The Violet Book

A. & D. Allen-Brown

THE VIOLET BOOK

"PRINCESS OF WALES"

THE VIOLET BOOK

BY A. AND D. ALLEN-BROWN

COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS
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TO OUR NEIGHBOUR

MISS ELIZABETH ROBINS

OF BACKSET FARM

HENFIELD SUSSEX

PREFACE

THE Rose is the Queen of the English garden by Right Divine and by general acclamation.

Other favourites stand near her throne. The clear-smiling carnation, the pure lily of the valley, the fairy-like but ambitious sweet pea, who casts an eye upon the very crown itself, and the violet, the violet who like King Cophetua's beggar maid wears her honours with a sweet remembrance of her lowly past. Her message is one of gentleness and love. She makes no display in courtly function, not for her the gay decoration of the ball-room, nor the glowing light of the feast. But who so welcome to the bed of the sick, to the hand of the convalescent, or on the desk of the writer? Who so at one with the mourner as he

places his last tribute on the grave of the beloved?

Let us honour the gentle flower which blossoms and breathes sweet odours for eight months out of the twelve.

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EARLY DAYS OF THE VIOLET

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"*Violets dim*
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath."

SHAKESPEARE.

"*Long as there are violets*
They will have a place in story."

WORDSWORTH.

FOR the earliest mention of the violet we must turn to mythic legend. It was said by the ancients that the Princess Io, a maid beloved of Jupiter, was changed by him for a space of time into the form of a cow to protect her from the anger of Juno. That she might find fitting food, he caused the violet to spring up in the pastures.

Another legend has it that when Jupiter visited the country of Ionia, a maiden presented to the god, a violet, as the flower most beloved by her people. For this cause it was held in great esteem by the

Athenians, who looked upon themselves as the descendants of the Asiatic Ionians.

According to Virgil, after the death of Daphnis, thistles took the place of violets as the emblem of mourning in nature.

It was usual amongst the Greeks and Celts to decorate with violets the bier on which a dead maiden lay; in many countries it is still the practice so to surround the coffin of young girls.

The Athenians also had a custom (by no means poetical when the reason was understood) of crowning themselves with violets during their protracted banquets, under the belief that the violet perfume prevented intoxication.

The Romans who were good gardeners, differing in this respect from the Greeks, cultivated their gardens with much care, two of their favourite flowers being the rose and violet; these were often grown round the beds of vegetables.

The younger Pliny, when describing the villa which he built for himself near the shores of the Tuscan sea, says, "the gallery

has a double row of windows on both sides . . . and one on each side toward the garden. . . . Before the gallery lies a terrace perfumed with violets."

In 1564 the first mention of double violets is made by Rombert de Dodome. In that year he published a most interesting work, written both in Latin and Greek, on the various fruits and flowers of the period, with their German, Flemish, Italian and French names. After describing the hardiness of the sweet violet of that time—how, in spite of its delicate fibrous root it can resist the summer's heat and winter's cold; thriving under the shelter of walls and hedges, growing in fields and gardens, luxuriating in rich soil and flowering in March and April—he adds, "To this genus belongs the double violet of multiple petals, which are found in gardens only." He goes on to speak of the small wild violet, paler and scentless, or almost so, which grows in shady places, by hedge and ditch, and in land generally dry and sterile.

After which we are told of its medical efficacy:

"The leaves and flowers can be used both as emollients and as a restorative."

"The flowers are employed for all sorts of internal inflammation."

"Dried violets are useful as a tonic."

"The leaves of violets taken as a salad make a good stomachic."

"The seeds of the violet will drive away scorpions."

"The leaves may be used as an outward application for inflammation of the eyes, etc. etc."

In 1730 De la Quintinye, head of the Royal Gardens at Versailles, in a new edition of a former work, gives instructions regarding the growth and multiplication of both double and single violets.

We do not yet know how the double flower first came into being. Some of the old botanical books tell us that "they became double through cultivation;" this assertion is far from being accepted by the scientific growers of to-day. De la Quintinye him-

self says, "The double violet which is cultivated in the garden is the same as that which grows wild in the fields, only the latter is single and the former double."

According to M. Millet the Parma violets should be put into a different category to the ordinary double violet. He says, "The flower, leaves, perfume, *everything* go to prove a birthplace other than Central Europe. What its origin, whence it came, and even when it first appeared remain shrouded in mystery. This alone is certain, that the family of Parma violets gives the sweetest perfume, that the flowering season is the longest and the foliage the handsomest of all double violets.

It is to M. Millet and other French writers, past and present, that we turn for the fullest account of the sweet-scented violet. That the French should hold the violet in high esteem is only natural, when one remembers the enormous commercial interest attached to its growth and development for scent, for confection, as cut-

flowers and exported plants. The violet is still used for medicinal purposes—flower, leaf and root.

The range of the sweet violet is very great, we hear of her from all parts of the world—from the mountain heights of India, from Africa, Tasmania, New Zealand, America, and nearly every country in Europe. Of her cousin, the scentless violet, it would be more difficult to say where these charming flowers do *not* grow.

From Virgil onwards our flower has been beloved by the poets of every nation. Is it not curious that whilst no nation has chosen the violet for her emblem, as the lilies of France or the rose of England, yet each one seems to lay a special claim upon her? She is the nestling among flowers.

"*Je reçois partout bon accueil,*
Mon parfum est de ceux qu'on aime
En mon calice, on trouve même
Une larme pour chaque deuil."

SONNET DE MME. GELADE.

PART I

CHAPTER I

NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR VIOLET-GROWING

BEFORE undertaking the culture of the violet it is well to ascertain the conditions that conduce to her highest development. The first and greatest requirement for the healthy growth of the violet is pure air. Given that, she will stand scorching sun or pouring rain, bustling wind or winter frost. The second essential is sunshine. The more she can bask in summer heat the more prolific will she be in the time of her flowering and the more magnificent her blooms.

Our English gardeners are apt to fear too great heat for the violet, and to plant her for her summer quarters in a shady place. This is a mistake. Monsieur Millet, the great French grower at Bourg-

la-Reine, insists on the efficacy of hot sun to ripen the crown of the plant. A healthy well-ripened crown means many and fine flowers.

Thirdly arises the question of soil. In this matter the violet is most accommodating save in one instance only, she will not thrive on a very chalky district. A rich, well-worked loam, that has been prepared for her reception some time beforehand, will give the best results. But whatever the soil may be—clayey or sandy, or loamy—if diligent use be made of the spade and hoe, the ground kept clean and sweet, fragrant flowers and healthy plants will recompense the cultivator's care. Pure air, sun-warmth, good soil—these being obtainable—what shall hinder the production of the loveliest of violets? Remember always that in this our England, in spite of fog and rain and a climate the most abused in all the earth, we can grow fruit with such a flavour and flowers so fragrant that not the most favoured countries in the world can surpass!

CHAPTER II

THE VIOLET-GROWER'S WORKING CALENDAR

April and May

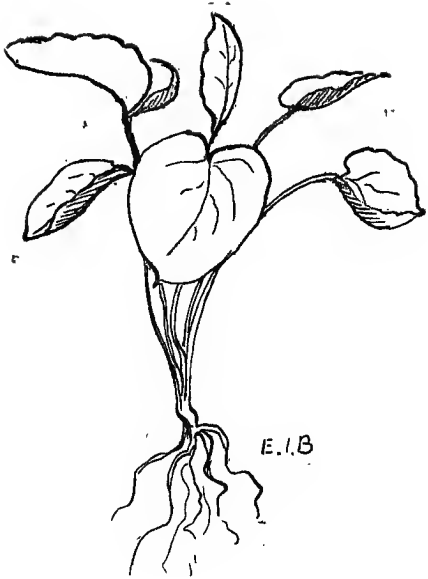
These months may be considered as the end of the old violet season and the beginning of the new. Towards the middle of April the blooms become fewer, paler and dwindle in size, while the plant runs to leaf. This proclaims that the time for the all important business of taking cuttings has arrived. Plants which have flowered for the past six or seven months must be taken out of the ground, for which purpose it is better to use a large fork rather than a spade so as to avoid injuring the roots. If possible let a day be chosen when the ground is moderately damp, as should the soil be wet and heavy when lifting the plants, the roots are apt

to break; on the other hand, when the soil is too dry, the rootlets will suffer. The plant being raised from the ground the soil should be carefully shaken from the roots. This being accomplished the rooted runners must be selected, choosing for preference good outside cuttings, as these grow into the best plants. Reject all that have a weedy appearance, retaining those of a stocky nature. Next remove from the cutting all outside shoots, leaving the neck perfectly clean, so that all strength may be thrown into the crown.

The illustrations show the difference between a good and a bad cutting.

From the single-flowering violets each cutting is taken and planted separately. From the doubles two or three may be put together.

It requires considerable practical experience to ensure the right cuttings being selected. We do not advise the use of cuttings being taken from plants that have been grown in a glass-house with the aid of artificial heat. These plants, through



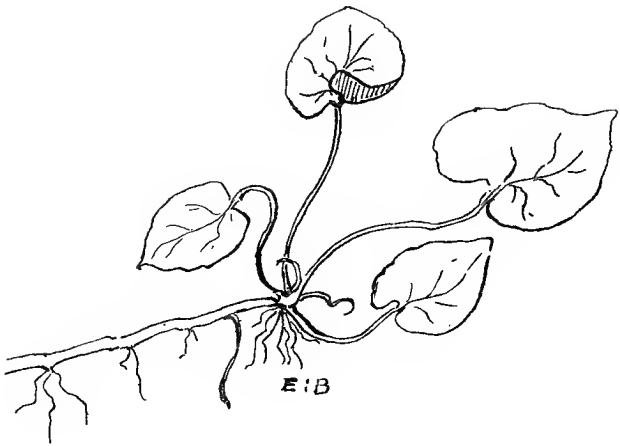
A GOOD CUTTING

forcing, have lost too much of their vitality to put forth strong and healthy runners, such as would make vigorous plants later on. If the total discarding of these plants is considered too drastic a measure, and such a loss of stock is deprecated, then let the plants be severely trimmed and planted in the open. By the next season they will have regained their vigour and may be treated in the usual way.

The ground where the cuttings are to be planted must be thoroughly prepared, deeply dug and well manured. A dressing of soot turned into the soil during the digging is a capital deterrent to wireworm, millipedes, etc. The ground should be divided into beds of not more than four feet in width, so that later blooms may be gathered from either side, thus avoiding unsightly footprints and incidentally injuring leaves. The soil should be trodden firmly and afterwards lightly raked. The firmness of the soil is of great importance to the well-being of the cutting.

If the violets are to remain where they are planted as cuttings, ample space must be allowed. For planting the rooted cuttings, either a trowel or a dibble may be used. The former is the tool usually employed in Cornwall; in the South-Eastern counties the dibble seems to find favour.

We should like to emphasise the importance of planting, as the whole future of the violet depends largely on the operation. Make the hole deep enough to receive the roots without doubling, yet be careful to leave no space below the roots. Take the violet by the crown and drop into the hole prepared, press the soil very firmly round the roots, and see that the crown is on a level with the soil. This is a matter of great importance, as if planted with the crown lower than the ground it is apt to rot; on the other hand, when planted with the crown above the ground, the neck is left unprotected, and thus exposed to the sun's rays, which hinder the plant's proper development.



A BAD CUTTING

We have seen a whole bed of good cuttings utterly spoilt by careless and ignorant planting. If the planting out has to be postponed to a later date, when the spring is more advanced and the sun more powerful, it is advisable to "puddle" the violet, which means to pour a little water into the holes prepared, so that the roots may find the moisture necessary to their growth.

It is a mistake constantly made by amateurs to plant the violets too closely together. Violets require plenty of room, especially the single varieties, and every gardener should bear this in mind if he desires a good result. A well-grown specimen of the single variety will cover at least one square foot. Such violets as the Princess of Wales, La France, Baroness de Rothschild, etc., should be planted at a distance of from sixteen to eighteen inches apart each way, so that the hoe may be used with ease and safety between the plants. The double violets being smaller and more compact, require

less room, and may be planted from ten to twelve inches apart.

The novice must be neither disappointed nor alarmed if, after a few days —especially if the weather is hot and windy—the newly planted cuttings look withered and the leaves brown and drooping. Have patience, and presently there will be observed in the very heart of the plant a leaf—a tiny delicate leaf of a pale shade of green. It is small, so small, indeed, that it has to be looked for; but nevertheless it is the advance guard of a whole sheaf of splendid leaves and blossoms, bringing with it as it does the promise of vigorous healthy life.

Where many violets are grown it saves an enormous amount of time and labour to frame the plants where they stand, if suitable arrangement has been made beforehand, namely, that the beds face south, and are in a position as sheltered as possible from cold north winds. Our experience is that long partitionless frames made out of boards one and a quarter

"LA FRANCE"

inches in thickness, held firmly together by cross-bars, are the healthiest for violets. The free circulation of air greatly diminishes the danger of damping.

May and June

Where violet cuttings are to be planted in great quantities, especially in the neighbourhood of market gardens, it is advisable to spray them, as a preventive measure against "spot" (Puccinia Violæ), with a mixture of cuprum. A calm, grey day should be chosen for the purpose. On a windy day the spray cannot be properly directed, and on a sunny day the leaves are apt to burn. The Automatic Knapsack Sprayer has greatly lessened the tedium of this operation.

For two to three weeks after planting the cuttings should be left severely alone, even though weeds grow apace and the ground looks neglected. It is most important that the rootlets, many of which

are close to the surface, should not be disturbed, nor the hold of the young plant loosened in the ground.

June and July

These weeks of waiting being over, the violet-grower will have a busy time before him. All weeds that have grown close to the roots of the plant must be carefully removed by hand, the hoe being used vigorously, but with discretion, for the destruction of those between the violets. The ground from this time should be kept clean and open. A ceaseless war must be waged against every creeping, flying, tunnelling pest, and their name is surely legion! It would be logical to advise the wholesale destruction of moths and butterflies. But who is logical? Certainly not we. To appease our gardening conscience, and to throw dust in the eyes of our students, we make ineffectual efforts to seize these jewels of

the air, but heave a sigh of thankfulness as they flutter safely away on their little shining wings. Alas! for human justice, 'tis the caterpillar pays the price.

Monsieur Millet, the expert violet-grower, of whom mention has already been made, strongly deprecates violets being watered before the early part of July, even though the weather should be dry and hot, the reason being that violets only then begin their real growth. Up to this period they have been in a state of quiescence, simply holding their own. Watering once commenced must be continued. In this month the grower will have the pleasure of culling the first blooms of the season from the little Semper Florens.

August

By the middle of August the violets will have grown into sturdy round plants, throwing off long runners. These must be promptly removed, as they

are useless, and only drain the plant of the strength that should be thrown into the crown. If this operation be omitted the plant will not produce the desired long stalks and fine blooms. The removal of the runners should be executed with great care. Slip the hand under the runner, and press downwards with the thumb-nail, so as to sever it at its junction with the parent plant. Special pains must at the same time be taken not to loosen the roots of the plant. The hoe will still be at work, but in dry weather care should be taken to avoid covering the leaves with dust. It should always be remembered that leaves are the lungs of the plant.

SEPTEMBER

THERE is no month in the violet year in which the vigilance of the grower is more needed than in this. Not only may various diseases develop among the plants, but the millipede and the surface grubs

are most voracious, as also are many of the largest snails and caterpillars. We have seen hundreds of sturdy violet plants, that have withstood the late spring frost and August drought, bearing upon them the promise of rich bloom, droop and die in a night. The deadly millipede has been at work—every neck is pierced! Or, again, a whole bed of brilliant green-leafed plants have served but as a dainty banquet to a horde of hungry snails that made a midnight sally from a neighbour's ill-kept field.

Towards the end of this month the violets begin to bloom freely.

October

The patient grower now begins to reap the benefit of his unremitting toil and care. The small cuttings planted in the spring will have developed into strong healthy plants, which for the second time are throwing off runners. These runners

must be removed, and those which have grown into what the French would term a "botte"—meaning a tufted end—should be carefully laid aside, as they will make choice plants for the ensuing year. Runners taken from the single varieties may be planted out in the open, where they may remain, and where they will grow into large plants for the following season. For the double varieties it is essential that they should be planted in a frame during the winter months, as they require protection. To avoid waste of space the runners may be planted at intervals of two inches. Any old frame covered with boards or mats may be utilised. In mild weather the coverings should be removed, as violets are apt to damp if kept in a close atmosphere. These are called Autumn struck cuttings.

"BARONESS DE ROTHSCHILD"

October and November

The time has now arrived when preparation must be made for the reception of those plants which are to be moved into frames for the winter season. A site facing south should be chosen for the purpose. All violets thrive really best in a rich soil.

A mixture of well-rotted manure and leaf-mould, that has been thoroughly dressed with soot and turned several times, should be dug into the ground. It is most essential that during the digging a careful look-out should be kept for the various pupæ that may have burrowed beneath the surface. When the bed is ready, frames may be placed in position. The grower will then select the strongest and healthiest plants with which to fill the frames. It is a waste of valuable space to put in any but the best.

The selected plants must be lifted with a large ball of earth attached to their

roots, and slipped gently into the holes prepared for their reception. This method will prevent them from flagging. Avoid the very usual mistake of planting violets too closely in frames—the single violet should be planted not less than twelve to fourteen inches apart, and the doubles from nine to ten inches. Keep the plants close for a few days with mats until their roots begin to move, after which give as much air as possible. When the planting is completed, let water be given through a fine rose, so as thoroughly to cleanse their foliage. Some growers advocate the planting of the violets in such a manner that the leaves touch the glass. We venture to dissent from this opinion, as the leaves are apt to get bruised, and also to be injured by frost.

As the violet is essentially a hardy plant the lights should not be brought into use until frost appears. The same instructions should be followed for violets that are to be grown in a glass-house. The house will naturally have been used for

some other crop during the summer months. After the removal of the other crop, the whole place must be thoroughly cleansed, the glass and woodwork washed with carbolic soft soap, and the brickwork whitewashed.

When the violets have all been planted, the house should be kept closed for several days, until the plants are thoroughly established; after which let air be given freely.

If these instructions are faithfully adhered to, the violet will receive little or no check, and in two or three days' time should bloom freely.

Violets must not be forced. The temperature in the house should never exceed 50° Fahrenheit. Before the frost becomes too severe, it is wise to bank round the frames with hot stable manure, so as to set up a slight heat. This will prevent the frost from striking through the wood, and will encourage bloom. In severe frost the frames must be covered with mats, Archangel or others. Monsieur Millet advocates the following methods

for violets grown in frames where the winter is very severe. Early in October the paths between and on either side the frames are dug out to a depth of from twelve to eighteen inches, and filled in with hot stable manure to a level with the top of the frames, the paths being not more than eighteen inches wide. Every four weeks a *chauffage*—meaning the adding of new manure — takes place, thus the heat is kept up throughout the winter.

We find that a weak solution of fowl or other manure given every fortnight to the roots of violets grown under glass, during the flowering season, is of considerable advantage.

December and January

Violets will bloom freely during the months of September, October and November; toward the latter part of December and throughout January they

are practically dormant, unless artificial heat is used. In February they again begin to bloom freely, and continue to do so until the middle and sometimes the end of April. During these winter months it is important to remove all old and decayed leaves from the plants in frames and houses, keeping the soil sweet and open. Should the plants become very dry, water on a mild day, wetting the leaves as little as possible, as damp leaves are apt to produce mildew. When there is no frost, remember to give the violets plenty of air, as they are hardy plants, and will bloom better if treated as such.

February and March

If the month of February be mild, the outside violets begin to throw off blooms, and those under glass to flower more freely. In March the plants in the house will probably show signs of debility, and they may soon be discarded. Those in

the frames will be flowering profusely, and the outside bed should be a mass of fragrant blue. By persistently removing all dead leaves, also runners, the violet season will be considerably prolonged.

We may remark that cloches have proved of good service in the protection and slight forcing of violets during the winter and early spring months.

CHAPTER III

SEED-SOWING

HITHERTO we have made no mention of seed-sowing as a method for the multiplication of single violets, but a book, however small, on the culture of violets would not be complete without some mention of it.

We shall quote freely from Monsieur Millet.

Though violets never cease to put forth flowers during the whole year, yet the small apetalous ones formed in the height of summer are useless as seed-bearers, fertilisation not having taken place owing to the weakness of the reproductive organs. Fertilisation takes place in the autumn when the first real flowers are formed. Seeds may be gathered from about the middle of October till the middle of November.

In the spring-time, in like manner, the cold and frost of winter being well over, and the flowering season drawing to a close, then it is that fertilised seeds may be gathered.

Both in autumn and spring a careful watch must be kept on the capsules, so that the seeds may be collected at the right moment. If neglected, the seed-pod when thoroughly ripened will burst, and its contents be scattered. This sounds a pleasant and easy way of increasing and improving one's stock of violets. Unfortunately, there are several reasons against it as regards the higher type of flower.

In the first place, the more beautiful and highly cultivated Violets make few seeds, so few indeed, as to be almost negligible. In the second place, when seeds are produced and have been sown, it will be found that a considerable percentage of the young plants have reverted to a simpler type. Also we may mention that these seeds are not easily grown.

Some growers still hope that by seed sowing they may discover some new and improved variety, but we think that so far experience is against them. We believe we are correct in saying that hitherto every beautiful variety, such as La France, Princess of Wales, etc., has appeared, as it were, by its own sweet will, not by the art of man. It is certainly curious that these varieties should appear about the same time in widely separated localities, even in different countries.

Some year or two ago, in a long frame containing almost three hundred double violets of Mrs. Arthur, a single plant appeared, making a distinct break in colour. We are unable to find the slightest reason for its differentiation. Each of the mother plants would divide into two or three cuttings, yet only one made the break. It was certainly to have been expected that two or three, at the very least, would have changed in the same way. So it is that new varieties appear.

For the simpler violets we think it is an excellent plan to increase by sowing. The Blue and White Czar and the Semper Florens are easily grown from seed, and very true to type. The White Czar and Semper Florens are particularly prolific in seeds. Seeds can be sown and flowers gathered from the plants within the twelve months: also by growing from seed, a healthy vigorous stock may be maintained at very small expense. We have already mentioned, that when this method of increase is to be followed, a careful watch must be kept in autumn and spring on the ripening capsules.

Let us follow nature's example as nearly as may be. She flings open the door of their prison when the seeds are ready, and scatters them upon the ground. So should we, in the sweet spring weather, scatter the seed in the moist, warm soil; there, hidden away in that cosy bed they will require scant attention, till the little plants appear and grow large enough to be pricked out. A watchful

"ASKANIA"

eye must guard against slugs and other enemies, the ground kept open and free from weeds, and in dry seasons a sufficiency of water given—rain water, if possible.

For autumn sowing the seeds must be sown in boxes or pans, using any good and sandy soil. Only slight protection will be required through the winter months, but one thing should be remembered—the soil must be kept in a condition of even moisture, and all sourness or dryness be avoided.

In the spring, when the cotyledons thrust their young greenness through the earth, and the first tiny leaves develop, the little plants must be lifted and pricked out into a carefully prepared bed, which is sheltered from the sudden heat of spring sunshine, or the sudden cold of keen east wind. Later, though still small, they may be planted out where they are to bloom in the autumn.

The question is sometimes asked: "Why not use artificial fertilisation as a

means for producing a still more beautiful violet?" Well, these are exciting times for plant breeders—but plants cannot be hurried, and much testing is needed ere theories are proved to be facts. May every patient seeker reap a rich reward.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHOICE OF VIOLETS

Our clients sometimes ask us which we consider the best varieties to grow. If we judged only by our own experience we should answer: Undoubtedly the Princess of Wales. She grows well in the open or under glass, she is hardy, fragrant and long-stemmed, blooming from early Autumn on to the month of April. From the doubles we should select the Improved Marie Louise with her big "bobbing" flowers, her long stalks and delicious perfume. The delicately beautiful Neapolitan still further prolongs the flowering season.

With these three varieties one can enjoy sweet violets for seven or eight months in the year.

So much for our personal experience;

other growers will claim for the magnificent La France the first place. Certainly when grown at its best we do not think it is surpassed by any violet. But it has proved to be not quite so accommodating as the Princess of Wales. In Cornwall, we were given to understand the La France could not be cultivated. The honours there are shared between the Princess and Luxonne. Nearer home, we hear from two ladies who have a charming Violet Farm that they get the best results from the Baroness de Rothschild for winter flowering under glass. In Devonshire the Kaiser Wilhelm makes a splendid show. The lately introduced Askania is still somewhat on her trial. If she proves healthy and a good forcer, she will certainly be one of the best.

With so many first-class varieties from which to choose, we find it needful, though we do it with reluctance, to eliminate some of the older favourites such as the Califorian, the Victoria Regina

and our old friend the Czar, the Princess of Wales having more than taken their place.

The following is a list of those violets which we consider will give the best return to the grower, a fuller list is given at the end of the book.

Single Violets

La France.
Princess of Wales.
Baroness de Rothschild.
Askania.
White Czar.
Souvenir de Jean Josse.
Admiral Avellon.

Parma Violets

Improved Marie Louise.
Mrs. Arthur.
Mrs. D'Arcy.
Neapolitan.
De Parme.
Mrs. J. J. Astor.
Comte de Brazza.

It may be of interest to add here that to England belongs the honour of producing the first of the large sweet single violets. The Czar was introduced to the gardening world by Mr. T. S. Ware of the well-known firm of that name, about 1872.

Monsieur Millet followed with the beautiful Gloire de Bourg-la-Reine about 1879, ancestor to the Princess of Wales and La France, both of these being first grown in France.

Since the introduction of these last-mentioned violets there has been no real advance in size or beauty, though several fine varieties have been brought out, such as the Baroness de Rothschild, Kaiser Wilhelm, The Boston from America, and most distinct of all, the Askania from Germany.

From what we hear, we believe our friends across the Atlantic are coming strongly to the fore in violet culture.

"SOUVENIR DE JEAN JOSSE"

CHAPTER V

THE USE OF MANURES

Our choice of a fertiliser will depend upon the nature of the soil with which we have to work.

When the soil is of a light and sandy nature, cow manure should be employed, so that the roots may find the coolness and moisture which they require. On the other hand, if the ground be stiff and heavy, stable manure is advisable.

We are inclined to think that carefully prepared leaf-mould is the best all-round manure for violet growing. We say "carefully" prepared advisedly, otherwise this most valuable preparation may prove an agent of destruction to the very crop in whose service it is to be used. Leaf-mould must be turned and re-turned, dressed with salt, lime and soot, with the

addition of any burnt vegetable or animal matter. Thus we shall obtain a fertiliser not only free from pests and blight, but rich, cool, and lasting.

All manures should be thoroughly turned and examined before using, as of late years pests of every description have caused such havoc in English gardens, that every precaution should be taken to guard against their increase.

After stable or farm manure has been used for two or three years a good result may be obtained by employing a chemical fertiliser for one year. We have tried it with admirable effect and never had finer blooms on our violet plants.

If possible give the ground a change every few years by growing some other crop upon it, such as tulips, narcissi, or potatoes. Where there is insufficient land for the adoption of this method, a change of culture can be arranged in another way. Plant the violets in long beds four feet wide. To the south of this make a path also four feet wide, and then another bed,

and so on. The following year the paths can be planted with violets, and the beds become paths. That no space be lost, crops may be grown in a single line down the centre of the path. Some growers plant tall growing peas or beans to give shade to the violets in summer, but this is not wise, for, as we have said before, violets cannot have too much of our English sun, always on the understanding that the soil has been thoroughly trenched and enriched so that the roots may find coolness and sustenance below, however dried and burnt the surface of the soil may appear.

We think it may be of some interest and perhaps a little service to our readers if we describe how we converted some old pasture land into an extension of our violet nursery. We prepared it in sections with some months intervening.

The first was deeply ploughed and then harrowed, the ground was straightened, the rough pieces of turf that had not been thoroughly turned in were wheeled away.

By this method, though we made immediate use of the land, the wireworms that infest grass lands were not destroyed, and we suffered greatly from their devastations. It took much labour and quantities of gas-lime and soot to get rid of them.

The second method was more laborious, but proved highly satisfactory. The turf was skimmed by special ploughing, after which the sods were beaten until most of the soil was thrown out. They were then wheeled in barrows to one side where they were formed into a broad high bank. The rough pieces of sods that remained were beaten and gathered together in great hollow mounds here and there all over the land. A light was set and the combustible refuse that had been thrown inside each mound, slowly consumed away. The ashes were then thrown broadcast. The land was dug over and straightened, and we were rewarded by plentiful healthy crops untouched by wireworm or millipede. From the big sod banks we still obtain an excellent soil for potting.

It may interest our readers to know that the three wells from which we draw water used for the garden were all found by the local "water-finder" with his forked twig of hazel or privet. He can trace the course of streams and tell to within a couple of feet at what depth water will be found.

We know of no more interesting operation to watch; a power as yet unexplained and mysterious is in operation, a power which we believe lingers almost exclusively among dwellers in the country.

Hints

To those who intend to take up the culture of violets as a trade we should like to offer the following suggestions:

Never send away blooms immediately after gathering, but let their stalks be immersed in water for at least two hours.

To obtain the best prices only the best flowers must be sent out.

Especial care must be taken with the gathering of violets in springtime when the sun's rays increase in power daily. They should be picked in the early morning and kept in a cool place.

Send out no marked or withered blooms even when flowers are very scarce.

Never allow cut violets to soak over head.

Violets sent by post must be carefully and firmly packed to prevent all shaking.

They should always be bunched, unless the contrary is specially desired, as they carry so much better.

Never lay one bunch upon another.

We think it is through a certain amount of careless packing that many people believe that violets do not carry well by post. If gathered in the cool, and properly packed, they should arrive perfectly fresh. We posted violets to Norway and heard that they arrived in good condition in spite of the long sea journey.

Now for a word relating to that most important point of the business, namely

the packing of plants, which are to be despatched by rail or post in the Autumn.

The plant must be lifted with a spade, taking care that a certain amount of soil adheres to the roots.

If the roots are long, double them back and surround them with well picked damp moss.

Roll the whole neatly in paper, so that the leaves are protected, and tie firmly round the centre with raffia.

Write the name and number of violets on a small wooden label thrust through the raffia.

The spring cuttings are packed in the same manner—with this difference—it is customary to put twelve cuttings into each roll.

The difference of opening a box of carefully packed Violet plants, each wrapped in a neat roll of clean paper with its shining unbroken leaves just visible, perfectly ready when the cool moss is removed, to be put in the ground, to that of gazing upon a mass of sodden or dried

earth, soiled paper, torn leaves and plants crushed out of all shape, may be imagined. We speak from experience.

After some years' experience of English and foreign packing of Violet plants, we think on the whole that the palm lies with the former in regard both to the quality of goods sent and to the manner of packing. We speak only of the best firms here and abroad.

It is the same old tale—bad English is very bad, but her best cannot be beaten.

CHAPTER VI

VIOLET DISEASES

Mildew. Peronospera Violæ.

This disease produces a whitish felt-like covering on the under surface of the leaves. It is generally caused by excessive damp, but sometimes from sudden drought, also from lack of ventilation when the Violets are grown under glass. The best preventative is to keep the ground open and to remove and burn all decayed leaves. When under glass, to give plenty of ventilation and to keep an even temperature. When the first signs of mildew are observed, the leaves and soil should be dusted over with flowers of sulphur.

In bad cases the plants may be sprayed with potassium sulphide.

American Spot Disease. Altunaria Violæ.

This disease has of late years become very prevalent amongst violets in this country. It appears quite suddenly and those who are not acquainted with the malady are horrified at its rapid progress. The appearance is most marked. It shows at first as a small brown patch, as if burnt, sometimes spreading over the whole leaf. M. Millet, after many years of experience and observation, does not consider this disease so deadly as it first appeared to him. He suggests powdering the injured plants, and the ground surrounding them, with sulphur.

Our Violets are now suffering very little from this disease owing we believe to the use of cuperum, or liver of sulphur, with which we spray our plants at certain intervals through the summer.

Violet Rust. Puccinia Violæ. So closely resembling the former that there is no need for further remark.

Another disease of Violets in Autumn is

AMERICAN SPOT DISEASE

caused by a fungus (Urocystis Violæ). This fungus produces gouty swellings on the stalks and large veins. The swellings eventually burst exhibiting black patches, and discharge sooty spores. No cure is known.

VIOLET PESTS

Red Spider.

These tiny insects are difficult to detect with the naked eye. They multiply at an enormous rate, breeding in large colonies on the underside of the leaves, which they cover with a fine web, sucking the life juice from them and reducing the plant to a pitiable condition. The opinion is generally held that an insufficiency of moisture at the roots or in the atmosphere is chiefly responsible. Yet we have seen havoc wrought during a very wet summer. A watchful eye will observe the first trace of the enemy and by taking prompt measures will be able to prevent it spreading to other plants.

Dust the back of the infected leaves when quite dry with soot, also the soil—and leave for three days. On the third day syringe thoroughly with fresh water through a fine rose. It is most essential to keep the soil pure and sweet.

If the attack of red spider has been severe, a dressing of nitrate of soda before a shower, will greatly assist the recovery of the plant. Should the pest have spread to a great extent it would be better to dig up and burn the plants and then thoroughly to disinfect the ground. Such drastic treatment will be rarely needed, if the gardener keeps a watchful eye. It has been our experience that red spider is very apt to appear during a dry east wind.

In either glass-house or frame, Violets will suffer very little from this plague if a fresh current of air is kept up, the atmosphere not too dry and the soil clean.

Aphis. Green fly is an enemy more easily combated. Washing with soft-

"JOHN RADDENBURY"

soap and hand-picking should soon dispel this pest.

Wireworms are the grubs of various species of beetles called in entomology Agrotis or Elater, and ordinarily Click-Beetles.

They vary in colour, some brown, some nearly black, the bodies being long and narrow. The larvæ have six legs each. The female lays her eggs in the height of the summer and presently the worms emerge and commence their devastating work. They live from three to five years eating voraciously, after which they re-descend into the earth and change into the chrysalis state to come forth at last as Skip-Jacks, Click-Beetles and Blacksmiths.

They attack the roots and neck of the Violet plant, causing it to languish and collapse. We found the best means to get rid of this pest was to strew gas-lime over the soil if it can be left unused for some weeks. Should this be impossible a quantity of fresh soot dug into the

ground and the soil constantly turned, will greatly weaken their attack.

Millipedes. Millipedes are to be distinguished from wire-worm by the numerous feet, varying in the different species, from fifty to one hundred and sixty. They have only one life. They are supposed to take two years before becoming fully grown. Millipedes make a very deadly assault upon the Violet. They pierce the neck just below the ground, causing the plants speedily to collapse and die. It is most important to use manure free of these pests, as they haunt all sorts of decaying matter. When manure is suspected of containing any of these pests, it is well to water it with a solution of salt. Dressing the soil with soot is also a great deterrent.

Surface Caterpillars. These are the larvæ of various moths, particularly those of the Heart and Dart moth (*Agrotis exclamationis*), Turnip or Dart moth (*A. segetum*), and "small" or "garden" Swift moth (*Hepialus lupulinus*). These grubs hiding just below the ground venture out

in the early morning and at dusk, to make terrible havoc among the violet plants. They seem particularly hungry during the end of August and the beginning of September. Every trace of the enemy must be closely followed up, keen search being made among the leaves, also both on as well as under the ground, round every plant which bears the mark of the cruel and voracious mouth.

Slugs and Snails. These pests are too well known to need any description. The large slugs devour in a very wholesale manner, but they are more easily traced and destroyed than the small ones, who hide in every possible place, and make up by numbers what they lack in size. Repeated dressings of salt, soot or lime act as deterrents; but hand-picking and immediate slaughter are the only real remedies. Watering with clear lime water, or with one ounce of carbonate of soda to the gallon, may be applied over the ground and plants. The slugs will rise to the surface and may then be destroyed.

When raids are made against the enemy, let them be thorough and continued, till the victory is complete.

In a Violet Farm the old adage, "Prevention is better than cure," is doubly true, and an enormous amount of time, labour and expense, saved thereby. Both pests and diseases seem to act with most dire rapacity against the inoffensive Violet. How to prevent is the question. Well! Keep a watchful eye on all manures that are used,—a free hand with soot and careful destruction of larvæ when the land is dug over. A hunter's instinct for the first faint trace of the enemy. Outpost duty along every bed and border of the land—a frequent use of hoe—a minute inspection of all bought plants. A clear eye, a quick hand, a cunning brain and loving heart, all these go to the making of a happy Violet Farm.

Let violet-growers encourage birds to nest in their gardens or nurseries. The amount of destructive grubs, insects, and

larvæ which they destroy while feeding their young is amazing.

The robin is a true gardener and keeps a bright eye for the wireworm or earwig turned up by spade or fork. The starling works havoc on caterpillars and surface-grubs; the thrushes and blackbirds advertise their good deeds in the early morning by the loud cracking of snail shells. The greatly abused sparrow does much to clear green-fly from the rose-trees. Tits, wrens, linnets, hedge-sparrows are all the friend of man.

Since the above was written, we have had to make a strong protest against what appears to us a stupid and cruel custom. During the months of winter and spring on moonlight evenings boys and men are encouraged by the so-called *Sparrow Clubs* to walk along the hedges (the owners' consent by no means being considered essential) carrying a lantern, nets, and thick sticks. With the latter they roughly belabour the hedges, the

sleepy and terrified birds bewildered by the sudden onslaught fly from their harbourage only to be entangled in the net. No need to ask what follows. It will be difficult to make us believe, that under the circumstances much discrimination is shown in the slaughter of our feathered kin. When insect pests and blights of every kind abound it seems incredible folly so to destroy our birds.

"MRS. J. J. ASTOR"

LIST OF VIOLETS

Single Violets

Admiral Avellon.
Red blooms, hardy.

Armadine Millet.
Elegant silver foliage.

Askania.
Large, dark and very fragrant. Free-flowering in a soil that suits it.

Boston.
Resembles Kaiser Wilhelm, same habit as Baroness de Rothschild.

Gloire de Bourg-la-Reine.
Large, very fragrant, dark foliage.

Baroness de Rothschild.
One of the largest violets, grows well in old hot bed.

California.
Large, long-stemmed, hardy and prolific.

Comtesse Edmond de Tertre.
Like Luxonne, but more compact.

Cyclops.
Large violet, rosette of white petals in the centre of each flower.

Czar.
Hardy, fragrant, free-flowering.

Czar white.
Small flower, but very pure white.

Doctor Jameson.
Small reddish flower, hardy.

Explorateur Dybowski.
Rather a metallic violet colour, strong stemmed.

Floribunda.
Resembling the Princess of Wales.

Ideal.
Fragrant and hardy.

Italia.
An improved California.

Inépuisable.
With toothed leaves, supposed to flower from August to May.

John Raddenbury.
Pale blue, with white eye. Very prolific in spring.

Knockmullen.
Early; freer than Welsiana.

Kaiser Wilhelm.
Very large, resembling Princess.

La France.
Enormous petals, dark violet purple, forces well.

Lianne.
Quantity of deep reddish purple flowers, hardy.

Le Lilas.
Good for frames, heliotrope.

Luxonne.
Free, hardy, long-stemmed.

Madame Em. Arene.
Resembles Luxonne, but darker.

Madame Schwartz.
Rich deep violet, very prolific.

Mlle. Armade Pages.
Pale blush pink.

Noelie.
Reddish purple.

Odorata grandiflora.
Large round flowers.

Princess Alexandra.
Improved Admiral Avellon.

Princess of Wales.
One of the largest and best.

Queen Charlotte.
Improved California.

Reine Augustine.
Dark purple, prolific.

Semper Florens.
Very fragrant, flowering for nine months.

Souvenir de Jean Josse.
Reddish mauve with white eye.

Victoria Regina.
Prolific, hardy.

Welsiana.
Hardy, sweet and early.

Wilson.
Large dark mauve flowers.

Sulphurea.
Beautiful in mass. Perfume doubtful.

etc. etc.

Parma Violets

Comte de Brazza.
The best double white.

Coolcronin.
Immense bloom.

De Parme.
Fragrant, lavender.

Lady Hume Campbell.
Free-flowering, lavender blue, very compact.

Marie Louise.
Rich deep purple, with splash of red in centre.

Marie Louise (Improved).
Larger, more prolific.

Madame Millet.
A charming pink, forces well.

Mrs. Arthur.
Dark blue, white centre, one of the best.

Mrs. D'Arcy.
Particularly sweet silvery mauve.

Mrs. J. J. Astor.
Rosy heliotrope, hardy, prolific.

Neapolitan.
Lavender, prolific.

Parme de Toulouse.
Resembles Marie Louise, makes more runners.

etc. etc.

Double Violets

(not Parma)

Belle de Châtenay.
Late flowering, white.

Bertha Barron.
Dark violet.

Blanche de Chevreuse.
White, with rosy centre.

King of Violets.
Dark blue, very double.

etc. etc.

PART II

MARIE LOUISE (IMPROVED)

CHAPTER I

EARLY BEGINNINGS

SOME of our readers who perhaps are thinking of taking up gardening as a trade, may be interested to hear a few particulars about our own experiences. Let us think a moment—what was our stock-in-trade? Why, a very small but sunny garden—a couple or so of frames, some elderly tools and much cheerful self-confidence. No: we did not at first set out as violet-growers, for a while we were deaf and blind. With adoring pride we looked round our little domain and as it seemed to our partial eyes, that every kind of plant flourished, and as we really were blessed with the gardener's gift of a lucky hand, we determined to begin our mercantile career as a sort of universal provider, with all the gay insouciance of optimistic ignorance.

What plants we ruthlessly dug up and despatched to all parts of the kingdom, what seeds we sowed in every kind of contrivance and nursed to early maturity at express speed! What beautiful and graceful names we gave to lovely unknown flowers! The decisions of the R.H.S. were to us as light as thistledown. We look back and smile at the luck that favoured our early endeavours. Orders came from here and there and everywhere, somehow we were invariably able to fulfil them, owing partly to the fact that we did not permit the sentence, "It is not worth while," to cross our lips. However tedious the order, however small the gain, however long the hours that passed as we searched through lists, or books, or papers, for the name of some rare and little-known plant —still in the end success crowned our efforts.

Soon we discovered that hard work only whetted our appetite for more. We joined the selling of bulbs to our business.

There is something fascinating in the

handling of a polished, plump and well-formed bulb. This new venture brought some curious and rather sad experiences to our knowledge of human nature. Certain of those who hitherto had been accustomed to purchase the various bulbs and tubers for their masters' gardens felt aggrieved when the matter was taken out of their hands, and to show how misguided the said masters were, our bulbs experienced many strange happenings. Some got planted upside down, some intended for the garden were planted in the greenhouse. Choice and delicate ones were lightly stuck in the open ground. Naturally our bulbs, the pride of our hearts, suffered; so did our belief in humanity, so also did the tempers of our unsuspicious clients. We eliminated that part of our universal providership.

As time rolled on the thought came to be more and more forced upon our minds, what great tracts of land in England were laid out in splendid nursery gardens. Of the enormous amount of capital that had

been sunk in the erection of horticultural buildings. We grasped in some degree the amount of money, education and long experience that had gone to their making, and the building up of the great firms whose names are world-famous.

At last we smiled, a little sadly, and said to each other, "What a tiny craft is ours to be afloat on this great ocean of trade." It seemed more dignified to steer our little vessel into haven, rather than let it be engulfed in that most turbulent sea. We determined to make a cheery end and decided (changing the metaphor) that the curtain should be rung down on "A special penny sale." What an amusing thing it was, for this, which was to be the last act in our commercial life, turned out a most exciting and laughable success. The weather was propitious, the sun smiled gently down, while the folk passed to and fro.

Smart double broughams with liveried men dashed up to our modest garden gate, and richly dressed clients descended to

take a critical survey of our special "Penny Menu." Spanking cobs in smart pony-carts trotted briskly up with their freight of laughing purchasers. Pedestrians arrived and made their well-considered choice. One delightful old gentleman intimated that he wished the plants of his desire dug up instantly, also (so slight his belief in common honesty) that they should be immediately packed into a "trug" and borne home under his own supervision by our one "handyman," aged thirteen. A stately lady left her castellated manor to ask for two pennyworth of honesty. Alas! no "honesty" was here!

So the first day of the great sale passed and others of a like nature followed. Though it was not a stream of gold that flowed into our hands, it was at least a cheery copper trickle.

And then—what then? Why then our eyes were opened, and we saw, and our ears were unsealed and we heard with understanding. For from under the high hedge, in the chink of the wall from every

nook and corner, filling the air with their fragrance, grew the sweet wild violets, purple and white and pink; and they whispered, "Oh! foolish humans—if we, the little rustics of our race live and thrive so happily without help, without thought, what would our statelier sisters do, cared for and tended—with all the science and all the art that love can teach? Send for them and you will see, but leave us, oh! humans! in our cosy nooks and corners." We sent for the statelier sisters—and in due time everything fell out as our little friends predicted, but not immediately.

"*A fragrance lifts and lingers,*
In the sunny April air,
The passing breezes catch it
And waft it here and there;
'Tis our violets' hymn of blessing
For the love in which we share."

CHAPTER II

EXPERIENCES

FROM the day we took up violet culture professionally our real hard work began. In the first place, the small garden was essentially private, not one arranged with the careful precision that trade requires. It was difficult to find any length of open space for those violet beds which would be framed later. One small bed had to be made here, another there, adding enormously to our daily work. No water was laid on, so heavy cans had to be carried long distances. It happened that the first summer was exceptionally hot and dry, there was drought even in the spring. Heads and arms ached. Cuttings put into what we fondly thought ideal soil, grew gross and leggy and refused to flower. Others free, healthy and strong

in a semi-uncultivated state with the richest of purple bloom, pined and drooped and disappeared under our fostering care. Diseases never heard of and pests we had never seen, descended upon our devoted plants.

Sometimes the struggle seemed too hard—but partly the feeling of "hold on" characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon—partly the pride that resented the undertone of disbelief in woman's enterprise, yes, even the very pity that is given to failure, made us doggedly continue.

One curious thing we noticed, it was always after a knock-down blow that our spirits rose the highest.

Our office was a small windowless shed, in which was done all the arranging of flowers, packing of parcels and writing business letters. The door, which faced due east, had to remain wide open, there being no other means of obtaining light. The cold on a winter's morning when an east wind was blowing, may be imagined. It was not a pleasant ex-

perience. But after all, in spite of hard work, some miseries and more disappointments, we had many pleasures. It was joy in the early dawn of an August day ere work began, to look out from the small summer-house across the sweet-smelling garden to the common beyond, lying half hidden, half discovered in the silver floating mists, the air alive with melody. We dwelt for a time in fairy-land. Homely bread and butter and tea in garden mugs and a dew-kissed apple from a tree by way of finish, was a feast worthy of Titania's tasting.

Are you fond of music? Do you pay down golden guineas to hear the very best? Come with us and listen. Thrush and robin, tit, hedge-sparrow, lark and linnet—free, all free.

It was still in the early days of our undertaking that an immense horde of snails and slugs descended upon our garden, and ravaged it. The work of extermination seemed impossible. However, we laid our plans and commenced

the defence by a determined sortie, armed with little tin buckets containing a strong solution of salt and water, large spoons and old lanterns. It was dusk; we crept along the hedge-side, under the wall, by the violet beds. The lust of battle and revenge for violets slain, fell upon us. There were eager exclamations, quick scoopings, then plop, plop, another snail was in the bucket. It was not nice work, but we went at it steadily night after night till the end came. The slaughtered were not unavenged. To strained and tired eyes, creeping forms seemed at our evening meal to move stealthily over the cloth, to mount the dishes, to climb the stairs, to haunt our nightly dreams. But the work was done, we have never had to repeat it.

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Time passed; a little bit of land was annexed, the first outward mark of progress, the two or three frames had now

stretched out into long rows. In the open, in the neatest of neat beds, grew our old friends the Czar, Victoria Regina and California. A dead leaf was an eye-sore, a foot-print an unforgivable offence, a weed grieved us to the heart. We were held fascinated, just one more touch, a smoothing of the rake here, a turn of the fork there. Did ever plants we wondered have pains more lavished on them?

A small part of the land we had recently acquired was heavy, sour and full of vermin. Our losses through wire-worm were very severe. In that first Autumn, just when we were looking forward to frames of beautiful flowers, the plants were cut down in a night, like the Assyrian Cohorts, by an unseen foe. Thanks to constant cultivation, much soot, lime and careful manuring, the soil is now excellent.

It is after misfortunes such as these that the unwavering belief of a friend in one's ultimate success is of such an immense

help. Pity disheartens too much, sympathy weakens the fibre, advice and criticism, that are often non-professional and nearly always given too late, fret and annoy—only steady unswerving faith braces the mind, puts courage into the heart, gives new vigour to the will, so crowning the endeavour with success.

These few lines are especially intended for one who, while hearing doubts, criticisms and hints of failure for many years, has remained our believing, unwavering friend.

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During the severe winter that followed, when there was a good deal of snow, we calculated that attending to the frames alone took five hours of each day.

In the morning we brushed the snow from the covering mats—with the first gleam of sunshine they were removed and hung up to dry, the lights being carefully

MRS. ARTHUR

polished, that every ray of sun might be received and a little air given. Our hands were sometimes so cold and numb that we had to stop and rub each other's to bring back a little life; often they were cut and bleeding. That time the land was swept by the cold north winds. Early in the afternoon began the closing and re-covering. When a high wind blew there was much additional work, as heavy boards had to be laid over the lights and covers. We have had lights that were closely shut down, whirled into the air by a south-west gale and flung to a considerable distance. In the cold nights we made many pilgrimages to see that all was safe—here a little extra covering; there more protection required. When we spoke of the weather it was always in relation to the violets—good for them was good for us—bad for them was bad for us. Though our borders were enlarged we were still doing all the hard work of the garden, with occasionally the grooming of the pony, cleaning of trap,

harness and stable thrown in. But early rising seems to make all work possible. When the winter was over we carried and stacked some sixty heavy lights to a considerable distance—a tedious and very tiring piece of work.

A good deal of thoughtful arrangement is required to obviate all needless work—so thought the gardeners of old:

"A handy place for a handy thing,
A tidy shed and a bit of string.
Hammer and nails and a good straight pin,
Polished tools you can see face in."

We made our first triumph in actual violet culture with the Princess of Wales and La France; they seemed to respond quickly to our care, yet our first floral success was not a promising one, for we actually gazed at a glorious frame full of stately sweet-smelling violets and did not know how to dispose of them.

Taken with a grain of salt, there is a great deal of truth in the saying of one of our pioneer women gardeners : "Anyone can grow a flower; the thing is to sell it when grown."

There is always a good demand for well-grown single violets. It took us much longer to master the proper treatment of the double variety.

In England there is no doubt that the single flowers are the favourites. It is interesting to notice how the public taste changes—at one time there was so little demand for the double white, that had we not loved them for their own sake we should have given up growing them. Now the request for them is constant and unceasing. They have a purity and charm which are unique—only those who love them fully understand their message.

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Spring once more, with eight or ten thousand cuttings to be chosen and

planted; hundreds of others to be packed and despatched to all parts of the United Kingdom.

In April we knelt down to plant the first spring cuttings, attired in neat apparel; the end of May found us in tattered skirt and ragged apron. The drought was early that year, and the carrying of heavy cans continued till our strength gave way; after some forty or fifty gallons had been carried by each during the evening of a very busy day our heads grew suddenly dizzy, and lights flashed and reflashed before the eye. Something had to be done—resources were taxed, the water committee communicated with, and after much delay we rejoiced with a glad heart and untired heads as the fine spray fell upon the drooping plants.

One day stands out vividly in our remembrance, it was one of the hottest of a very hot spell. At early dawn we used the hose while the dew lay cool on the shimmering leaves; when the night was

young and the full moon shone we turned the hose upon the thirsty land, the spray lifted and fell in a spreading silver arc, the drops pattered on the grateful leaves. The "kling" of a quoit rang out, thrown on the ground hard by—laughter and voices followed—then pipes were lit—the players departed. We were left alone to the silence and the glory of the night.

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It is our constant gardening experience that after a period of pleasant genial work, when everything goes with a will and fortune beams upon us, to find that in a day there is a change, an unexpected hitch, even as a smoothly running train suddenly jolts and jars and lessens speed. The easy swing of daily routine becomes a labour. Cold winds strike down and "backen" the young crops on whose early ripening so much depends. Long continued sunlessness damps off the healthy plants that fill long rows of frames.

Weeks of careful preparation may be thrown away. With hard work a certain amount is saved, but discouragement lays his heavy hand on head and arm, one toils doggedly, looking neither to the right-hand nor the left—in spite of persistent effort no improvement is visible. Is gardening worth it, we ask gloomily, for we are making no headway? 'Tis plod, plod, week in, week out, and for what? Then, all of a sudden, we look round and see that the *seemingly* useless drudgery has worked wonders, we are once more on even lines—the wheels fly merrily round, the hard barren piece is passed, its lesson learned and a pleasing prospect lies ahead.

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In our neighbourhood there is a *rara avis*, a farmer who never complains—fair weather or foul, good luck or bad. His voice has the rich roundness of the Sussex burr as he greets you cheerily during a wet hay-harvest or the havoc of

"DE PARME"

a late frost. We try to follow his example —at a distance.

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In many American novels we are told how the gallants of Boston or New York lavish gifts of choicest flowers on their fair companions of the theatre or ball. Which of our English novelists tell of the innumerable gifts that quiet women of the British Isles send to their women friends? It is one of our great pleasures that we are connected (though only as "middlemen") with this most gracious custom.

. . . . .

Faster and faster fly the years, another Easter has come and gone, the violet season is over, the best we have ever had. In the garden by the common, looking to the Sussex Downs, we have built another glass-house, rather larger than

the first. Though now it is filled with stalwart young tomato plants, yet with the mind's eye we see it in its autumn glory—purple with the violet blooms.

The little violet frame has grown and branched out here and there; more workers are required. Students and helpers are busy, not only amongst the violets but with the many side issues, the so-called "catch-crops." Men and boys now do the heavy work we used to do. Over the latter rules and works an upright, thoughtful, clever English gardener. All work in cheeriest goodwill.

We look back and the path we have travelled seems but short. We look forward and the pathway is lost in distance.

April 1911.

Alas! that path which seemed to lead by pleasant ways to higher heights of fortune and success came to an abrupt

end—the rosy vision of continued and uninterrupted success suddenly vanished.

In the early spring we arranged to double our stock of violets. These were to be planted in the more distant and more recently acquired portion of the nursery, where no water is laid on and only wells are used. The ground was prepared with much thought and labour; skilled and loving hands planted the runners and all went merry as a marriage bell.

During April refreshing showers fell in beautiful succession, just as the happy little plants required. The first weeks of May passed by and still the weather was ideal—sunshine and shower, sunshine and shower; and then drought, drought, drought. Ere we had half finished the planting the ground grew dry and dusty. We watched and waited cheerfully for rain, for was it not spring time? But no rain came. Time passed, the little plants fought valiantly for life; pumps were kept hourly in motion; the heavens remained as brass. The ground grew hot, radiating

heat. Then the wells gave out. Only a trickle of water remained and even that was used to try and save what might be saved.

Sadly we watched the fresh green leaves turn pale, then yellow; finally collapse and die.

At last in September the rain fell, for us, alas! too late. Some fifteen thousand violet plants were utterly destroyed—so fades the rosy light of early morn. What says the old rhyme?

"*Bad luck to-day, good luck to-morrow,*
Of the past only experience borrow."

So we bade farewell to the little dead violet plants and turned our attention to the survivors. We also determined that never again should there be a deficiency of water. We are even now engaged in working out a scheme to that effect.

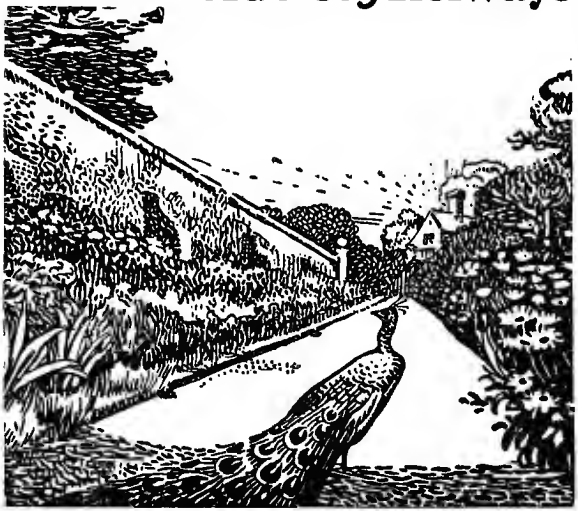
In spite of the past—for us most dis-

astrous—summer in spite of loss and anxiety we can still finish our little book on a cheerful note. For not only has the mild weather been a Godsend to us but never have our faithful violets blossomed more persistently, more freely, more beautifully. It is as if they knew how much we needed their help; and never have we received so many kind letters from clients telling how greatly their sick friends had appreciated the fragrant flowers sent to them.

Once more with renewed courage and light hearts we enter upon another year of violet culture.

January 1912.

Colour Borders *by* Kelways



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