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·: FLOWERS :·

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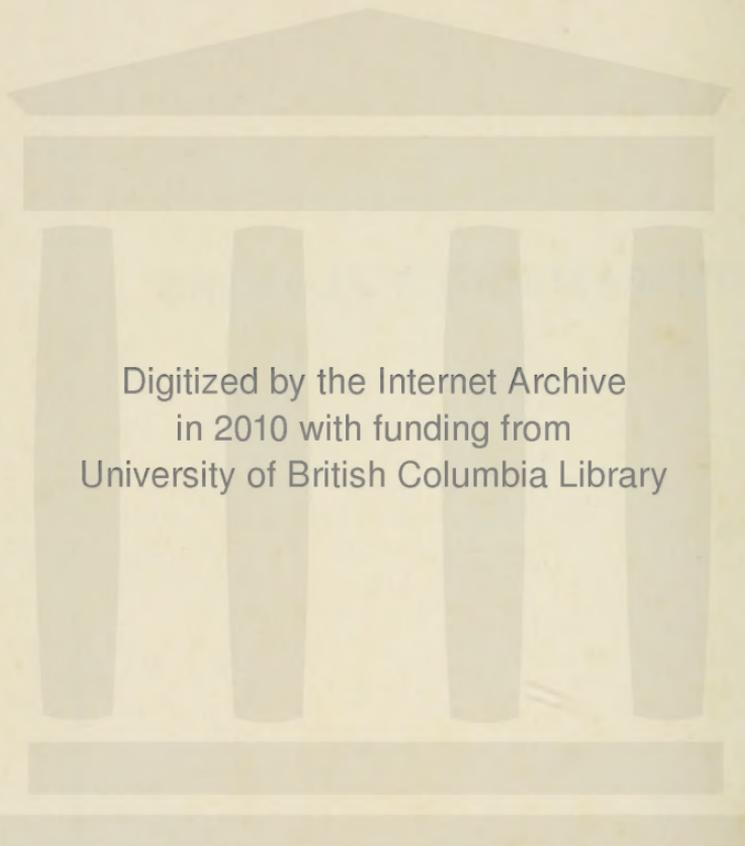
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OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS



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G. S. Elgood.

Andre & Sleigh, Ltd.

Orange Lilies and other Old-fashioned Flowers.

*Frontispiece.*

**OLD-FASHIONED  
FLOWERS** and other

Open-Air Essays    ❧    ❧

by Maurice Maeterlinck

Translated by A. Teixeira de Mattos

With Illustrations by G. S. Elgood



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## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

### I

THIS morning, when I went to look at my flowers, surrounded by their white fence, which protects them against the good cattle grazing in the field beyond, I saw again in my mind all that blossoms in the woods, the fields, the gardens, the orangeries and the green-houses; and I thought of all that we owe to the world of marvels which the bees visit.

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

Can we conceive what humanity would be if it did not know the flowers? If these did not exist, if they had all been hidden from our gaze, as are probably a thousand no less fairy sights that are all around us, but invisible to our eyes, would our character, our moral system, our sense of the beautiful, our aptitude for happiness be quite the same? We should, it is true, in nature have other splendid manifestations of luxury, exuberance and grace; other dazzling efforts of the infinite forces: the sun, the stars, the varied lights

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

of the moon, the sky and the sea, the dawns and the twilights, the mountain and the plain, the forest and the rivers, the light and the trees and, lastly, nearer to us, birds, precious stones and woman. These are the ornaments of our planet. Yet, but for the last three, which belong to the same smile of nature, how grave, austere, almost sad would be the education of our eye without the softness which the flowers give! Suppose, for a moment, that our globe knew them not: a great region, the most enchanted in the joys of our

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

psychology, would be destroyed, or rather would not be discovered. All of a delightful sense would sleep for ever at the bottom of our harder and more desert hearts and in our imagination stripped of worshipful images. The infinite world of colours and shades would have been but incompletely revealed to us by a few rents in the sky. The miraculous harmonies of light at play, ceaselessly inventing new gaieties, seeming to revel in itself, would be unknown to us; for the flowers first broke up the prism and made the most subtle

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

portion of our sight. And the magic garden of perfumes: who would have opened its gate to us? A few grasses, a few gums, a few fruits, the breath of the dawn, the smell of the night and the sea would have told us that beyond our eyes and ears there existed a shut paradise where the air which we breathe changes into delights for which we could have found no name. Consider also all that the voice of human happiness would lack! One of the blessed heights of our soul would be almost dumb, if the flowers had not, since centuries, fed with their

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

beauty the language which we speak and the thoughts that endeavour to crystallize the most precious hours of life. The whole vocabulary, all the impressions of love are impregnate with their breath, nourished with their smile. When we love, all the flowers that we have seen and smelt hasten to people with their known charms the consciousness of a sentiment whose happiness, but for them, would have no more form than the horizon of the sea or sky. They have accumulated within us, since our childhood and even before it, in the soul

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

of our fathers, an immense treasure, the nearest to our joys, upon which we draw each time that we wish to make more real the clement minutes of our life. They have created and spread in our world of sentiment the fragrant atmosphere in which love delights.

### 2

That is why I love above all the simplest, the commonest, the oldest and the most antiquated: those which have a long human past behind them, a large array of kind and consoling

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

actions; those which have lived with us for hundreds of years and which form part of ourselves, since they reflect something of their grace and their joy of life in the soul of our ancestors.

But where do they hide themselves? They are becoming rarer than those which we call rare flowers to-day. Their life is secret and precarious. It seems as though we were on the point of losing them; and perhaps there are some which, discouraged at last, have lately disappeared, of which the seeds have died under the ruins, which will no more know the dew of the gardens

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

and which we shall find only in very old books, amid the bright grass of the miniature-painters or along the yellow flower-beds of the Primitives.

They are driven from the borders and the proud baskets by arrogant strangers from Peru, the Cape of Good Hope, China, Japan. They have two pitiless enemies in particular. The first of these is the encumbering and prolific *Begonia Tuberosa*, that swarms in the beds like a tribe of turbulent fighting-cocks, with innumerable combs. It is pretty, but insolent and a little artificial; and,

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

whatever the silence and meditation of the hour, under the sun and under the moon, in the intoxication of the day and the solemn peace of the night, it sounds its clarion cry and celebrates a monotonous, shrill and scentless victory. The other is the Double Geranium, not quite so indiscreet, but indefatigable also and extraordinarily courageous. It would appear desirable were it less lavished. These two, with the help of a few more cunning strangers and of the plants with coloured leaves that form those bloated mosaics which at present

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

debase the beautiful lines of most of our lawns, these two have gradually ousted their native sisters from the spots which these had so long brightened with their familiar smiles. They no longer have the right to receive the guest with artless little cries of welcome at the gilded gates of the mansion. They are forbidden to prattle near the steps, to twitter in the marble vases, to hum their tune beside the lakes, to lisp their dialect along the borders. A few of them have been relegated to the kitchen-garden, in the neglected and, for that

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

matter, delightful corner occupied by the medicinal or merely aromatic plants, the Sage, the Tarragon, the Fennel and the Thyme, old servants, too, themselves dismissed and nourished only through a sort of pity or mechanical tradition. Others have taken refuge by the stables and the coach-house, near the low door of the kitchen or the cellar, where they crowd humbly like importunate beggars, hiding their bright dresses among the weeds and holding their frightened perfumes as best they may, so as not to attract attention.

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

But, even there, the Pelargonium, red with indignation, and the Begonia, crimson with rage, came to surprise and hustle the unoffending little band; and they fled to the farms, the cemeteries, the little gardens of the rectories, the old maids' houses and the country convents. And now hardly anywhere, save in the oblivion of the oldest villages, around tottering dwellings, far from the railways and the nursery-gardener's overbearing hot-houses, do we find them again with their natural smile: not wearing a driven, panting and hunted look, but

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

peaceful, calm, restful, plentiful, care-  
less and at home. And, as in  
former times, in the coaching days,  
from the top of the stone wall that  
surrounds the house, through the  
rails of the white fence or from the  
sill of the windows enlivened by a  
caged bird, on the motionless road  
where none passes save the eternal  
forces of life, they see Spring come  
and Autumn, the rain and the sun,  
the butterflies and the bees, the silence  
and the darkness, followed by the  
light of the moon.

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

### 3

Brave old flowers! Wall-flowers,  
Gillyflowers, Stocks! For, even as  
the field-flowers, from which a trifle,  
a ray of beauty, a drop of perfume,  
divides them, they have charming  
names, the softest in the language;  
and each of them, like tiny, artless  
ex-votos, or like medals bestowed by  
the gratitude of men, proudly bears  
three or four. You Gillyflowers, who  
sing among the ruined walls and  
cover with light the grieving stones;  
you Garden Primroses, Primulas

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

or Cowslips, Hyacinths, Crocuses and Cinerarias, Crown Imperials, Scented Violets, Lilies of the Valley, Forget-me-nots, Daisies and Periwinkles, Poet's Narcissuses, Pheasant's-Eyes, Bear's-Ears, Alyssums, Saxifrage, Anemones: it is through you that the months that come before the leaf-time—February, March, April—translate into smiles which men can understand the first news and the first mysterious kisses of the sun! You are frail and chilly, and yet as bold-faced as a bright idea. You make young the grass; you are

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

fresh as the water that flows in the azure cups which the dawn distributes over the greedy buds, ephemeral as the dreams of a child, almost wild still and almost spontaneous, yet already marked by the too-precocious brilliancy, the too-flaming nimbus, the too-pensive grace that overwhelm the flowers which yield obedience to man.

### 4

But here, innumerable, disordered, many-coloured, tumultuous, drunk with dawns and noons, come the luminous

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

dances of the daughters of Summer! Little girls with white veils and old maids in violet ribbons, school-girls home for the holidays, first-communi-cants, pale nuns, dishevelled romps, gossips and prudes. Here is the Marigold, who breaks up with her brightness the green of the borders. Here is the Chamomile, like a nose-gay of snow, beside her unwearying brothers, the Garden Chrysanthe-mums, whom we must not confuse with the Japanese Chrysanthemums of Autumn. The Annual Helianthus, or Sunflower, towers like a priest raising





G. S. Egbert

Alfred W. Smith, 1881

“The rough Larkspur, in his peasant's blouse.”

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

the monstrance over the lesser folk in prayer and strives to resemble the orb which he adores. The Poppy exerts himself to fill with light his cup torn by the morning wind. The rough Larkspur, in his peasant's blouse, who thinks himself more beautiful than the sky, looks down upon the Dwarf Convolvuluses, who reproach him spitefully with putting too much blue into the azure of his flowers. The Virginia Stock, arch and demure in her gown of jaconet, like the little servant-maids of Dordrecht or Leyden, seems to wash the borders of the

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

beds with innocence. The Mignonette hides herself in her laboratory and silently distils perfumes that give us a foretaste of the air which we breathe on the threshold of Paradise. The Peonies, who have drunk their imprudent fill of the sun, burst with enthusiasm and bend forward to meet the coming apoplexy. The Scarlet Flax traces a blood-stained furrow that guards the walks; and the Portulaca, or Sun-plant, the wealthy cousin of the Purslane, creeping like a moss, studies to cover with mauve, amber or pink taffeta the soil that has

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

remained bare at the foot of the tall stalks. The chub-faced Dahlia, a little round, a little stupid, carves out of soap, lard or wax his regular pompons, which will be the ornament of a village holiday. The old, paternal Phlox, standing amid the clusters, lavishes the loud laughter of his jolly, easy-going colours. The Mallows, or Lavateras, like demure misses, feel the tenderest blushes of fugitive modesty mount to their corollas at the slightest breath. The Nasturtium paints his water-colours, or screams like a parakeet climbing up the bars

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

of its cage; and the Garden Mallow, *Althæa Rosea*, Hollyhock, Jacob's Rod, riding the high horse of her many names, flaunts her cockades of a flesh silkier than a maiden's breast. The Snapdragon and the almost transparent Balsam are more timorous and awkward and fearfully press their flowers against their stalks.

Next, in the discreet corner of the old families, are crowded the Long-leaved Veronica; the Red Potentilla; the African Marigold; the ancient *Lychnis*, or Bachelor's Button; the Mournful Widow, or Purple Scabious; the

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

Foxglove, or *Digitalis*, who shoots up like a melancholy rocket; the European *Aquilegia*, or Columbine; the *Viscaria*, who, on a long, slim neck, lifts a small ingenuous, quite round face to admire the sky; the lurking Honesty, who secretly manufactures the "Pope's money," those pale, flat crown-pieces with which, no doubt, the elves and fairies by moonlight carry on their trade in spells; lastly, the Pheasant's-Eye, the red Valerian, or Jupiter's-Beard, the Sweet William and the old Carnation, that was cultivated long ago by the Grand Condé in his exile.

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

Beside these, above, all around, on the walls, in the hedges, among the arbours, along the branches, like a people of sportive monkeys and birds, the climbing plants make merry, perform feats of gymnastics, play at swinging, at losing and recovering their balance, at falling, at flying, at looking up at space, at reaching beyond the tree-tops to kiss the sky. Here we have the Spanish Bean and the Sweet Pea, quite proud at being no longer included among the vegetables; the modest *Convolvulus*; the Honeysuckle, whose scent represents

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

the soul of the dew; the Clematis and the Wistaria; while, at the windows, between the white curtains, along the stretched string, the Campanula, surnamed Pyramidalis, works such miracles, throws out sheaves and twists garlands formed of a thousand uniform flowers so prodigiously immaculate and transparent that they who see it for the first time, refusing to believe their eyes, want to touch with their finger the bluey marvel, cool as a fountain, pure as a source, unreal as a dream.

Meanwhile, in a blaze of light, the

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

great white Lily, the old lord of the gardens, the only authentic prince among all the commonalty issuing from the kitchen-garden, the ditches, the copses, the pools and the moors, among the strangers come from none knows where, with his invariable six-petalled chalice of silver, whose nobility dates back to that of the gods themselves: the immemorial Lily raises his ancient sceptre, august, inviolate, which creates around it a zone of chastity, silence and light.

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

### 5

I have seen them, those whom I have named and as many whom I have forgotten, all thus collected in the garden of an old sage, the same that taught me to love the bees. They displayed themselves in beds and clusters, in symmetrical borders, ellipses, oblongs, quincunxes and lozenges, surrounded by box hedges, red bricks, earthenware tiles or brass chains, like precious matters contained in ordered receptacles similar to those which we find in the discoloured engravings that

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

illustrate the works of the old Dutch poet, Jacob Cats, or of good Abbot Sanderus, who, about the middle of the seventeenth century, drew and described in his "Flandria Illustrata" all the country-seats of Flanders and never failed to show his gratitude by topping with a magnificent plume or bush of smoke the chimneys of those great manor-houses where he had received a plentiful hospitality and excellent good cheer. And the flowers were drawn up in rows, some according to their kinds, others according to their shapes and shades, while

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

others, lastly, mingled, according to the ever happy chances of the wind and sun, the most hostile and murderous colours, in order to show that nature acknowledges no dissonance and that all that lives creates its own harmony.

From its twelve rounded windows, with their glittering panes, their muslin curtains, their broad green shutters, the long, painted house, pink and gleaming as a shell, watched them wake at dawn and throw off the brisk diamonds of the dew and close at night under the blue darkness that

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

falls from the stars. One felt that it took an intelligent pleasure in this gentle daily fairy-scene, itself solidly planted between two clear ditches that lost themselves in the distance of the immense pasturage dotted with motionless cows, while, by the roadside, a proud mill, bending forward like a preacher, made familiar signs with its paternal sails to the passers-by from the village.

6

Has this earth of ours a fairer ornament of its hours of leisure than

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

the care of flowers? It was beautiful to see thus collected for the pleasure of the eyes, around the house of my placid friend, the splendid throng that tills the light to win from it marvellous colours, honey and perfumes. He found there translated into visible and positive joys, at the gates of his house, the scattered, fleeting and almost intangible delights of Summer: the voluptuous air, the clement nights, the emotional sunbeams, the glad hours, the confiding dawn, the whispering and mysterious azured space. He enjoyed not only their dazzling presence;

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

he also hoped—probably unwisely, so deep and confused is that mystery—he also hoped, by dint of questioning them, to surprise, with their aid, I know not what secret law or idea of nature, I know not what private thought of the universe, which perhaps betrays itself in those ardent moments in which it strives to please other beings, to beguile other lives and to create beauty. . . .

7

Old-fashioned flowers, I said. I was wrong; for they are not so old.

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

When we study their history and investigate their pedigrees, we learn with surprise that most of them, down to the simplest and commonest, are new beings, freedmen, exiles, upstarts, visitors, foreigners. Any botanical treatise will reveal their origins. The Tulip, for instance (remember La Bruyère's "Solitary," "Oriental," "Agate" and "Cloth of Gold"), came from Constantinople in the sixteenth century. The Buttercup, the Moonwort, or Honesty, the Caltrop, the Balsam, the Fuchsia, the African Marigold, or *Tagetes Erecta*, the Rose

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

Campion, or *Lychnis Coronaria*, the Variegated Aconite, the *Amarantus Caudatus*, or Love-lies-bleeding, the Hollyhock and the *Campanula Pyramidalis* arrived at about the same time from the Indies, Mexico, Persia, Syria and Italy. The Pansy appears in 1613; the Yellow Alyssum in 1710; the Perennial Flax in 1775; the Scarlet Flax in 1819; the Purple Scabious in 1629; the *Saxifraga Sarmentosa* in 1771; the Long-leaved Veronica in 1731. The Perennial Phlox is a little older. The China Pink made her entrance into our gardens about 1713.



G. S. Elgood.

Andre & Sleigh, Ltd.

“The old, paternal Phlox.”



## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

The Garden Pink is of modern date. The Portulaca did not make her appearance till 1828; the Scarlet Sage till 1822. The Ageratum, now so plentiful and so popular, is not two centuries old. The Elichrysum, or Xeranthemum, is even younger. The Zinnia is just a centenarian. The Spanish Bean, a native of South America, and the Sweet Pea, an immigrant from Sicily, number a little over two hundred years. The Chamomile, whom we find in the least-known villages, has been cultivated only since 1699. The

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

charming Blue Lobelia of our borders came to us from the Cape of Good Hope at the time of the French Revolution. The China Aster, or Reine Marguerite, is dated 1731. The Annual or Drummond's Phlox, now so common, was sent over from Texas in 1835. The large-flowered Lavatera, or Tree-Mallow, who looks so confirmed a native, so simple a rustic, has blossomed in our northern gardens only since two centuries and a half; and the Petunia since some twenty lustres. The Mignonette, the Heliotrope—who would believe it?—

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

are not two hundred years old. The Dahlia was born in 1802; and the Gladiolus and Gloxinia are of yesterday.

### 8

What flowers, then, blossomed in the gardens of our fathers? They were very few, no doubt, and very small and very humble, scarce to be distinguished from those of the roads, the fields and the glades. Have you ever observed the poverty and the monotony, most skilfully disguised, of the floral decoration of the finest

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

miniatures in our old manuscripts? Again, the pictures in our museums, down to the end of the Renaissance period, have only five or six types of flowers, incessantly repeated, wherewith to enliven the richest palaces, the most marvellous views of Paradise. Before the sixteenth century, our gardens were almost bare; and, later, Versailles itself, Versailles the splendid, could have shown us only what the poorest village shows to-day. Alone, the Violet, the Garden Daisy, the Lily of the Valley, the Marigold, the Poppy, a few Crocuses,

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

a few Irises, a few Colchicums, the Foxglove, the Valerian, the Larkspur, the Cornflower, the Wild Pink, the Forget-me-not, the Gillyflower, the Mallow, the Rose, still almost a Sweetbriar, and the great silver Lily, the spontaneous ornaments of our woods and of our snow-frightened, wind-frightened fields: these alone smiled upon our forefathers, who, for that matter, were unaware of their poverty. Man had not yet learnt to look around him, to enjoy the life of nature. Then came the Renaissance, the great voyages, the discovery and

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the invasion of the sunlight. All the flowers of the world, the successful efforts, the deep, inmost beauties, the joyful thoughts and wishes of the planet rose up to us, borne on a shaft of light that, in spite of its heavenly wonder, issued from our own earth. Man ventured forth from the cloister, the crypt, the town of brick and stone, the gloomy stronghold in which he had slept. He went down into the garden, which became peopled with bees, purple and perfumes; he opened his eyes, astounded like a child escaping from the dreams

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

of the night ; and the forest, the plain, the sea and the mountains and, lastly, the birds and the flowers, that speak in the name of all a more human language which he already understood, greeted his awakening.

### 9

Nowadays, perhaps, there are no more unknown flowers. We have found all or nearly all the forms which nature lends to the great dream of love, to the yearning for beauty that stirs within her bosom. We live, so to speak, in the midst of her

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

tenderest confidences, of her most touching inventions. We take an un-hoped-for part in the most mysterious festivals of the invisible force that animates us also. Doubtless, in appearance, it is a small thing that a few more flowers should adorn our beds. They only scatter a few impotent smiles along the paths that lead to the grave. It is none the less true that these are new smiles, which were unknown to those who came before us ; and this recently-discovered happiness spreads generously in every direction, even to the doors of the

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most wretched hovels. The good, the simple flowers are as happy and as gorgeous in the poor man's strip of garden as in the broad lawns of the great house; and they surround the cottage with the supreme beauty of the earth: for the earth has till now produced nothing more beautiful than the flowers. They have completed the conquest of the globe. Foreseeing the days when men shall at last have long and equal leisure, already they promise an equality in sane enjoyments. Yes, assuredly it is a small thing; and everything is a

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

small thing, if we look at each of our little victories one by one. It is a small thing, too, in appearance, that we should have a few more thoughts in our heads, a new feeling at our hearts; and yet it is just that which is slowly leading us where we hope to arrive.

After all, we have here a very real fact, namely, that we live in a world in which flowers are more beautiful and more numerous than formerly; and perhaps we have the right to add that the thoughts of men are now more just and greedier of truth. The smallest joy gained and the smallest

## OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

grief conquered should be marked in the Book of Humanity. It behoves us not to lose sight of any of the evidence that we are mastering the nameless powers, that we are beginning to handle some of the laws that govern the created, that we are making our planet our home, that we are adorning our stay and gradually broadening the acreage of happiness and of beautiful life.







W. S. Egbert

Artists & Society, Inc.

Peach-blossom.

## NEWS OF SPRING

### I

I HAVE seen how Spring stores up sunshine, leaves and flowers and makes ready, long beforehand, to invade the North. Here, on the ever-balmy shores of the Mediterranean—that motionless sea which looks as though it were under glass—where, while the months are dark in the rest of Europe, Spring has taken shelter from the wind and the snows in a

## NEWS OF SPRING

palace of peace and light and love, it is interesting to detect its preparations for travelling in the fields of undying green. I can see clearly that it is afraid, that it hesitates once more to face the great frost-traps which February and March lay for it annually beyond the mountains. It waits, it dallies, it tries its strength before resuming the harsh and cruel way which the hypocrite winter seems to yield to it. It stops, sets out again, revisits a thousand times, like a child running round the garden of its holidays, the fragrant valleys, the tender

## NEWS OF SPRING

hills which the frost has never brushed with its wings. It has nothing to do here, nothing to revive, since nothing has perished and nothing suffered, since all the flowers of every season bathe here in the blue air of an eternal summer. But it seeks pretexts, it lingers, it loiters, it goes to and fro like an unoccupied gardener. It pushes aside the branches, fondles with its breath the olive-tree that quivers with a silver smile, polishes the glossy grass, rouses the corollas that were not asleep, recalls the birds that had never fled, encourages the

## NEWS OF SPRING

bees that were workers without ceasing; and then, seeing, like God, that all is well in the spotless Eden, it rests for a moment on the ledge of a terrace which the orange-tree crowns with regular flowers and with fruits of light; and, before leaving, casts a last look over its labour of joy and entrusts it to the sun.

### 2

I have followed it, these past few days, on the banks of the Borigo, from the torrent of Carei to the Val de Gorbio; in those little rustic

## NEWS OF SPRING

towns, Ventimiglia, Tende, Sospello; in those curious villages, perched upon rocks, Sant' Agnese, Castellar, Castillon; in that adorable and already quite Italian country which surrounds Mentone. You go through a few streets quickened with the cosmopolitan and somewhat hateful life of the Riviera; you leave behind you the band-stand, with its everlasting town music, around which gather the consumptive rank and fashion of Mentone; and behold, at two steps from the crowd that dreads it as it would a scourge from Heaven, you find the

## NEWS OF SPRING

admirable silence of the trees, with all the goodly Virgilian realities of sunk roads, clear springs, shady pools that sleep on the mountain-slopes, where they seem to await a goddess's reflection. You climb a path between two stone walls brightened by violets and crowned with the strange brown cowls of the arum arisarum, with its leaves of so deep a green that one might believe them to be created to symbolize the coolness of the well; and the amphitheatre of a valley opens like a moist and splendid flower. Through the blue veil of the giant

## NEWS OF SPRING

olive-trees, that cover the horizon with a transparent curtain of scintillating pearls, gleams the discreet and harmonious brilliancy of all that men imagine in their dreams and paint upon scenes that are thought unreal and unrealizable, when they wish to define the ideal gladness of an immortal hour, of some enchanted island, of a lost paradise or the dwelling of the gods.

### 3

All along the valleys of the coast are hundreds of these amphitheatres

## NEWS OF SPRING

which are as stages whereon, by moonlight or amid the peace of the mornings and afternoons, are acted the dumb fairy-plays of the world's contentment. They are all alike; and yet each of them reveals a different happiness. Each of them, as though they were the faces of a bevy of equally happy and equally beautiful sisters, wears its distinguishing smile. A cluster of cypresses, with its pure outline; a mimosa that resembles a bubbling spring of sulphur; a grove of orange-trees with dark and heavy tops symmetrically charged with golden

## NEWS OF SPRING

fruits that suddenly proclaim the royal  
affluence of the soil that feeds them ;  
a slope covered with lemon-trees,  
where the night seems to have heaped  
up on a mountain-side, to await a  
new twilight, the stars gathered by  
the dawn ; a leafy portico opening  
over the sea like a deep glance that  
suddenly discloses an infinite thought ;  
a brook hidden like a tear of joy ;  
a trellis awaiting the purple of the  
grapes ; a great stone basin drinking  
in the water that trickles from the  
tip of a green reed : all and yet  
none modify the expression of the

## NEWS OF SPRING

restfulness, the tranquillity, the azure  
silence, the blissfulness that is its own  
delight.

### 4

But I am looking for Winter and  
the print of its footsteps. Where is  
it hiding? It should be here; and  
how dares this feast of roses and  
anemones, of soft air and dew, of  
bees and birds display itself with  
such assurance during the most  
pitiless months of Winter's reign?  
And what will Spring do, what  
will Spring say, since all seems

## NEWS OF SPRING

done, since all seems said? Is it superfluous, then, and does nothing await it?

No; search carefully: you shall find amid this life of unwearying youth the work of its hand, the perfume of its breath which is younger than life. Thus, there are foreign trees yonder, taciturn guests, like poor relations in ragged clothes. They come from very far, from the land of fog and frost and wind. They are aliens, sullen and distrustful. They have not yet learned the limpid speech, not adopted the delightful

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customs of the South. They refused to believe in the promises of the sky and suspected the caresses of the sun, which, from early dawn, covers them with a mantle of silkier and warmer rays than that with which July loaded their shoulders in the precarious summers of their native land. It made no difference: at the given hour, when snow was falling a thousand miles away, their trunks shivered and, despite the bold avowal of the grass and a hundred thousand flowers, despite the impertinence of the roses that climb up to

## NEWS OF SPRING

them to bear witness to life, they stripped themselves for their winter sleep. Sombre and grim and bare as the dead, they await the Spring that bursts forth around them; and, by a strange and excessive reaction, they wait for it longer than under the harsh, gloomy sky of Paris, for in Paris, the buds are already beginning to shoot. One recognizes them here and there amid the holiday throng whose motionless dances enchant the hills. They are not many and they conceal themselves: they are gnarled oaks, beeches, planes; and even the

## NEWS OF SPRING

vine, which one would have thought better-mannered, more docile and well-informed, remains incredulous. There they stand, black and gaunt, like sick people on an Easter Sunday in the church-porch made transparent by the splendour of the sun. They have been there for years: some of them, perhaps, for two or three centuries; but they have the terror of Winter in their marrow. They will never lose the habit of death. They have too much experience, they are too old to forget and too old to learn. Their hardened reason refuses to

## NEWS OF SPRING

admit the light when it does not come at the accustomed time. They are rugged old men, too wise to enjoy unforeseen pleasures. They are wrong: wisdom should not forbid any fine indiscretion. Here, around the old, around the grudging ancestors, is a whole world of plants that know nothing of the future, but give themselves to it. They live but for a season; they have no past and no traditions and they know nothing, except that the hour is fair and that they must enjoy it. While their elders, their masters and their gods,

## NEWS OF SPRING

sulk and waste their time, they burst into flower; they love and they beget. They are the humble flowers of dear solitude: the daisy that covers the sward with its frank and methodical neatness; the borage bluer than the bluest sky; the anemone, scarlet or dyed in aniline; the virgin primrose; the arborescent mallow; the wild hyacinth, shaking bells which no one hears; the rosemary that looks like a little country serving-maid; and the potent thyme that thrusts its grey head between the broken stones.

## NEWS OF SPRING

But, above all, this is the incomparable hour, the diaphanous and liquid hour of the wood-violet. Its proverbial humility becomes usurping and almost intolerant. It no longer cowers timidly among the leaves: it hustles the grass, overtowers it, blots it out, forces its colours upon it, fills it with its breath. Its unnumbered smiles cover the terraces of olives and vines, the tracks of the ravines, the bend of the valleys with a net of sweet and innocent gaiety; its perfume, fresh and pure as the souls of the springs that flow under the hills,

## NEWS OF SPRING

makes the air more translucent, the silence more limpid and is, in very deed, as a forgotten legend tells us, the breath of Earth, all bathed in dew, when, a virgin yet, she wakes in the sun and yields herself wholly in the first kiss of early dawn.

### 5

Again, in the little gardens that surround the cottages, the bright little houses with their Italian roofs, the good vegetables, unprejudiced and unpretentious, have known no doubts. While the old peasant, who has come

## NEWS OF SPRING

to resemble the trees he cultivates,  
digs the earth around the olives, the  
spinach assumes a lofty bearing,  
hastens to grow green nor takes the  
least precaution; the garden bean  
opens its eyes of jet in its pale leaves  
and sees the night fall unmoved; the  
giddy peas shoot and lengthen out,  
covered with motionless and tenacious  
butterflies, as though June had en-  
tered the farm-gate; the carrot blushes  
as it faces the light; the ingenuous  
strawberry-plants inhale the flavours  
which noontide lavishes upon them  
as it bends towards earth its sapphire

## NEWS OF SPRING

urns; the lettuce exerts itself to achieve a heart of gold wherein to lock the dews of morning and night.

The fruit-trees alone have long reflected: the example of the vegetables among which they live urged them to join in the general rejoicing, but the rigid attitude of their elders from the North, of the grandparents born in the great dark forests, preached prudence to them. Nevertheless, they awaken: they too can resist no longer and at last make up their minds to join the dance of perfumes and of love. The peach-trees are now no

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more than a rosy miracle, like the softness of a child's skin turned into azure vapour by the breath of dawn. The pear and plum and apple and almond-trees make dazzling efforts in drunken rivalry; and the pale hazel-trees, like Venetian chandeliers, resplendent with a cascade of gems, stand here and there to light the feast.

As for the luxurious flowers that seem to possess no other object than themselves, they have long abandoned the endeavour to fathom the mystery of this boundless summer. They no

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longer score the seasons, no longer count the days; and, knowing not what to do in the glowing disarray of hours that have no shadow, dreading lest they should be deceived and lose a single second that might be fair, they have resolved to bloom without respite from January to December. Nature approves them and, to reward their trust in happiness, their generous beauty and their amorous excesses, grants them a force, a brilliancy and perfumes which she never gives to those which hang back and show a fear of life.

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All this, among other truths, was proclaimed by the little house that I saw to-day on the side of a hill all deluged in roses, carnations, wall-flowers, heliotrope and mignonette, so as to suggest the source, choked and overflowing with flowers, whence Spring was preparing to pour down upon us; while, upon the stone threshold of the closed door, water-melons, lemons, oranges, limes and Turkey figs slumbered peacefully in the steel-blue shade and amid the majestic, deserted, monotonous silence of a perfect day.







G. S. Egbert

ARTHUR & SON, LTD.

Foxglove and Dog-rose.

## FIELD FLOWERS

### I

THEY welcome our steps without the city gates, on a gay and eager carpet of many colours, which they wave madly in the sunlight. It is evident that they were expecting us. When the first bright rays of March appeared, the Snowdrop or Winter-bell, the heroic daughter of the hoar-frost, sounded the reveille. Next sprang from the earth efforts, as yet shapeless,

## FIELD FLOWERS

of a slumbering memory, vague ghosts of flowers, pale flowers that are scarcely flowers at all: the Three-fingered or Rue-leaved Saxifrage; the almost invisible Shepherd's Purse; the Two-leaved Squill; the Hellebore, or Christmas Rose; the Colt's-foot; the gloomy and poisonous Spurge Laurel: all plants of frail and doubtful health, pale-blue, pale-pink, undecided attempts, the first fever of life in which nature expels her ill-humours, anæmic captives set free by Winter, convalescent patients from the underground prisons, timid

## FIELD FLOWERS

and unskilful endeavours of the still buried light.

But soon this light ventures forth into space; the nuptial thoughts of the earth become clearer and purer; the rough attempts disappear; the half-dreams of the night lift like a fog dispelled by the dawn; and the good rustic flowers begin their unseen revels under the blue, all around the cities where man knows them not. No matter, they are there, making honey, while their proud and barren sisters, who alone receive our care, are still trembling in the depths of the

## FIELD FLOWERS

hothouses. They will still be there, in the flooded fields, in the broken paths and adorning the roads with their simplicity, when the first snows shall have covered the country-side. No one sows them and no one gathers them. They survive their glory and man treads them under foot. Formerly, however, and not so long ago, they alone represented Nature's gladness. Formerly, however, a few hundred years ago, before their dazzling and chilly kinswomen had come from the Antilles, from India, from Japan, or before their own daughters, ungrateful

## FIELD FLOWERS

and unrecognizable, had usurped their place, they alone enlivened the stricken gaze, they alone brightened the cottage-porch, the castle-precincts and followed the lovers' footsteps in the woods. But those times are no more; and they are dethroned. They have retained of their past happiness only the names which they received when they were loved.

And these names show all that they were to man: all his gratitude, his studious fondness, all that he owed them, all that they gave him are there contained, like a secular

## FIELD FLOWERS

aroma in hollow pearls. And so they bear names of queens, shepherdesses, virgins, princesses, sylphs and fairies, which flow from the lips like a caress, a lightning-flash, a kiss, a murmur of love. Our language, I think, contains nothing that is better, more daintily, more affectionately-named than these homely flowers. Here the word clothes the idea almost always with care, with light precision, with admirable happiness. It is like an ornate and transparent stuff that moulds the form which it embraces and has the proper shade,

## FIELD FLOWERS

perfume and sound. Call to mind the Daisy, the Violet, the Bluebell, the Poppy, or, rather, Coquelicot: the name is the flower itself. How wonderful, for instance, that sort of cry and crest of light and joy, "Coquelicot!" to designate the scarlet flower which the scientists crush under this barbarous title: "Papaver Rhœas!" See the Primrose, or Primula, the Periwinkle, the Anemone, the Wild Hyacinth, the blue Speedwell, the Bird's-eye, the Forget-me-not, the Wild Bindweed, or Convolvulus, the Iris, the Harebell: their name depicts

## FIELD FLOWERS

them by equivalents and analogies which the greatest poets but rarely light upon. It represents all their ingenuous and visible soul. It hides itself, bends over, rises to the ear even as those who bear it lie concealed, stoop forward, or stand erect in the corn and in the grass.

These are the few names that are known to all of us; we do not know the others, though their music describes with the same gentleness, the same happy genius, flowers which we see by every wayside and upon all the paths. Thus, at this moment, that

## FIELD FLOWERS

is to say at the end of the month in which the ripe corn falls beneath the reaper's sickle, the banks of the roads are a pale violet: it is the sweet and gentle Scabious, who has blossomed at last, discreet, aristocratically poor and modestly beautiful, as her title, that of a mist-veiled precious stone, proclaims. Around her, a treasure lies scattered: it is the Ranunculus, or Buttercup, who has two names, even as he has two lives; for he is at once the innocent virgin that covers the grass with sun-drops and the redoubtable and venomous

## FIELD FLOWERS

wizard that deals out death to heedless animals. Again we have the Yarrow and the Sneezewort, little flowers, once useful, that march along the roads like silent school-girls, clad in a dull uniform; the vulgar and innumerable Bird's Groundsel; her big brother, the Lamb's Lettuce of the fields; then the dangerous Black Nightshade; the Bitter-sweet, who hides herself; the creeping Knot-grass, with the patient leaves: all the families free from show, with the resigned smile, wearing the practical grey livery of Autumn, which already is felt to be at hand.

## FIELD FLOWERS

2

But, among those of March, April, May, June, July, remember the glad and festive names, the springtime syllables, the vocables of azure and dawn, of moonlight and sunshine! Here is the Snowdrop or Winter-bell, who proclaims the thaw; the Stitchwort or Satin-flower, who greets the first-communicants along the hedges, whose leaves are as yet indeterminate and uncertain, like a diaphanous green lye. Here are the sad Columbine and the Field Sage; the Ploughman's

81

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Spikehard, the Sheep's-bit, the Angelica, the Field Fennel; the Wall-flower, dressed like a servant of a village-priest; the Osmond, who is a king fern; the Wood-rush, the Parmelia, the Venus' Looking-glass; the Esula or Wood Spurge, mysterious and full of sombre fire; the Winter Cherry, whose fruit ripens in a red lantern; the Henbane, the Deadly Nightshade, the Foxglove, poisonous queens, veiled Cleopatras of the untilled places and the cool woods. And then, again, the Chamomile, the good capped Sister with

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a thousand smiles, bringing the health-giving brew in an earthenware bowl; the Pimpernel and the Coronilla, the cool Mint and the purple Thyme, the Saintfoin and the Eyebright, the Moon Daisy, the mauve Gentian and the blue Verbena, the lance-shaped Horsetail, the Cinquefoil or Potentilla, the Green-weed or Dyer's Broom. . . . To tell their names is to recite a poem of grace and light. We have reserved for them the most charming, the purest, the clearest sounds and all the musical gladness

## FIELD FLOWERS

of the language. One would think that they were the persons of a play, the dancers and choristers of an immense fairy-scene, more beautiful, more startling and more supernatural than the scenes that unfold themselves on Prospero's Island, at the Court of Theseus or in the Forest of Arden. And the comely actresses of this silent, never-ending comedy—goddesses, angels, she-devils, princesses and witches, virgins and courtezans, queens and shepherd-girls—carry in the folds of their names the magic sheen of innumerable dawns,

## FIELD FLOWERS

of innumerable springtimes contemplated by forgotten men, even as they also carry the memory of thousands of deep or fleeting emotions which were felt before them by generations that have disappeared, leaving no other trace.

### 3

They are interesting and incomprehensible. They are vaguely called the "Weeds." They serve no purpose. Here and there, a few, in very old villages, retain the spell of contested virtues. Here and there, one

## FIELD FLOWERS

of them, right at the bottom of the apothecary's or herbalist's jars, still awaits the coming of the sick man faithful to the infusions of tradition. But sceptic medicine will have none of them. No longer are they gathered according to the olden rites; and the science of "Simples" is dying out in the housewife's memory. A merciless war is waged upon them. The husbandman fears them; the plough pursues them; the gardener hates them and has armed himself against them with clashing weapons: the spade and the rake, the hoe and the

## FIELD FLOWERS

scraper, the weeding-hook, the mattock. Along the highroads, their last refuge, the passer-by crushes them, the waggon bruises them. In spite of all, they are there: permanent, assured, abundant, peaceful; and not one but answers the summons of the sun. They follow the seasons without swerving by an hour. They take no account of man, who exhausts himself in conquering them, and, so soon as he rests, they spring up in his footsteps. They live on, audacious, immortal, untamable. They have

## FIELD FLOWERS

peopled our flower-baskets with extravagant and unnatural daughters; but they, the poor mothers, have remained similar to what they were a hundred thousand years ago. They have not added a fold to their petals, reordered a pistil, altered a shade, invented a perfume. They keep the secret of a stubborn mission. They are the indelible primitives. The soil is theirs since its origin. They represent, in short, an invariable thought, an obstinate desire, an essential smile of the Earth.

That is why it is well to question

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them. They have evidently something to tell us. And, then, let us not forget that they were the first—with the sunrises and the autumns, with the springs and the sunsets, with the song of the birds, with the hair, the glance and the divine movements of woman—to teach our fathers that there are useless and beautiful things upon this globe. . . .







G. S. Elliot

Watts & Stone, Ltd.

Early Chrysanthemums.

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

### I

EVERY year, in November, at the season that follows on the hour of the dead, the crowning and majestic hour of Autumn, reverently I go to visit the chrysanthemums in the places where chance offers them to my sight. For the rest, it matters little where they are shown to me by the good will of travel or of sojourn. They are, indeed, the most universal, the most

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

diverse of flowers ; but their diversity and surprises are, so to speak, concerted, like those of fashion, in arbitrary Edens. At the same moment, even as with silks, laces, jewels and curls, a voice composed of sky and light gives the password in time and space ; and, docile as the most beautiful of women, simultaneously, in every country, in every latitude, the flowers obey the sacred decree.

It is enough, then, to enter at random one of those crystal museums in which their somewhat funereal riches are displayed under the harmonious

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

veil of a November day. We at once grasp the dominant idea, the obtrusive beauty, the conscious effort of the year in this special world, strange and privileged even in the midst of the strange and privileged world of flowers. And we ask ourselves if this new idea is a profound and really necessary idea on the part of the sun, the earth, life, Autumn, or man.

### 2

Yesterday, then, I went to admire the year's gentle and gorgeous floral feast, the last which the snows of December

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and January, like a broad belt of peace, sleep, silence and oblivion, separate from the delicious festivals that commence again with the germination, powerful already, though hardly visible, that seeks the light in February.

They are there, under the immense transparent domes, the noble flowers of the month of fogs; they are there, at the royal meeting-place, all the grave Autumn fairies, whose dances and attitudes seem to have been struck motionless with a magic word. The eye that recognizes

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them and has learned to love them perceives, at the first pleased glance, that they have actively and dutifully continued to evolve towards their uncertain ideal. Go back for a moment to their modest origin: look at the poor buttercup of yore, the humble little wine-coloured or damask rose that still smiles sadly, along the roads full of dead leaves, in the scanty garden-patches of our villages; compare with them these enormous masses and fleeces of snow, these disks and globes of red copper, these spheres of old silver,

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

these trophies of alabaster and amethyst, this delirious prodigy of petals which seems to be trying to exhaust to its last riddle the world of autumnal shapes and shades which the winter entrusts to the bosom of the sleeping woods; let the unwonted and unexpected varieties pass before your eyes; admire and appraise them.

Here, for instance, is the marvelous family of the stars: flat stars, bursting stars, diaphanous stars, solid and fleshy stars, milky ways and constellations of the earth that

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correspond with those of the firmament. Here are the proud plumes that await the diamonds of the dew; here, to put our dreams to shame, the fascinating poem of unreal tresses: mad and miraculous tresses; honeyed moonbeams, golden bushes and flaming whirlpools; curls of fair and smiling maidens, of fleeing nymphs, of passionate bacchantes, of swooning sirens, of cold virgins, of frolicsome children, which angels, mothers, fauns, lovers have caressed with their calm or quivering hands. And then here, pell-mell, are the

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monsters that cannot be classed: hedgehogs, spiders, curly endives, pine-apples, pompons, rosettes, shells, vapours, breaths, stalactites of ice and falling snow, a throbbing hail of sparks, wings, flashes, fluffy, pulpy, fleshy things, wattles, bristles, funeral piles and sky-rockets, bursts of light, a stream of fire and sulphur. . . .

### 3

Now that the shapes have capitulated comes the question of conquering the region of the proscribed

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

colours, of the reserved shades, which Autumn, we can see, denies to the flowers that represent it. Lavishly it bestows on them all the wealth of the twilight and the night, all the riches of the harvest-time: it gives them all the mud-brown work of the rain in the woods, all the silvery fashionings of the mist in the plains, of the frost and snow in the gardens. It permits them, above all, to draw at will upon the inexhaustible treasures of the dead leaves and the expiring forest. It allows them to deck themselves with the

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golden sequins, the bronze medals, the silver buckles, the copper spangles, the elfin plumes, the powdered amber, the burnt topazes, the neglected pearls, the smoked amethysts, the calcined garnets, all the dead but still dazzling jewellery which the north wind heaps up in the hollows of ravines and footpaths; but it insists that they shall remain faithful to their old masters and wear the livery of the drab and weary months that give them birth. It does not permit them to betray those masters and to don the princely, changing

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dresses of Spring and dawn; and, if, sometimes, it suffers a pink, this is only on condition that it be borrowed from the cold lips, the pale brow of the veiled and afflicted virgin praying on a tomb. It forbids most strictly the tints of Summer, of too youthful, ardent and serene a life, of a health too joyous and expansive. In no case will it consent to hilarious vermilions, impetuous scarlets, imperious and dazzling purples. As for the blues, from the azure of the dawn to the indigo of the sea and the deep lakes, from the periwinkle

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

to the borage and the larkspur, they are banished under pain of death.

### 4

Nevertheless, thanks to some inadvertence of nature, the most unusual colour in the world of flowers and the most severely forbidden, the colour which the corolla of the poisonous euphorbia is almost the only one to wear in the city of the umbels, petals and calyces, green, the colour exclusively reserved for the servile and nutrient leaves, has penetrated within the jealously-guarded

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precincts. True, it has slipped in only by favour of a lie, as a traitor, a spy, a livid deserter. It is a forsworn yellow, steeped fearfully in the hesitating azure of a moonbeam. It is still of the night and false, like the opal depths of the sea; it reveals itself only in shifting patches at the tips of the petals; it is elusive and anxious, frail and deceptive, but undeniable. It has made its entrance, it exists, it asserts itself; it will be daily more fixed and more decided; and, through the breach which it has contrived in the citadels

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of light, all the joys and all the splendours of the banished prism will hurl themselves into the virgin domain, there to prepare unaccustomed feasts for our eyes. This is a great tidings and a memorable conquest in the land of flowers.

### 5

We must not think that it is puerile thus to interest one's self in the capricious forms, the unwritten shades of a flower that bears no fruit; nor must we treat those who seek to make it more beautiful or more

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strange as La Bruyère once treated the lover of the tulip or the plum. Do you remember the charming page?

“The lover of flowers has a garden in the suburbs, where he spends all his time from sunrise to sunset. You see him standing there and would think that he had taken root in the midst of his tulips before his ‘Solitaire;’ he opens his eyes wide, rubs his hands, stoops down and looks closer at it; it never before seemed to him so handsome; he is in an ecstasy of joy and leaves it

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

to go to the 'Orient,' then to the 'Widow,' from thence to the 'Cloth of Gold,' on to the 'Agatha,' and at last returns to the 'Solitaire,' where he remains, is tired out, sits down and forgets his dinner; he looks at the tulip and admires its shade, shape, colour, sheen and edges, its beautiful form and calyx; but God and nature are not in his thoughts, for they do not go beyond the bulb of his tulip, which he would not sell for a thousand crowns, though he will give it to you for nothing when tulips are no longer in fashion

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and carnations are all the rage. This rational being, who has a soul and professes some religion, comes home tired and half starved, but very pleased with his day's work: he has seen some tulips.

“Talk to another of the healthy look of the crops, of a plentiful harvest, of a good vintage, and you will find that he cares only for fruit and understands not a single word that you say; then turn to figs and melons; tell him that this year the pear-trees are so heavily laden with fruit that the branches almost break,

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that there is abundance of peaches, and you address him in a language which he completely ignores; and he will not answer you, for his sole hobby is plum-trees. Do not even speak to him of your plum-trees, for he is fond of only a certain kind and laughs and sneers at the mention of any others; he takes you to his tree and cautiously gathers this exquisite plum, divides it, gives you one half, keeps the other himself and exclaims, 'How delicious! Do you like it? Is it not heavenly? You cannot find its equal anywhere;'

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and then his nostrils dilate, and he can hardly contain his joy and pride under an appearance of modesty. What a wonderful person, never enough praised and admired, whose name will be handed down to future ages! Let me look at his mien and shape, while he is still in the land of the living, that I may study the features and the countenance of a man who, alone among mortals, is the happy possessor of such a plum."

Well, La Bruyère is wrong. We readily forgive him his mistake, for

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the sake of the pleasant window which he, alone among the authors of his time, opens upon the unexpected gardens of the seventeenth century. The fact none the less remains that it is to his somewhat bigoted florist, to his somewhat frenzied horticulturist that we owe our exquisite flower-beds, our more varied, more abundant, more luscious vegetables, our ever more delicious fruits. Contemplate, for instance, around the chrysanthemums, the marvels that ripen nowadays in the meanest gardens, among the

## CHRYSANTHEMUMS

long branches wisely subdued by the patient and generous espaliers. Less than a century ago, they were unknown; and we owe them to the trifling and innumerable exertions of a legion of small seekers, all more or less narrow, all more or less ridiculous.

It is thus that man acquires nearly all his riches. There is nothing that is puerile in nature; and he who becomes impassioned of a flower, a blade of grass, a butterfly's wing, a nest, a shell, wraps his passion around a small thing that always contains a great truth. To

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succeed in modifying the appearance of a flower is an insignificant act in itself, if you will; but reflect upon it for however short a while and it becomes gigantic. In thus succeeding, do we not violate, or deviate, profound, perhaps essential and, in any case, time-honoured laws? Do we not exceed too easily accepted limits? Do we not directly intrude our ephemeral will on that of the eternal forces? Do we not give the idea of a singular power, a power almost supernatural, since it inverts a natural

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order of things? And, although it is prudent to guard against over-ambitious dreams, does not this allow us to hope that we may perhaps learn to elude or to transgress other laws no less time-honoured, nearer to ourselves and important in a very different manner? For, in short, all things touch, all things go hand to hand; all things obey identical exigencies, the same invisible principles; all things share in the same spirit, in the same substance in the terrifying and wonderful problem; and the most modest victory gained

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in the matter of a flower may one day disclose to us an infinity of the untold. . . .

### 6

Because of these things I love the chrysanthemum; because of these things I follow its evolution with a brother's interest. It is, among familiar plants, the most submissive, the most docile, the most tractable and the most attentive plant of all that we meet on life's long way. It bears flowers impregnated through and through with the thought and will

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of man: flowers already human, so to speak. And, if the vegetable world is some day to reveal to us one of the words that we are awaiting, perhaps it will be through this flower of the tombs that we shall learn the first secret of existence, even as, in another kingdom, it is probably through the dog, the almost thinking guardian of our homes, that we shall discover the mystery of animal life. . . .



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