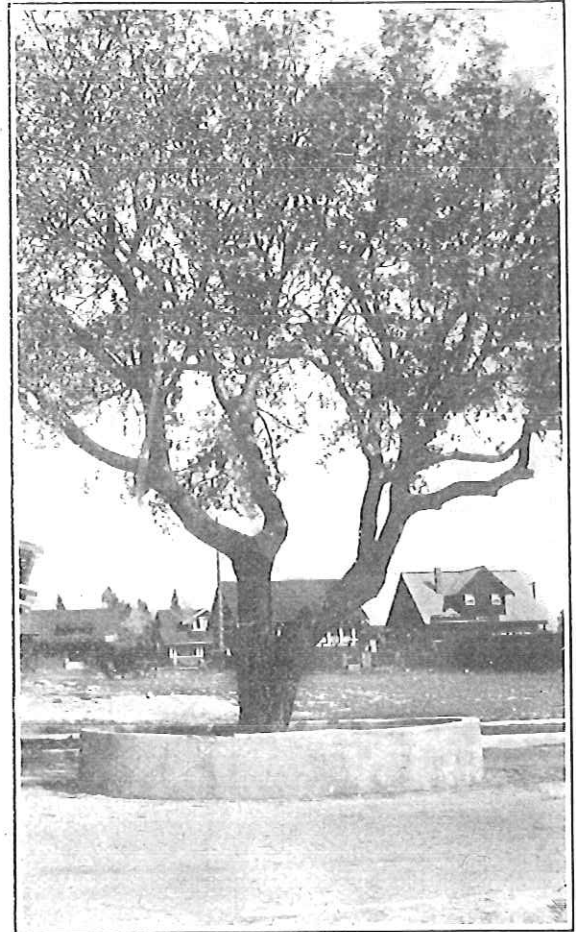
The whole undertaking has about it something of the old-world atmosphere of simplicity bordering on the severely primitive. There is no applause during the program, which lasts about three hours, and the atmosphere is rather that of a religious service than of a concert hall.

The musical critic of the *Chicago Tribune* describes the singing of the chorus as follows: "It attains a tone of surprising unity, and in all matters of rhythmical and intervallic precision it is unsurpassed. The quality of the tone is beautiful. . . . But it is a spiritual attribute rather than that of mere tone and technic that distinguishes the performance of the Lindsborg chorus, as compared with the choruses of larger cities."

The credit for the existence of the Bethany Oratorio Society is due Dr. Carl Swenson, who in 1879 came to Lindsborg, fresh from college, to be pastor of the church.

Fortifying a Tree

Out in Glendale, California, they believe not only in keeping fine trees, but in insuring them against injury. When the land around the tree shown in our illustration went the way of all real-estate develop-



AN "ISLE OF SAFETY" FOR A TREE

ments and was cut up into building lots, the tree was left in the middle of a street.

Shade was none too plentiful—it's not one of the "all modern improvements" that you can buy for so much down and so much per month—and the tree was too good to lose. So it was left unmolested, and a protecting wall of concrete was placed around it by the town officials.

The Land of Roses

To think of the Balkan region at the present time in connection with anything but war is difficult. Yet the mountain regions of Bulgaria are renowned for an industry so full of beauty and peacefulness



BULGARIAN GIRLS GATHERING ROSES
Poetry and prices are both on a high level in this industry.

that the simple peasant folk engaged in it would seem to have no place in their hearts for thoughts of war.

From out of this wild mountain country comes the world's principal supply of that expensive luxury known as attar or otto of roses, or simply, rose oil, obtained by distillation of the flowers. An ounce costs at wholesale from \$12 to \$16.

Bulgaria has been renowned as a rose oil district since early in the seventeenth century. A sheltered situation protects the roses from weather extremes; heavy dews, overcast skies and showers at flowering time favorably affect the oil content; plenty of timber is available for firing the stills, and many streams furnish water for cooling the condensing pipes.

The famous rose district extends along the southern slope of the Balkan Mountains. Its average length is about eighty miles, its width some thirty. The rose gardens cover about 18,000 acres, scattered thru 150 villages, with the districts of Karlovo and Kazanlik in the lead in production.

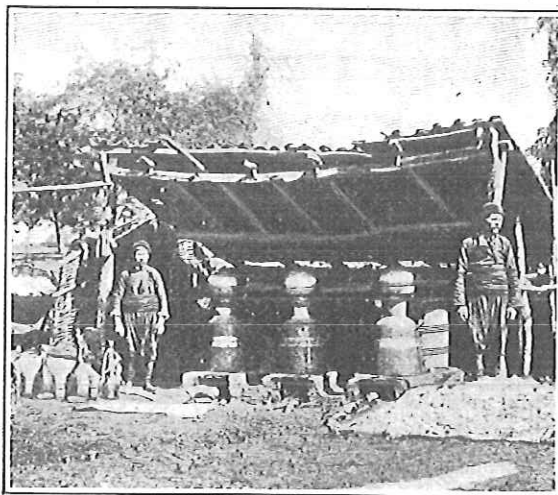
The damask rose (*Rosa damascena*) of the old-fashioned garden is the kind generally cultivated in Bulgaria for the oil. White roses, yielding an inferior grade, are occasionally seen. A rose garden will produce flowers for about twenty years, but only one crop is obtained in a year.

The gathering of the roses is done mostly by women and young girls. Long before the sun rises, in May or early June, these peasant girls, clad in their bright-colored native costumes, are at work. For miles around the air is heavy with the fragrance, and as far as the eye can reach are thousands of closely grown rose hedges, about the height of a man. The gathering must be done early in the morning, while the half-opened buds are still wet with dew.

The roses are broken off just below the calyx. A sticky waxlike substance from these calyxes clings to the hands of the girls plucking the roses, and this is scraped off from time to time, to be made up later into a salve that is claimed to be good for sore eyes; it is also used for perfuming tobacco, and for coating metal necklaces.

No wonder the oil is so expensive—about 200 pounds of roses yield a single ounce of the oil. Under the most favorable conditions an acre may produce from 4000 to 4500 pounds of roses; about 300 blossoms to the pound.

As soon as they are gathered, the roses are carried to the distillery, spread out in a cool, shady place and distilled during the same day. Some of the larger establishments have modern equipment, but for the most part the process is carried on in the primitive fashion known to the peasants for ages; most frequently the distillery is merely a covered shed, open in front, under which the apparatus is placed. The rose water obtained from the first distillation is distilled a second time. Floating upon its



PRIMITIVE ROSE OIL STILL

surface are numerous tiny yellow oil globules—the attar of roses. When all the oil globules (called "butter" by the Bulgar) have come to the surface, they are skimmed off with a queer little conical spoon having a very fine opening thru which the water can run out, but not the oil.

Needless to say, attar of roses, because of its high price, is much subject to adulteration. An attractive souvenir bought at the foreign bazars is in the form of an oblong crystal flask holding about ten or fifteen drops of what may or may not be oil of rose. Sometimes the only oil of rose present consists in a dab of the precious oil on the skin covering the crystal stopper.

Alice Henkel.