



LESSONS FROM NATURE.

BY LITA H. BARNEY.

How gently and softly the pattering rain
Is coming adown to the earth;
So softly and gently, the clear window-pane
It has gambolled all o'er with its transparent grain,
No token yet gives of its mirth.

The week that hath passed brought its sunny days
And heavens unclouded and fair—
The blue-bird hath bathed in the orient rays,
And the robin burst forth in his sweetest of lays,
And nothing but pleasure was there.

Man lifted his eyes to the King of all Kings,
And loving his brother, man,
Saw a path that was brighter than all earthly things,
That reached far above the arch-angel that sings,
And longed that Elysian to scan.

Now softly and gently the warm spring-time rain,
Descending so kindly in love,
Has melted us down to the earth life again,
And learned us to labor in order, to gain
The coveted pleasures above.

The shower hath its mission, as well as the sun,
And sadness its lessons, as joy;
The rain finds its way where bright Sol may not come,
And tells old King Frost that his work is nigh done,
And sorrows, deep probers employ.

Each, each have their volumes of wisdom, if we
Will open our hearts to receive,
The rain, and the sun, and the bird on each tree,
The moonlight and starlight their lessons to me
In a beautiful wreath they shall weave.

I know that existence, through all of life's hours,
At best is but sunshine and shade;
Let me treasure the sorrows as well as the flowers,
And then I shall rightly develop the powers
That my Heavenly Father has made.

Beauteous Arrangement of Colors.

The *Scientific American*, from the columns of which we glean many excellent, practical and truthful articles, gives its readers the following directions for the most systematic and scientific arrangement of colors, which is a subject but little understood, yet of no little importance to florists and all whose taste leads them to cultivate and decorate their homes with the lovely and ever varying profusion of flowers, with their modest or their gorgeous qualities, which nature imparts to cheer the young and the old, the grave and the gay:

Now, in the pleasant Spring time, when nature awakes from her winter's repose, and puts on her floral robes, the denizens of our cities and villages seek to enjoy the beauties of rural life in the arrangement of their gardens and the cultivation of flowers. This is a delightful and elevating recreation, for their is implanted in our constitution the same capacity for deriving pleasure from viewing colors by the sense of sight as from drinking in the strains of music—they impart most pleasure when arranged most harmoniously with regard to their several hues. This harmony is governed by laws with which too many are unacquainted; a few words, therefore, on this topic will not be inapplicable at present.

That which we call *color*, in flowers, is simply their powers of reflecting and transmitting the rays of light which fall upon them. There are three primary colors in nature—red, blue and yellow; and these must always be associated together to produce harmony. On this subject Chevreul, the distinguished French chemist says: "The principal rule to be observed in the arrangement of flowers is to place those which are blue next to those of orange; the violet next the yellow, while red and pink are never seen to greater advantage than when surrounded by verdure, or by white flowers. The latter may also be advantageously dispersed among groups of blue and orange; also of violet and yellow flowers." These associations of color stated by the French author promote harmony and do not offend the taste by the mingling of discordant hues. This is a study which affords wide scope for observation. "Complementary" colors always harmonize; and colors are said to be complementary, when they form a white beam in combination. Thus red and green are complementary, because the latter is composed of blue and yellow, which, with the red, embrace all the primary colors in a ray of light. Crimson and orange are also complementary; and so with other combinations. Green foliage and flowers are complimentary, and nature has provided these hues with no miserly hand. Roses and geraniums, with their green leaves are great favorites, and even in mid-winter ripe red berries are frequently seen peeping out from among evergreen boughs, in order to replace with their modest beauty, the sleeping roses of departed summer. Some persons may suppose, from what has been stated, that the green leaves of flowers may sometimes destroy the proper effect arising from the contrast of color; but Chevreul asserts that green leaves are a proper ground for all flowers, and never produce discord in the vision.

This subject has lately engaged the attention of some great minds. Sir Gardner Wilkinson, in his recent work "On Color and the Necessity for a General Diffusion of Taste among all Classes," devotes a large space to the arrangement of flowers in gardens, as it regards their color and forms. The principal colors which he recommends are blue, red, pink, purple, lilac, yellow, orange, white and scarlet; and he gives a table covering nine pages, containing the names of many plants with their different colors and periods of blooming. When arranged in beds, he recommends that each plot should have flowers of the same size, and that they should all bloom at the same period. In this view he is correct; yet this is a feature in gardening which is continually overlooked. Large and tall, small and short flowers are frequently planted helter-skelter, in beds apparently upon the principle that profusion is the very essence of beauty. In contracted spaces the flowers selected should be small, while in larger gardens they may be more stately. The reason of this is obvious. A few large flowers, by occupying a large space, must convey an impression of dwarfishness to a small garden, but it is far otherwise when modest little flowers are chosen for their blushing beauty as suitable to such a situation.

The beautiful in nature is a gift which may be and should be enjoyed by the humblest as well as the highest. The mechanic's cottage with its little flower-garden may be enriched with all the harmonies of color, and the latter may exhibit in tasteful miniature the best arranged gardens of the wealthy. It affords us pleasure to state that most of our gardeners and many of our ladies and mechanics are well acquainted with the cultivation of flowers, and they exhibit great taste in their arrangement, but very few of them have studied the law of simultaneous contrast of color, and hence they frequently place together flowers of colors that produce discord; whereas, by a just arrangement in the same beds, they would produce a more pleasing effect. In regard to the effects of color, we conclude by quoting the following eloquent passage written by Sir David Brewster:

"He who exhibited such matchless skill in the organization of material bodies, and such exquisite taste in their formation, has super-added that ethereal beauty which enhances their permanent qualities, and presents them to us in the ever-varying character of the spectrum. Without this the foliage of vegetable life might have filled the eye and fostered the fruit which it veils, but the youthful green of its Spring would have been blended with the dying yellow of its autumn. If the objects of the material world had been illuminated with white light, all the particles of which possess the same degree of refrangibility, and were equally acted upon by the bodies on which they fall, all nature would shine with a leaden hue, and all the combinations of external objects, all the features of the human countenance would have exhibited no other variety than that which they possess in a pencil sketch or a China ink drawing. The rainbow itself would have dwindled into a narrow arch of white light, the stars would have shone through a grey sky, and the mantle of a wintry twilight would have replaced the golden vesture of the rising and setting sun."

It may be thought that we are too sanguine on the subject of flowers; but we think not.

The above article, we predict, will not be attentively read by any reflective person without profit. The subject of colors, as seen in the vast range of Nature's productions, is here treated in a manner at once entertaining and scientific.

While we have no disposition to enter upon the uninviting task of creating a taste for the beautiful in nature, where no such taste intrinsically exists, we earnestly desire to improve, cultivate and refine that taste wheresoever abides the involuntary admiration of Nature's loveliness.

The far-famed prairies of the West are unrivalled for the variety, gorgeousness and luxuriance of their native flowers; and even here, among the Wahsatch ranges, may be found as choice native flowers, probably, as can be found in any other region of the globe. During an occasional visit to the canyons and mountain benches we have seldom failed to find flowers possessing all the qualities most desirable to those who delight in them—the exuberant growth, showy colors, and the grateful fragrance—requiring only the skillful hand of the florist or amateur to transplant or appropriate them to our gardens, where, with suitable culture and attention, most, if not all of those wild mountain flowers would doubtless become very much improved and be found as valuable at least as those imported from the East, West, or elsewhere.

With our limited knowledge of the extensive collections of valuable flowers to be found in the mountains around us, we are surprised that, ere this, more has not been done by way of introducing them to the garden, lawn and borders of walks, to gladden the eye and diffuse their sweet perfume around our dwellings.

Most of our native flowers are perennials and are therefore the more valuable and worthy of being cultivated. These, with the

choice exotic annuals already introduced and the seeds of other varieties which may in future be brought here, when arranged in conformity to the "law of simultaneous contrast of color" and succession of bloom, will afford us, in their rich display of colors and their fragrant perfume, a treat amply repaying all the labor that may be bestowed upon them.

Relative to the best modes of culture, time of transplanting, and how to procure seeds of these native flowers and other useful plants, when we have obtained some further knowledge on those subjects, either by actual experiment or from the observation of others, we shall take great pleasure in presenting the facts for the consideration and information of our readers.

CULTURE OF MELONS AND VINES.

The following, from a correspondent of the *Country Gentleman*, tho' mislaid so that we could not print it before, will yet be found seasonable; for, as we have learned, most of the early planted seed has failed:

To a person that has just built himself a new home, and is planting its surroundings of fruits, vines and trees, as doubtless some of the readers of this journal are now, or will soon be, doing, it is very desirable to have something that will produce fruit for him to enjoy while his trees and vines are growing and getting to the size and period of bearing fruit. To all such, especially the small fruits, strawberries and others, and the melon in all its varieties, offer especial attractions. They reward us for our care and attention very soon. We plant them to-day, and a few weeks or months hence can gather their ripened fruit.

It is my purpose to write a few words about the melon, which are the result of some years of observation in their culture, and give whatever hints I may be able to, to assist others who, like me, delight to grow them. That enthusiasm that is filling our gardens with grapes like the Delaware, and other choice fruits of equal merit, might some of it be expended with profit upon the melon, to give us new varieties, ripening earlier, of finer quality, or bringing present good varieties but little known to public notice.

The melon has been highly esteemed from the remotest antiquity, and is scarcely, if at all, inferior to most other fruits. Its history can be traced to a period far back in the past ages. The Watermelon, which is believed to be the melon of the Jews, mentioned in various places in the Bible, is believed to have originated in Southern India or Egypt, where it has been cultivated from time immemorial. The Muskmelon is supposed to have been a native of Asia. It is said by travelers that the melons produced here are superior to those usually seen in the West Indies or South America. This is obviously to be ascribed to superior culture, as the climate must be more congenial to them in those regions than here. This compliment to our skill should incite us to still better culture, to obtain still better fruit. Where Indian corn will ripen the melon can be grown with success. Like that great staple of our country, it requires considerable heat, and like that it also has varieties suited to different degrees of latitude. As a general rule all the largest varieties require the longest seasons.

The soil most congenial to them is a sandy one, and those sections most famous for their growth, are usually found to possess a sandy loam. Sand will be found almost indispensable to the growth of the Watermelon. Its roots run far in search of food, and may often be traced beyond the length of its vines. In a hard soil they cannot push through with the freedom necessary from their quick growth—do not grow with their natural luxuriance; and the fruit, if there is any, is inferior; but this demand can be easily supplied by adding sand; a bushel or two to each hill, well worked in, is nearly as good as if nature put it there. The soil should be deeply worked and highly manured with rotted manure or compost for them; for, like all other vines, they are rank feeders. The Watermelon is in all senses of the word a *Water*-melon. Its long and ample roots seek in all directions beneath the surface for moisture, while its foliage, with its thousands of mouths, drink in from the dews and other sources above; for this reason alone a deeply prepared soil is necessary.

In places as far north as central and northern New York it is advisable to use artificial heat in growing the melon, for though we may grow them ordinarily without, we gain so much by a few weeks start in the spring as to amply repay us for the trouble. This is a very simple and inexpensive thing to do. There are several methods for starting the seed by heat. One is to plant on pieces of inverted turf in a hot bed or in small earthen pots; another is to make a miniature hot bed where the hill is destined to remain, using a sash with a few lights of glass, or instead, one covered with muslin rendered semi-transparent, as Mr. Goodrich detailed in a number of this journal a year or two since. These are all very good methods; but there is one I have practiced with uniform success, which I prefer. It is this: I procure oyster-kegs—saw them in two, and plant in each half after draining them. These boxes I place in a hot bed about the 15th April, where they remain until the season is sufficiently advanced to allow them to be transplanted with safety,

when I cut the hoops of each and bury the ball of earth and roots left, after taking the staves apart carefully, in a hill previously prepared for the purpose. This checks their growth but little, if they have been previously hardened off. The trouble is but little. An ordinary hot bed will hold many of them, and they are conveniently and easily handled. It is well to place a small frame around each hill—15 to 18 inches square—which, if covered by glass or muslin, is the ne plus ultra of perfection. By this method we also head off the irrepressible 'bug.' It is not necessary to be to this trouble, though slight, but we gain so much upon the season, securing fruit when it is most enjoyable, that the trouble is amply paid for.

Three plants to each hill I think sufficient, and for the Watermelon, nine feet apart should be the distance. Muskmelons can be planted closer. In a patch containing several rows, the hills for the second row should fall opposite the spaces in the first, and thus throughout the whole; this distributes them more uniformly, and brings more hills upon the ground. It is often the case in clean cultivation that our vines are much blown about and twisted by the winds, as there is nothing for their tendrils to cling to. This can be obviated by laying down brush here and there for them to twine about.

A frequent cause of failure in growing all vines—one which often blasts all our hopes of an abundant yield of fruit, is drouth. If their season for setting fruit occurs during a severe drouth, their blossoms wither, and the embryo fruit drops to the ground. This was very apparent to me the past season, when I saw thousands of instances, in the Watermelon, Muskmelon, Squash, Japan melon, and also Pumpkins in the field. If our vines are many we cannot remedy the evil, as the remedy would involve too much labor; but if few, we can do much to help counteract it. A sprinkling of plaster, and abundant watering daily at evening, will help us. It is moisture in the atmosphere that is needed. This will be apparent to a careful observer. He will observe that during such a period, if a shower occurs, though it may not penetrate the ground two inches, many of the blossoms then opening will set for fruit. After the fruit has formed and acquired a little size, the vines should be pinched off at their tips; their tendency is then to throw out new shoots at the first joint below; these new shoots should also be clipped off as fast as they grow, as this retards the sap for the benefit of the fruit. This course should be persevered in, and it is easily and quickly done with a hoe.

There are many varieties of melons that are excellent, but it is difficult to tell which variety is adapted to a particular locality. Many of those that are very fine at the South require too long a season and too much heat to mature here. We have sorts that are well known, and have been grown with us for generations back, yet there are finer sorts that many have never heard of. These finer sorts, and their peculiar points of excellence, are what we wish to know about. I refer more particularly to the Watermelon. A Watermelon, to be good, should first of all be capable of fully maturing and ripening where it is planted; its rind should be thin, about half an inch in thickness, and its flesh should be solid to the core, tender, sweet, melting and juicy; its flesh, whether red or of a rose color, should be clear, not dull, free from stringiness, and free from that rank taste which is not uncommon to those sold in our markets.

There is as much difference in the flavor of melons as there is in grapes or pears. How is it with many of the melons we find sold in cities? Some of them possess rinds fully an inch thick; rap them and they would sound like a pumpkin; open them, and we do not find the melting, solid fleshed melon we like, but the center is hollow, the flesh foxy. It is ignorance of there being better varieties, that is the reason for these being cultivated, and carelessness in the cultivation of poor ones. It is well known that all vines are liable to hybridize, if planted near members of their own families; for this reason, muskmelons, squashes, pumpkins, vegetable eggs, Jonah's gourds, etc., should be kept far separate. Watermelons, citrons, and Japan melons, also freely hybridize, and must be planted further than a few rods apart to secure pure seed. All separate varieties of each must be kept at a distance from each other, if we desire to keep them distinct. It is ignorance and carelessness of this law of nature that causes the deterioration of our vines. It is not my purpose to give a list of those sorts I have found good, or are my present favorites. I would refer all those that desire a list of good varieties to Downing's Fruits and Fruit Trees of America. I have grown some of the sorts he mentions, and found them excellent varieties, but many of them are new, and are not to be found at any seed store that I am aware of.

In the foregoing I have referred more particularly to the Watermelon, but the cultivation of both Watermelons and Muskmelons is so similar that that which is good for one will answer for both; the latter, however, is not so partial to a sandy soil, and will grow with more freedom upon one that is not, than the former. There are many varieties of both kinds of melons that will keep a long time. Downing tells of some that are called winter melons, which are grown in the South of Europe, and will keep until winter. I have never seen them, however, but have grown and kept Watermelons until January, when they were in a good state of preservation.

Wherever the soil is loamy and rich, watermelon and other vine seeds, if soaked previous to planting and during the season hoed, weed-