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THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF  
WILD FLOWERS

AND THE STORY OF THEIR NAMES

by GARETH H. BROWNING

ILLUSTRATED BY M. C. POLLARD

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*SECOND SERIES.*





W.F. 2—FRONT.

The Daffodil.

PAGE 35

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M. C. POLLARD

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# THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF WILD - FLOWERS AND THE STORY OF THEIR NAMES

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## THE WONDERFUL STORY OF WILD FLOWERS

### CHAPTER I.

I HAVE sometimes thought, and mostly when I have been lying in the warm odorous grass of a field just at the edge of a beech-wood I know, and the afternoon sun has become over-poweringly hot and the warm air heady with the scent of flowers and murmurous with the drowsy droning of bumble-bees—I have thought then: If only the wild-flowers could be changed, just for one single day, into the people who have come to them for help, or had strange dealings with them!

What a fascinating spectacle we should see. Lovely maidens who walked the earth until they were changed, through love or jealousy, into flowers as lovely as themselves. Hideous witches and grey-bearded sooth-sayers and magicians who came to pluck the wild herbs and dig their roots to make into potions and charms for good

or evil purposes. Simple country people and earnest students who eagerly sought in the plants the secret medicines for all their ills. And (I always want to add) the fairies and elves, the pixies and other little imps who loved to shelter in the flowers, or use them in their house-work, or play tricks with them on clumsy human beings. And priests, and great generals, and sailors, and lovers despairing of their sweethearts' affections, and heathen gods and goddesses, and . . . but I never got any further than this in my day-dreamings, for, what with the heat of the sun and the dull droning of the bees, I always fell asleep sooner or later.

Still, if my day-dream cannot be made real, I can at least tell you something about those attractive figures that would throng about us if it *could*. It is astonishing what a lot of stories and quaint old practices have grown up about the simple blooms that lift their sweet faces so happily to the sunshine. At first we love the flowers because of their beauty; but when we discover that almost every plant has some romantic association with people and times that we can never see, we grow to love them all the more because of this added attraction.

In the Introduction to the first<sup>1</sup> book that I wrote for you about wild-flowers, I related the history of their names, and this involved a good deal of the general history of the flowers

<sup>1</sup>*Children's Book of Wild Flowers*, 10/6 net. (Chambers.)

themselves. This time, before dealing with a fresh selection of plants one by one, I think perhaps you would like to hear something further about the more picturesque side of plant-lore. This will necessarily bring some garden flowers into our talk, besides the wild ones which form the real subject of this book. I shall tell you of incidents that will astonish you, for some of them are almost unbelievable. I shall take you on a long journey right across the continent of Europe and back again. And I shall fit you with a magic cap that will enable you to mix with the people who lived hundreds and hundreds of years before you were born.



## CHAPTER II.

WITH the magic cap on our heads we stand in England as it was two thousand years ago, and, instead of the smiling fields of corn and vegetables and the teeming towns and cities of the present day, what do we see? We see a land only sparsely cultivated, with vast, unexplored forests where wild beasts lurk, and tiny hamlets composed of little huts made of mud and thatch and stone. The land is inhabited by tribes in varying degrees of civilisation. Some of the people are more like those we know to-day. They grow corn for bread and keep sheep and cattle for food and milk, and they wear clothes made of cloth or linen. But many of them are more like savages, clad in skins and living on the fish they spear in the rivers and the animals they hunt in the forests.

These people are very quarrelsome, and the different tribes are constantly at war with one another. They fight with knives and swords, and they ride in swift chariots whose wheels are set with sharp scythes to mow their enemies down.

These tribes are the Ancient Britons whom we read about in our history books. Now let us see what our wild-flowers have to tell us

about them. The first thing they disclose is that the more savage tribes made a blue dye from a plant called Woad—a dye that is still in use to-day. The women stained themselves with the juice because they thought it added to their beauty, and the men tattooed themselves with it in times of war and on other special occasions.

The next piece of information which the flowers give us concerns the religion of the tribes. The Ancient Britons worshipped a number of heathen gods, and they believed in the existence of giants, dragons, witches, and demons of the air. Their chief priests were called Druids, and they were also prophets, sorcerers, and medicine men. They professed to be able to foretell the future, to work magic, and to know all the secrets of the art of healing by means of medicines extracted from plants. They held solemn religious ceremonies in deep and gloomy groves of Oak trees, and also in vast circular enclosures made of enormous slabs of stone. One of the largest of these enclosures is Stonehenge. I expect you have heard of this, and some of you will have seen its remains, for they are still in existence.

Amongst the plants which the Druids used were two of special sanctity and power—the Mistletoe and (probably) the Vervain. The Mistletoe was called by them All-heal, because they believed it had the magical power of curing

all ills. They gathered it with the greatest solemnity and awe. When they found it growing on an Oak-tree they prepared to make a sacrifice to their gods. The chief Druid, who was a very important person, clad in a white robe, climbed the tree (I suppose in as dignified a manner as you *can* adopt when you climb a tree) and cut the plant with a golden sickle. It dropped into a white cloth held by the other Druids standing below, and then the priests sacrificed two milk-white bullocks and offered up prayers to their gods. After that the Mistletoe was supposed to be ready for use as a sacred medicine specially sent to them from heaven. All this happened two thousand years ago, and yet, if we recall one of the practices which we observe at Christmas time, we shall realise that the Mistletoe is still associated with something of a ceremonial character.

The Vervain was treated with the same reverence. The Druids assembled at night and performed various mystic ceremonies. Then they poured honey into the ground and dug up the plant with the left hand, after which they waved it solemnly in the air. When all these rites were duly finished the plant was considered to be a cure for fevers and snake-bites.

Other plants were used by the Druids, both in their religious services and in healing the sick, but we do not know much about them, because, when the great Roman Empire conquered our

land, its rulers did their utmost to stamp out the Druids.

For nearly four hundred years the Romans were masters of Britain, and during that time they taught the natives their own superior knowledge of plants and led them to adopt many of their names. Here again we know very little of what happened, because, after the Romans left, England was invaded by hordes of savage Anglo-Saxon warriors, who destroyed most of the Roman civilisation and put large numbers of the Britons to death.

### CHAPTER III.

THE Romans were very learned on the subject of plants, but unhappily, as I said in the last chapter, the knowledge which they gave to the ancient Britons was largely destroyed by the Anglo-Saxons. None the less the time was to come when the Roman learning should once more spread over our land; and I think it will be nice presently to take a journey to the south of Europe and discover something of the Roman practices affecting flowers.

The Romans, however, had themselves acquired a great deal of their learning from another country in the south of Europe. That country was Greece, and as our magic cap enables us to travel wherever we like, perhaps we had better go straight on to Greece, and then visit Italy, in which of course Rome is situated, on the return journey.

The Greeks knew more about plants than any other nation, and, as their climate was warm and genial, the wild-flowers grew in their land in the greatest abundance. The Greeks sought out the flowers in the mountains and rich valleys, and they also studied them in special herb-gardens. Like other nations they used plants very largely for medicines. In fact that





The Broad-Leaved Garlic.



was the chief object of studying them in those days. They also employed them as vegetables to eat, and they made lavish floral displays on every occasion of festivity. But, although they were an exceedingly wise and clever people, they had come to adopt many absurd notions about the marvellous powers of plants.

I must tell you that the Greeks, like the Britons, were pagans, although the gods they worshipped were quite different from those of the Druids. One of their gods was supposed to be supreme in all matters relating to medicine. When he lived on the earth he was said to have had the power of raising the dead by means of a herb brought to him by a serpent. His descendants formed a separate caste of priests, who worshipped in his temples and ministered to the sick, partly, I expect, with plants and partly with other remedies. The Greeks believed that some of their wild-flowers had once been lovely maidens who had been changed into plants through the love or jealousy of the gods. You will read about one of them in the chapter on the Hairy Mint.

There was a certain group of people in Greece called root-gatherers, and it was their business to go out into the fields and gather plants for sale as medicines. Some of these people were ridiculously superstitious, and all sorts of absurd tales were told about the ceremonies which they practised. If they picked the hips of the

wild Rose they faced in the direction of the wind, or their eyesight would suffer. Certain roots were gathered only at night, others only by day, the Honeysuckle, in particular, before the sun shone on it. If they dug up the Peony in daylight and happened to be seen by a wood-pecker, they might lose their sight altogether. In the case of a certain kind of Iris they put cakes of meal into the hole made by digging the herb, this being intended as a kind of payment for it. They cut the plant with a two-edged sword, first making a circle round it three times. When they dug the Black Hellebore they drew a circle round it and, facing towards the east, recited certain prayers. At the same time they kept a sharp look-out for an eagle, because, if one happened to come near, they might die within a year!

Other superstitions of the Greeks were that witches and sorcerers existed who possessed uncanny powers of looking into the future, speaking with the ghosts of the dead, and destroying people's health and good fortune by merely looking at them. This latter power was called the Evil Eye, and those who feared it sometimes sought protection by wearing what are called amulets. An amulet consisted of some supposedly protective object, such as the image of a god, or part of a particular plant, e.g. the Vervain, tied on a thread and hung around the neck. The sorcerers also claimed the power of

making people fall in love, and young men and maidens went to them secretly for powders and potions, compounded from different herbs, to win the hearts of those whom they wished to become their sweethearts.

I think I have dwelt long enough upon these fancies, and although we cannot help considering the Greeks extremely foolish and ignorant for believing in such nonsense, we must remember that, in spite of errors of this kind, they really did possess an intelligent knowledge of plants.

A happier use of flowers, particularly of Roses, Violets, Lilies, and Hyacinths, is found in the coronets and garlands which figured in all public and private ceremonies. When any religious service was held the priests and the worshippers wore chaplets of flowers, and the temples and the very beasts of sacrifice were adorned with garlands. At the public games the victorious athletes received as their sole reward crowns of wild Olives, Laurel, Parsley, or Pine leaves. At banquets all the guests wore floral crowns, the Rose being the favourite flower used for the purpose. At weddings, not only the bride, but the bridegroom and the guests were similarly crowned. When a baby came into the world its parents hung a chaplet at the door of their house—of Olive leaves for a little boy, of wool for a girl; and the child who passed through the illnesses that often prove fatal during the



first three years of its life was crowned with flowers as a thank-offering by its grateful parents.

The Greeks were great sailors, as indeed they needed to be, for their country possessed a long coast-line, cut up into numerous gulfs and other inlets, and many of the people lived on tiny islands scattered about the Mediterranean Sea. Before they put to sea they would sometimes hang coronets of flowers on the stems of the ships. These were meant as an offering to their gods, and it was hoped that they would ensure a safe and prosperous voyage.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE mighty Roman Empire became the conquerors of Greece, and our next journey is to the great city of Rome. The Romans, like the Greeks, were pagans. They were not as clever as their vanquished foemen, but they had the good sense to adopt their learning, and this they increased through studies of their own. At the same time they accepted the superstitious beliefs which we have just read about, and added some more from their own imaginations.

They believed, or some of them did, that certain plants gave one the power of drying up rivers and of opening locked doors; and also that their soldiers had only to throw a particular herb into the ranks of their enemies to make them take to panic-stricken flight.

One of the questions which greatly interested the Romans was the compounding of a medicine that would serve as a universal cure for the bites of every kind of serpent and every description of poison. You see they lived in an age and clime when everyone was afraid of being bitten by venomous reptiles, and the great public characters, such as the emperor, his famous generals and civil officers, stood in especial dread

of being poisoned by their envious rivals. One of the many so-called cures was made up of Thyme, Dill, Fennel, Parsley, and other herbs; but some of them contained minerals and parts of animals, especially the flesh of vipers, all mixed up together in a most disgusting manner. These mixtures came to be called *Theriaca*, which comes from Greek words meaning antidotes against wild beasts or poisonous reptiles.

The most famous mixture was said to have been compounded by an eastern king named Mithridates. This king was constantly experimenting with different poisons and cures. He even went so far as to take a certain quantity of various poisons every day, in the belief that it would so accustom his body to them that, if at any time an enemy did secretly administer poison to him, he would be able to resist its effects.

The story is told that, when he was defeated in battle, he tried to poison himself to avoid falling into the hands of his victorious enemy; but he had fortified his system so well that the draught had no effect, and he killed himself with his sword. King Mithridates was said to have written out the recipe for the cure which he had discovered, and after his defeat his conqueror searched his palace for it. A tale is told that the only 'recipe' discovered there, or rather the ingredients of it, consisted of two dried figs, two nuts, and twenty leaves of Rue powdered and mixed with salt-which, of course, was

rather disappointing. Whether or not this tale is true I cannot say, but a mixture was subsequently published under the king's name, comprising a great many ingredients, some of which were taken from herbs. The pursuit of this universal remedy was followed eagerly right up to comparatively modern times, and in the course of it the name *Theriaca* became changed into Treacle. But the ointments, or whatever form the mixtures took, would have been far less pleasant to taste than the syrup which you and I know by that name.

The Romans worshipped a special goddess who, they believed, presided over flowers. They called her Flora, and our word 'flower' is connected with that name. Every year, at the end of April, they held a great festival of flowers in her honour, when everyone danced and sang and feasted, and all the buildings and all the merry-makers were lavishly decorated with choice blooms.

In Rome there was an even greater use of garlands and crowns and chaplets than with the Greeks. The chaplets which conferred the greatest honour were of the simplest kind. The most coveted of all was made merely of grass and wild-flowers, and it was conferred on a general who had saved his army from destruction or shameful surrender during a siege. Next in honour stood the garlands of Oak leaves, which were presented to soldiers who

bravely rescued a citizen from the hands of the enemy; and other rewards of the same character were reserved for valiant sailors and others who had distinguished themselves in the cause of their country.

At public and private banquets the guests were crowned with flowers, as they were in Greece, and this reminds me of a story about a poisoned coronet and the beautiful Queen of Egypt called Cleopatra. One night the queen gave a gorgeous banquet in honour of the mighty Roman general Mark Antony, who was deeply in love with her. Now Antony, although he was enslaved by the beauty of the queen, was distrustful of her intentions towards him, because he had just conquered her kingdom in battle. He feared that she might seize the opportunity to rid herself of his presence by offering him poisoned food, so, before eating from any of the sumptuous dishes set before him, he commanded one of his servants to taste them. If the dishes were poisoned the poor servant would die, but Antony would be safe. Cleopatra, observing this precaution, devised a malicious trick to play upon her jealous lover. As the banquet proceeded she playfully suggested that they should break up the chaplets they were wearing and drink them in their wine. Antony entered into the spirit of the jest, and the pair of them mixed up their garlands accordingly. The queen laugh-

ingly drank her wine, and Antony was about to do the same when, with a sudden gesture, she stayed him. ‘My best beloved,’ she exclaimed, ‘now see what she is whom thou dost dread so much, and how I would not seek for means to cause thy death if I could find it in my heart to live without thee!’ So saying she called for one of her prisoners to be brought into the royal presence, and, when he stood trembling before her, she commanded him to drink from Antony’s cup. He obeyed, and immediately fell dead at her feet. The wicked queen had previously caused her lover’s chaplet to be dipped in a strong poison, and thus Antony learned how little his precautions availed and how truly she loved him. But it was rather a sad end for the unhappy prisoner!

## CHAPTER V.

ONCE more we are back in England. We have watched the ancient Britons practising their heathen rites, and we have seen how the Romans came from over the sea and conquered them. Then I have told you how the invaders taught the Britons what they had discovered or learned about plants, and that this learning was overwhelmed by the savage Anglo-Saxon tribes who in their turn settled in our land after the Romans had departed. Now let us see what these tribes, from whom we ourselves are descended, knew and believed about the subject of flowers.

At first the Anglo-Saxons were heathens, but after many years they were converted to Christianity by missionaries sent out from Rome; for by this time the Romans had accepted the teaching of our Lord. One result of this happy event was that some of the old Greek and Roman knowledge of plants was restored, though the people still retained many of their pagan superstitions and mixed them up with those which they learned from abroad. One of the later famous men who helped the spread of useful knowledge was King Alfred. I expect that the incident which you remember best about

him is that he allowed the cakes to burn when he was set to watch them; but he was a most high-minded king, and, if he did forget the cakes, it was only because he was thinking of more important affairs.

The Anglo-Saxons were really rather well versed in the knowledge of plants, for they had gathered them for centuries to be used as medicines and food. They were even clever enough to write books about them, and they cultivated many kinds of herbs in their herb-gardens. They grew Rue, Fennel, Mustard, Elecampane, Southernwood, Celandine, Parsley, and many other plants which are amongst the familiar flowers of to-day. But what I more particularly want to tell you about is the fantastic beliefs they held. They were quite as superstitious as the other nations we have been reading about, and they had the same ignorant fear of witchcraft and sorcery and devils and demons, and the same faith in the protective power of charms and amulets.

One of the herbs they valued was a plant that many of us would like to believe in to-day, for, if you knew the right way to employ it, you could drive away hail and rainstorms, and, better still, you could quiet tempests at sea. If you took a preparation of Burdock you would never be poisoned, and, should your appetite fail, you had only to drink some sweetened water containing Betony and it would be restored.



Nettles, steeped in oil, would banish cold if you rubbed the preparation over your body. Before going on a long journey you could avoid fatigue by going out before sunrise, picking some leaves of Mugwort (which you signed with the sign of the Cross) and placing them in your shoe, or even simply carrying them in your hand. While plucking the leaves you had to say very solemnly, 'I take thee, Mugwort, lest I be weary on the way.' After that, apparently, you could walk for ever without becoming footsore.

One of the most highly esteemed plants was the Betony—a herb which you can find growing freely almost everywhere in the country-side. The range of maladies which it was held to cure is really past all crediting. It was good for soul and body. It dispelled 'frightful visions and dreams,' or nightmare; mended a broken head; remedied sore eyes, ears, and throat; allayed toothache; strengthened the sight; stayed bleeding of the nose; cured the bites of adders and mad dogs; abated fevers; and worked a number of equally surprising and desirable feats of healing. Another useful plant was the Plantain. It relieved a headache if you bound its roots about the neck, and it cured snake-bites if you ate it. Some plants were useful for treating lunatics, or perhaps people who were merely subject to fits. There was a kind of Buttercup which you were told to wreath about the sufferer's neck with a red thread at the waning

of the moon. Another herb, which had the mysterious habit of shining by night like a lamp, was to be placed on the patient as he lay in his fit, and immediately he would recover and stand up. Furthermore, the disease would never attack him again so long as he kept this wonderful herb at hand.

Now, as a change from doctors' medicine, let me mention one or two remedies of a different kind, but no less strange in character. Suppose a man were losing his hair. Nobody likes this to happen, and nowadays people would be very grateful for a really reliable remedy. The Anglo-Saxons claimed to have found an extremely simple one in a kind of Cress. 'Take the juice of the plant,' they said, 'put it on the man's nose, and his hair will grow again'! Another surprising plant (it may have been the Vervain) was used by sorcerers. If you carried it with you, it would effectually prevent dogs from barking at you, and, I suppose, from biting you too, for no one minds a mere bark.

## CHAPTER VI.

**D**URING a period of a thousand years and more after the Anglo-Saxons first settled in our land people continued to live in the condition of superstition I have described. In some respects, indeed, their state grew, if possible, worse. Men's minds were obsessed by the haunting fears of dire calamities which might befall them at the hands of Satan and his army of demons, imps, witches, goblins, and other evil spirits. Wherever they went, whatever they did, their homes, their loved ones, their health and property were liable at any moment to be afflicted by the spells of these powers of darkness.

In many of these dreadful operations the flowers played a conspicuous part. The witches' potions, brewed on the wild heaths in the blackest nights, or those concocted by wizards and sorcerers in their dark haunts, whether to gain unlawful insight into the future, to discover men's secrets, or to gratify enmity and hatred, were largely compounded of the herbs of the field and garden. The plants used by the witches included Vervain, Periwinkle, Dill, Betony, Mugwort, Yarrow, Honesty, Rue, Foxglove, and dozens of others:

I ha' been plucking plants among,  
Hemlock, Henbane, Adder's Tongue;  
Nightshade, Moonwort, Leopard's bane

and so on to an almost unlimited extent. Satan himself set his hand to the same dark work. The Nightshade was so highly esteemed by him that he stole secretly about the earth trimming and tending it wherever he found it growing.

You may imagine that all these horrors so filled the minds of ignorant men with fear that they hardly knew where to turn for comfort and protection. Actually their refuge was in the Church, and the priests were earnest in their teaching that our Lord and His saints had power to triumph over all the wicked designs of Satan and his hosts. And just as the plants might serve the purposes of the evil-doers, so would they operate to defeat those unholy designs. The very herbs the witches gathered could be turned against them, and such plants as Vervain, Rue, Mugwort, and Honesty gained both an evil and a good repute, while further protection might be sought from such flowers as Honeysuckle, Mistletoe, St John's Wort, and Herb Bennet.

There were happier reflections, too, in the association of the wild-flowers with the fairies, although this was not always free from harm. In those days the little sprites were believed in by everybody, and many a tale was told of the good they did and the pranks they played on human

beings. Country people, of course, knew quite well that they used the Ragwort as a horse to ride on when they assembled for their revels; that they sheltered against rain in the drooping flowers of the Anemone; and that it was they who first fitted the bells of the Foxglove on the feet of wily Reynard to enable him to steal about silently.

The priests took charge, not only of the spiritual welfare of their flock, but of their bodily health. Most of the gardens of those times were herb-gardens, where plants were grown for food and medicine, as in earlier days. All the great monasteries cultivated herb-gardens, and from the plants grown in those quiet retreats every kind of medicine was prepared for healing the sick.

The Church was very active in teaching the love of flowers, and many beautiful religious associations were created by the holy legends which they spread abroad. Have you ever seen the Passion Flower? It is a foreign plant that has been introduced amongst our cultivated flowers. The Passion Flower was chosen by the priests to symbolise the story of our Lord's Crucifixion, the reason being that it contained several remarkable features that seemed to have been produced there especially to remind us of His agony. The flower has five 'anthers,' and these were explained as representing the five wounds of Jesus. In the centre is a column which bears at the top three slender objects with enlarged





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heads, like nails, signifying the three nails that transfixed Him. The crown of thorns and the halo of glory that encompassed His head are to be seen in other parts of the flower; while the five petals, together with the five 'sepals' below, were taken to indicate the twelve Apostles—Peter, who denied his Saviour, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him, being excluded from the reckoning.

One of the Veronica plants was the subject of a beautiful tale. St Veronica was amongst the women who followed our Lord on the way to Calvary. So heavy was the Cross He carried that His forehead broke out into a profuse perspiration beneath the burden. Veronica's gentle heart was filled with compassion. She stepped timidly up to the Saviour and wiped away the sacred drops with her kerchief. Then a miracle was worked, for the likeness of Jesus became impressed upon the kerchief. I suppose the Veronica flower was thought to bear some markings in its petals that reminded one of the image. At any rate, it seems to have been named after the pitying saint, and the word Veronica itself is said to mean 'the true image.'

I could go on telling you of these legends and superstitions until I filled the entire book, but now I must come to an end. Most of the ancient beliefs have long been forgotten, though some still linger on in the remote parts of the country. But, though they are passing away from memory,



I think the romance of them all adds very greatly to the charm of wild-flowers. And that is why I indulge in my day-dream and wish that the flowers might for one day be changed into the maidens and witches, the wise men, the simple country folk and earnest students, the fairies, the priests, the soldiers and sailors, and all the other fascinating people I mentioned at the beginning of our talk as forming a part of the story of our lovely flowers.

## The Daffodil.

Daffy-down-dilly is come to town  
With a yellow petticoat and a green gown.

PEOPLE may well repeat these pretty verses when they see the great market-baskets over-flowing with lovely yellow blooms brought into the dusty towns, when winter is bidding us farewell and our hearts go out with joy and thankfulness to the returning spring. But the true Daffodil haunts are the places for us to seek; the awakening woods when March is blustering loudly with its gales but cannot frighten—at least not very much—the thousands of golden bells that flutter and tremble before its gusty breath.

How lovely and how welcome are the masses of golden yellow as they paint the shadowy spaces beneath the budding trees! Their long leaves seem to quiver with the joy of the new season, and their trumpets to blow with the promise of the spring as their petals spread out like fairies' wings. No wonder the plant is called Welcome-Spring by the Welsh country people! No wonder it has received such a wealth of other affectionate names! Let us look at its beauty, and then see what interesting stories it has to tell us.

Our sweet wild Daffodil stores up its food in

a little bulb, from which it sends out tiny roots to hold it in the ground and draw up the juices of the earth. From the bulb a few long, narrow, and pointed leaves, of a blue-green hue, grow to a height of a foot or less, and in their midst arises the somewhat longer hollow tube of the flower-stalk. In its early days the bud is like the head of a paint-brush, the folded flower being protected by a sheath. As the sheath parts in the warm sunshine the lovely bloom unfolds its six long, pointed lobes of a light yellow tint and reveals the golden trumpet within, frilled prettily around its mouth and coloured a warm deep yellow. In the heart of the trumpet stands a ring of six golden-topped 'stamens,' with the three-headed 'stigma' in their midst.

The season of the Daffodils is the season of Lent, and many a name has been given to the plant because of this connection. In the west of England one of the commonest is Lent Lilies, and there are lots of different forms, such as Lent-pitcher and Lenty-cups, from the pitcher- or cup-like trumpet of the flowers, Lent Rose and Lents; and there is also Easter Lily. Then there is the name Lent-cocks, which seems to bring back to mind a barbarous Shrove Tuesday 'sport' of other times. The practice was to take a live cock and tie it by the leg to a stake fixed in the ground. Then everyone gathered round and threw sticks at the poor bird, and laughed to see its pitiful agility in try-

ing to avoid them. It was, of course, a wicked and cruel pastime, and it is a matter for thankfulness that nothing but its memory remains in the Daffodil's name of Lent-cocks.

Now let us talk about some pleasanter names. Bell Rose and Yellow-bells, I think, are quite fitting ones; but I like Babies'-bells and Fairy-bells, Gold-bells, and Dong-bells better. Trumpets and Golden-trumpets are rather nice too, and Cups-and-saucers is quite a happy expression, for the trumpet of the flower makes the prettiest golden cup, and you find the saucer to match in the spreading 'petals' beneath it. Ideas of a different kind are suggested in some of the other names. In Somersetshire the children call the plant Princess'-robe, and I am sure any fairy princess would look sweet in a dress made of golden Daffodil flowers. They also have the name Hoop-petticoat (which really belongs to a garden variety), because the flowers are like the old-fashioned garments worn in our grandparents' days. And there is Sun-bonnets, given because the blooms would furnish such a darling little bonnet for sunny days and its colour matches that of the sun. Another title is King's-spear, and really, when you see the slender, pointed leaves standing up from the ground, they do rather suggest a sharp spear.

The cuckoo begins to arrive in our woods about the time the wild Daffodils fade, and some children, remembering this, call the plant

Cuckoo Roses. In one part of Devonshire the villagers name it Giggaries, and they never bring the flower into their cottages if they have any hens or other poultry sitting, because they believe that it would prevent the eggs hatching out. One of the districts where this name is used has an old priory dedicated to St Gregory. The festival of this saint is held on the twelfth of March, when the Daffodils are beginning to appear, and it may be that the flowers are named after him, and that the curious word Giggaries should really be Gregories. Many other names have been given to this favourite plant, but I have dwelt so long on the subject that I can only stop to mention a few more, and must then leave you to guess their meaning. A Scottish name is Glens; in Norfolk they have Queen Anne's-flowers; and in the west of England they say Goose-flops, Gracy Daisies, Grassy Daisies, Gracy-day, and Hen-and-chickens.

The common name Daffodil has no particular meaning that we know of to-day. In olden times it was spelt Affodil, and this itself came from Asphodel, which is another plant altogether. As time went on someone put a 'd' before the word Affodil, and so made it into the name we use now; but no one knows exactly how it came about. What we do know, however, is that for centuries people have treated the name in a most playfully affectionate manner, with the result that you hear the flower called by such

funny names as Daffy-down-dilly, Down-dilly, Daffadilly, Daffy, Dilly, Dilly-daff, Dilly-dally, and so on without end.

Our little wild herald of the spring does not sound its trumpet everywhere in the country-side. It is only in a certain number of favoured woods and shady meadows that you may expect to see it waving in the wind; but where it does grow it flourishes in delightful abundance. Remember, though, when you are gathering the flowers, that they contain a poison which would harm you if it got into your system.

### The Broad-Leaved Garlic.

IF you are ever playing in the woods during the late spring you may tell, without opening your eyes, whether the Broad-leaved Garlic grows there. The air is tainted with the pungent smell of onions, and, if you stay long in the neighbourhood, you will find the rank odour become more and more unpleasant. I am not surprised that people have christened the plant Devil's-posy, for assuredly no one but an evil-minded being would dream of including it in a nosegay. People also speak of it by the vulgar name of Stink-plant, and also Stinking Lilies because its leaves are so much like those of the Lily-of-the-Valley.

The plant is a wild relative of the cultivated Garlic, as well as of the Onion, the Leek, and

the Shallot; and, if you pull it up, you will find that it has a bulbous root like those herbs. That is why it is called by such names as Wild Leek, Water Leek, Wild Onion, Gipsy's Onion, and Onion-flower. It also goes by the names of Hog's Garlic, Badger's-flower, and Bear's Garlic, because it is suggested that, although it is inferior to the cultivated plants, the wild animals that used to range the woods in olden days found it quite good enough for their uncultivated tastes. The snakes which abound in the woods and may lie lurking beneath its broad leaves have given further names to the flower, for it is known as Snake-plant and Snake's-food.

It is a pity the Garlic makes itself so unpleasant by its overpowering odour, for it is a most graceful flower. When the blooms appear, as they do, in thousands and thousands, clothing the steep slopes of the wooded valleys, and lying in broad expanses along the ground or by the woodland streams, they make a very pleasing sight. The leaves, which grow on long stalks, are big and broad, and long and pointed. It is to their shape that the plant owes its name, for the word Garlic comes from two words, one of which is an old, old term known to the Anglo-Saxons, the Greeks, and the Romans, and perhaps to the Ancient Britons as well. That term was 'gar' amongst the Anglo-Saxons, and it meant 'a spear.' You have only to glance at the broad, pointed leaves of our plant, set on their long

stalks, to see how closely they resemble a spear; and, when you remember that the early tribes were constantly thinking about warfare, you will not be surprised that they themselves should have observed the resemblance and called the plant after it. The second word I alluded to is the familiar 'Leek,' for the latter syllable of our plant-name is made up from that. The name therefore really means 'the Spear-leek.'

The flowers of the Broad-leaved Garlic grow in stalked clusters at the top of a long stem, and they are like a beautiful six-pointed star of pure white. In the centre of each flower lie three green balls joined together, with the seeds of future plants inside them, and a slender white column standing in their midst. Six white threads, with creamy or yellow tops, form a graceful ring about the balls.

Our plant is very commonly spoken of as Ramsons, which is a very old word indeed—so old, in fact, that it is uncertain where it came from, though many people say that its meaning is 'rank,' from the unpleasant smell of the plant. There are all sorts of variations of this name: Ransoms, Ramsies, Ramps and Rams, and even Rams'-horns, the last of which shows that some folks think the word refers to the male sheep, as perhaps it does.

The most interesting name of all is one which associates our plant with the magic herb which I have mentioned in the chapter on the



Enchanter's Nightshade. The people of ancient Greece believed in the existence of a herb which had been discovered by one of the heathen gods whom they worshipped. The god was named Hermes by the Greeks, or Mercury by the Romans, and he acted as the messenger of the other gods, and so often travelled about the earth. I expect it was while he was engaged on his duties that he discovered the herb; but the wonderful thing about the story is that he also found out that it was an unfailing protection against the evil spells of sorcerers. The Greek gods often made use of the plant, but the people of earth found it exceedingly hard to dig up, because its roots might be more than thirty feet long!

The magic herb, so far as it is known at all, is supposed to be related to the Broad-leaved Garlic. The name of it is Moly, and that very name has been given to our present plant in some of the villages of the west of England. I wonder if the people there imagine that this is the magic herb of olden times?

### The Woodruff.

IF you had lived a few hundred years ago you would have found no carpets on the floors of your home. Instead, you would have seen the inmates covering them with sweet-smelling plants, called 'strewing herbs,' amongst

which the subject of the present chapter would find a place. The blooms themselves have a distinct scent, but it is only when the plant is taken up and dried that it yields the fullness of its fragrance, for then the leaves exhale the delicious odour of new mown hay. That is why the plant has received such pretty names as Sweet Woodruff, New-mown-hay, Hay-plant, Ladies-in-the-hay, and, in Scotland, Sweet-grass.

The sweet odour of the Woodruff caused the herb to be used in several other ways about the house. It was placed in the old presses amongst the linen, and also between the leaves of books, where its fragrance would linger for a very long time. In those days there was a charming old gentleman who wrote a delightful book all about the flowers that he loved to study, and, speaking in his old-fashioned language about the Woodruff, he said: 'The flowers are of a very sweet smell, as is the rest of the herb, which, being made up into garlands or bundles, and hanged up in houses, in the heat of summer, doth very well attemper the air and cool and make fresh the place, to the delight and comfort of such as are therein.'

The Woodruff grows in great masses in woods and shady places—hence the first part of its name—and the fresh green foliage and pure white blooms seem to have set themselves the pleasant task of making the earth lovely in the happy months of May and June. The plant has

a root that runs under the ground and sends up stems at intervals. These stems grow erectly to a height of from six inches to perhaps a foot. The leaves, which are neatly and beautifully rounded to a short point, are arranged in a series of rings, with usually eight, but sometimes more or less, leaves to each ring. It is to these pretty circles of foliage that the plant owes one of the associations of the second syllable of its name. They reminded people of the stiff ruffs which were worn by ladies and gentlemen around their necks in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and many folks said that the plant was given its name of Wood-*ruff* for that reason.

The original name of the plant, however, is ever so much older than the times when ruffs were worn, for it was used by the Anglo-Saxons, who were not so much given to personal adornment, at any rate of that character. In their day the name was spelt *wudurofe*; and if it is true, as some people assert, that *rofe* meant 'fragrant,' it is clear that those tribes were not so constantly occupied with fighting as to have no leisure for observing the beauties of the wild-flowers which grew in England then as freely as they do to-day.

About the time of the wearing of ruffs the name of our plant came to be spelt Wood-rowe and Wood-rowel. Rowels are the spiked wheels on the spurs which horsemen wear to goad their horses, and it was because the rings of leaves

on the Woodruff bore a resemblance to these that the plant was so named.

There is a curious rhyme about one of the old ways of spelling the word Woodruff, and I will leave it to you to puzzle out—

Double U, double O, double D, E,  
R, O, double U, double F, E.

The flowers of the Woodruff grow in forked clusters at the top of the stem. They are funnel-shaped at their base, and then they open out into four ‘petals’ of the purest white, set in the shape of a cross. There are several other plants which have leaves and flowers like those of the Woodruff; but none of them has the funnel-shaped part of the flower, and most of them are weaker and less erect in growth, while the stems are often very much longer.

### The Enchanter’s Nightshade.

WHAT a terrifying name for a plant to have! It makes us wonder what magic powers it possesses, and conjures up dark visions of witches and enchanters working their evil spells by its means. We imagine the plant to be some fearful growth, of monstrous size, and bearing the signs of its wicked character written plainly on its leaves and flowers for innocent people to read and shun with horror. Yet,

when we find the plant, what do we see? An erect slender herb, with a round stem of the height of a foot or two, more or less covered with short whitish hairs. Its leaves, which are stalked and of a fair size, are broad and shortly tapering, notched or wavy at their edges, and of a thin texture.

The stem bears a number of fine branches, especially at the top of the plant, and on these the delicate flowers grow in thin and 'spidery' looking spikes. They are very small and harmless in appearance; in fact, they give the impression of having lost the greater part of their petals. They stand away from the branches on short stalks, with a pair of reddish-tinted 'sepals' which look like leaves, bending backwards away from the blossoms. The flowers themselves have only two tiny white or faintly pink petals, each of them deeply divided, with two pretty pink or white threads, called 'stamens,' and another, called the 'pistil,' in their midst.

When the flower has fallen you will discover that it has left behind a little pear-shaped object, covered with stiff, hooked hairs; and, if you split this open, you will find that it contains two seeds, all ready to grow into new plants when the proper time comes. You will also notice that the flower-stalks bend downwards in rather an odd manner as the blooms fade.

Altogether, we do not seem to have discovered anything in the least forbidding about the plant.

The leaves are quite commonplace, and the flowers are really charming with their airy grace. The roots are not so attractive, but then you do not expect roots to be beautiful. There is a rather thick creeping stock, with several fleshy roots, white or pink in colour, shooting out of it.

You will find the plant in bloom at any time during July and August; and possibly one reason why it is supposed to possess magic properties is that it often hides itself away in the dark and shady corners of damp woods and lanes, and in other places where it can escape the direct light of the sun. It was in such dim haunts as these that the witches were supposed to gather the poisonous herbs with which they worked their spells, a plant of this character being considered as 'loving darkness rather than light, because its deeds are evil.'

Those of you who have read the chapter on the Woody Nightshade in the first volume will know that there are altogether four kinds of Nightshade, and that their name probably had something to do with the poisonous berries which certain of them produce. Some of these berries, if you ate them, would make you fall into an unhealthy sleep, and this condition was perhaps likened to the *shade* of *night*, whose falling, moreover, was believed to mark the time when ghosts and witches stole out from their lairs. The Enchanter's Nightshade does not

produce any berries, and it is quite unlike the rest of the group in its general features. I really do not know, therefore, why it is linked with the Nightshades, unless it is that its leaves are somewhat like one of them, and that it grows in shady places.

But all this time you will be wondering when I am going to tell you the story of the Enchanter referred to in the name. Well, I am coming to that now. Long ago there lived, on a small island set in the midst of the sea, a wicked sorceress named Circe. The island was a very beautiful one, set with shady trees and flowers of marvellous brightness. But it was surprisingly full of animals, such as lions and wolves and pigs and sheep. Presently you shall learn where all these animals came from.

Circe was a most beautiful woman, with bright hair as golden as the sun, but she lived all alone in a magnificent palace set in the heart of a wood. And yet it is not quite true to say that she lived all alone. From time to time the ships that sailed across the sea would put in to the island, or sometimes they would be wrecked there. Whenever this happened the beautiful Circe would run out from her palace to greet the voyagers and furnish them with the food and drink of which they stood in sore need. But, strangely enough, the mariners would never be seen again, and their families, who longed for their return, were at last forced to abandon all







The Wood Loosestrife or Yellow Pimpernel.

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hope of ever welcoming them home. Strangely, too, the animals roaming about the island increased in number soon after each band of mariners had landed on its shores.

Now at the time of which I am speaking there was a man named Ulysses, who was famous as a warrior and equally renowned for his cunning. It so happened that he and his companions were returning home after an absence of many years, and, as their vessel sailed past the island where Circe dwelt, a tremendous storm arose and cast it on the shore. The sailors scrambled out of the ship, and, as the island was strange to Ulysses, he sent half of his party to explore it while he and the others remained on the shore. The golden-haired Circe was on the watch for them. She hastened out to offer them refreshment, and in particular she made them drink of a magic potion which she had prepared.

All the thirsty men, except one, drank deeply of the sweet-tasting wine. Then Circe struck them with her wand—and immediately they were changed into pigs, and went tearing and grunting out into the thick woods to mix with the other animals, who had been changed from human beings by the same enchantment. But the one man who had not drunk the potion ran back to Ulysses as fast as he could and told him of the abominable deed that had been done. Ulysses considered for some time what he should do, and at last he gathered his remaining men about

him and set off to find Circe. On his way he fell in with a fair youth carrying a golden wand in his hand. This youth was named Mercury, and he was really one of the heathen gods who were worshipped in that land before the people learned of our Lord. Mercury gave him a magical plant called Moly, which had the power of preserving its possessor against all enchantments; and, armed with this, Ulysses continued on his way. Circe, of course, was delighted to greet some more victims on whom to work her spells, and she at once proffered to Ulysses another cup of the enchanted wine.

Ulysses drank it all. Circe struck him with her wand, and, to her utter astonishment, there was not the slightest change in his appearance. The plant Moly had saved him from the fate which had fallen on all her other victims. So Circe failed in her wicked endeavours, and she was terrified of Ulysses, who was the first who had ever thwarted her. Ulysses compelled her to restore his companions to their natural shapes, and then, after they had spent some time on the island, they all sailed gladly away towards home.

That is the story of the Enchantress Circe. The magic potion which she brewed owed its evil powers to a certain plant employed in its preparation. The modest little Enchanter's Nightshade was not the actual plant, but it was supposed to resemble it, or to be connected

with it in some way, and that is how it came by the first part of its name. Although the story happened so long ago, and although our little flower is really innocent of any part in it, the plant still goes by the name of Witch-flower in one of the villages of the west of England.

Our poor unfortunate Nightshade, through no fault of its own, has fallen into bad company in another direction. It is sometimes, though not often, I think, called a Mandrake. Now the true Mandrake was regarded with extreme fear by people of olden days. It is a foreign plant with a long thick root like a carrot, and it often divides into two parts, just as a carrot does. From this quite commonplace circumstance the tale was told that the roots were always shaped in the exact likeness of a man's legs, and it was believed that there was something uncannily human about the plant. I have said that everyone was afraid of it; yet, because it was believed to possess the most marvellous powers of healing and sorcery and of bringing good fortune, it was greatly sought after. Unfortunately, a wild story was repeated that, if you pulled up the roots, the plant would shriek in the most terrifying manner, and that, on hearing the screams, you would go mad or perhaps die altogether.

To overcome this danger you were told to stop up your ears with wax and tie a dog to the plant. Then, after hurrying out of hearing of the screams which would presently issue, you

called the dog as loudly as you could. The animal would struggle to follow you, and, in so doing, would wrench the Mandrake out of the ground. You yourself would be safely out of the range of its piercing screams, but the poor innocent dog would hear them and die. Of course this was an utterly foolish superstition, but it was the sort of tale that people believed in those ignorant times. The Mandrake roots were brought into England and sold for large sums of money; and, as the true roots were difficult to obtain, dishonest herb-sellers often dug up those of the Bryony and other English plants, and, after carving them into the likeness of a man, sold them as real Mandrake roots.

The Enchanter's Nightshade had nothing whatever to do with the Mandrake. It should never have been called by that name, and it is difficult to explain how it ever got mixed up with a plant of such an evil character.

### The Wood Loosestrife or Yellow Pimpernel.

WHEN you discover this sweet little plant creeping in the woods and hedgerows and other shady places you may wonder for a moment whether you have chanced upon a Scarlet Pimpernel that has decided to produce a yellow flower for a change. The plant has exactly the same fairy-

like delicacy of form and graceful manner of growth, and its general appearance strongly suggests that the two are twins. That is why our plant is called the Yellow Pimpernel; but as, for scientific reasons which we need not trouble about, it really belongs to the family of Loosestrifes, it is also named the Wood Loosestrife.

Our little plant has a weak trailing stem, generally of a reddish tint, from which grow a number of slender branches. Often the stem takes root *at* different points where it lies along the ground, and then new plants are formed. The leaves grow in pairs on very short stalks, and they are broadly oval in shape, except that they end in a point. Their surfaces are smooth and glossy and their edges quite plain.

At the points where the leaves are joined to the stems you will see pairs of slender flower-stalks springing well out beyond the leaves in graceful curves, and each of these stalks bears a flower of the same starlike shape as the Scarlet Pimpernel. Some children very happily call the plant Star-flowers for this reason. Looking into the flower you see that it has five broad, pointed petals and a circle of the same number of delicate threads with tiny heads. These are the 'stamens' of the flower, and in their midst stands another thread-like object called the 'pistil.' At the base of the pistil is a tiny green ball, and, when this ripens, the seeds which lie within will be ready to grow into fresh flowers next year.

The plant bears a certain resemblance to the Moneywort or Creeping-Jenny which you see so often in gardens and window-boxes; but you can always tell the latter plant by its larger flowers, which are shaped more like a cup than a spreading star.

I have spoken about the meaning of the curious word Loosestrife in the chapter on the Purple Loosestrife. Our plant was never credited with the marvellous property which I mentioned in that chapter, and it is only because it possesses certain features in common with the other Loosestrifes that it has been given their name. The other name—Pimpernel—is one whose meaning has become uncertain. Many people think it comes from a foreign word which sounds something like Pimpernel and means ‘winged,’ or ‘two-winged.’ The leaves, both of the Scarlet Pimpernel and of this plant, have something of the appearance of pairs of wings, so it is possible that the name has to do with that.

The Wood Loosestrife has a nice long season, for it lasts from early in May until August or September.

### The Ragged Robin.

WHEN you are walking by the damp pastures along the sides of streams and ditches, look out for the bright pink flowers of the Ragged Robin, for they are a pleasant sight to see as



they wave their tattered petals in the breeze. You will recognise the plant quite easily, for it is very simple and distinct in form. The stems stand from a foot to about eighteen inches high. The leaves grow in pairs, and only the lowest ones have any stalks. They are long and fairly narrow, and they taper to a point. Being few in number they leave the stems with a rather bare appearance.

The flowers grow in loose clusters at the top of the stems. Their five petals are of a beautiful pink or reddish hue, and they look as if they had been torn into ragged strips, which is the reason why the plant is called the *Ragged Robin*. Each petal is divided into four of such strips, the two inner ones being much longer than the others. The blooms grow out of a lovely slender vase-like object, called the 'calyx,' which is ornamented with bold ribs and topped with a ring of tiny teeth.

I am not at all sure about the question of whom or what the name Robin refers to. Those of you who have read the chapters on the Red Campion and the Herb Robert in the first volume will remember what I said about the subject there. It may be that our present plant is named after the mischievous little sprite called Robin Goodfellow. Or it may refer to the bold Robin Hood, a robber who lived in a forest and stole from rich travellers to give their money to the poor. Or, again, the name may have been taken

the from the little Robin Redbreast who comes and asks for crumbs in winter time; though the colour of his breast is a very much more rusty red than that of the flower.

Whatever the source of the name may be, the plant, in common with those I have mentioned, owns it in many different forms; for it is called Cock-Robin, Red-Robin, Rough-Robin (because, I suppose, the stem is rough to the touch), and Robin Hood. It is also known as Ragged-Jack, Ragged-urchin, and Shaggy-Jack; while some children, with their minds full of the fairy story, name it Little-Red-Riding-Hood.

The Ragged Robin blooms in the late spring and early summer, when the cuckoo is calling through the woods, and so it takes its place with the other spring-time flowers that go by the name of Cuckoo and Cuckoo-flowers. The ragged petals remind many people of the Pinks which grow in their gardens, and they call the wild plants Wild-Williams and Meadow Pinks, or, in one part of Scotland, Meadow-spinks. The Ragged Robin is also a relative of the Campions, and it occasionally takes the additional name of Meadow Champion. So, too, it belongs to the assorted group of plants called loosely Bachelor's-buttons, because people fancy the flowers might serve as buttons for young men who have no wives to look after their clothes for them.





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The English Stonecrop.

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The Bugle.

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All these are names which country people use, but you will do well to remember that the name by which the plant is properly known is Ragged Robin.

### The Bugle.

YOU might almost mistake this plant for the Bluebell when you see it spreading along the hedgebanks, for it creates the same effect of a blur of blue colour against the green, though it is not nearly so extensive in its growth. It is in flower, too, at Bluebell time, its season beginning about the end of April and lasting until late in June. It loves a damp soil for its home, and you may find it growing freely in shady woods and moist pastures and hedgerows.

The Bugle is a neat little plant in all its parts. It has a small rootstock, from which it sends many rootlets down into the earth, and several stems that creep above the ground and throw up the erect flowering stems to a height of something between a few inches and nearly a foot. The herb is smooth to the touch, though it bears a number of soft hairs on stems, leaves, and buds. The leaves at the base of the stem are continued down the long flat stalks. Higher up they grow in pairs without any stalks, and the topmost ones are stained a dark wine colour or tinged with blue or purple. They are oval in shape and wavy at the edges.

The flowers, which are of a beautiful deep blue, grow in rings amongst the leaves and form a close spike at the top of the stem. In some of the villages of the west of England children call the plant Baby's-rattle, because the stalk of flowers looks rather like that plaything. The blooms have a long tube which spreads out at the top into three 'lobes,' or divisions, with a divided lobe at the back which you can scarcely see. Some children call the flowers Baby's-shoes, as if they thought they could be drawn on to the little ones' feet. I think this is rather a pretty fancy, and it looks as if the Bugle were regarded as one of the special plants of little children. In the centre of each flower you will notice two pairs of golden-topped 'stamens' and another thread-like object called the 'pistil.' I have explained, in other chapters, how these parts of the flower help in preparing the seeds to produce new plants.

Nobody quite knows how the plant came by its common name. It does not seem to have anything to do with the musical instrument, although the flowers, with their long tubes and spreading mouths, are not at all unlike the bugles which soldiers blow. Some folks say that the name comes from a Latin expression meaning 'to drive away,' and they explain its use by saying that the plant, which used to have a great reputation as a medicine, would drive away various complaints. Perhaps they are right, but, as this



name was first made up at least two thousand years ago, it is not surprising that its meaning has become uncertain.

## The English Stonecrop.

I DO not know any sufficient reason why this particular Stonecrop should be called the *English* Stonecrop. It is true that it grows very abundantly in England, as well as in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, but it flourishes also on the continent of Europe, from Portugal to Norway. However, that is the name by which it has come to be distinguished from the other Stonecrops; and as it is a plant that loves to grow near the coast, and as England has always been famous for her connection with the sea, we will accept the name without further question.

This particular Stonecrop grows, as I have said, in the neighbourhood of the sea-coast, but it is none the less at home in more inland situations of a stony or sandy character. It is wonderful how it manages to exist in the barren spots it chooses to adorn; but its thick fleshy leaves are well adapted to absorb nourishment from the air and to store up supplies of moisture which tide it over the spells of dry weather. The name of the plant is due to the stony sites in which it often makes its home. It is as though you said that the very *stones* produced

this abundant *crop* of lovely starlike flowers—and so you arrive at the name Stonecrop.

The little plants cluster very closely together in bright and cheerful patches, often becoming so extensive as to line a dry or stony hedge-bank or entirely cover a rock or boulder. The tangled branches, which are only two or three inches high, are crowded with tiny fleshy leaves, and both stems and foliage take on a pleasing variety of lovely tints, from pale green to pink and red. The flowers, which are at their best in June and July, are of the most delicate beauty, both in design and colouring. The opening buds are painted with a delicate shade of pink on the outside, and they are often stained with a deeper red at the heart, as if the shy little blooms blushed at their boldness in opening upon the world. But when the five petals stand fully expanded in a gleaming star, set with a cluster of delicate, hair-like, purple-topped stamens, you realise how little cause there was for blushing. If the barren stones were really capable of producing such a crop of loveliness as this, how marvellous we should account them!

Children sometimes call the plant Pig's-ears, as they do the Yellow, or Biting, Stonecrop, which I told you about in the previous volume. They give this rather unlovely name to both plants because they say that their leaves are like the ears of a pig—assuming you could find a pig sufficiently small to wear them.

## The Spotted Orchis.

ONCE upon a time there lived in a far-distant country a race of beings who seemed to be half men and half animals. They had legs and arms and a head and body like ours, but their ears were drawn out to a point at the top, their foreheads were set with a pair of horns like a goat, and, strangest feature of all, they possessed tails. These curious beings lived in the green forests that clothed the mountains and valleys of their lovely country. They spent their time in rather a riotous manner, drinking wine and dancing with the beautiful nymphs or fairies who also dwelt in the land. They dressed themselves in the skins of wild animals, and they wore on their heads and bodies wreaths and garlands of Vine and Ivy. Ordinary human beings were very much afraid of them, for they were of a mischievous nature, and could work a great deal of harm if they became angry.

These strange creatures were called Satyrs. They worshipped a heathen god named Bacchus, who was supposed to preside over the Vines from which the Satyrs made their wine.

One day the Satyrs assembled in the woods to celebrate, with much noise and dancing, a great feast in honour of their god, when an unexpected event happened. One of the Satyrs

was named Orchis—which, of course, is the name of the flower we are presently going to examine—and he was deeply in love with a beautiful nymph who was one of the priestesses of the god. The priestess would never listen to the declarations of love which Orchis constantly made to her, because priestesses were sacred and were never supposed to marry. Poor Orchis, however, was so deeply infatuated that, during the ceremony, he completely lost control of himself, and seizing the shrinking maiden in his arms, dashed off with her into the deep woods.

Immediately there was a hue and cry. All the Satyrs and nymphs were horrified at the profane act, and they set off in hot pursuit. Soon they came upon Orchis, struggling fiercely with the maiden, and they threw themselves upon him, wrenched the terrified nymph from his arms, and in their frenzy tore the youth limb from limb.

The father of Orchis, though he was as greatly scandalised as his companions at the wicked action of his son, could not refrain from lamenting his tragic end; so, falling on his knees, he prayed earnestly to his gods to restore the youth to life. The gods heard his despairing cry, but they announced that, since the fate which had befallen the erring youth was only the just punishment of his sin, they could not grant the old man's prayer. Instead, they proclaimed

that the dead body should give birth to a flower that had never before bloomed on the earth, the name of which should be that of the hapless Orchis. And that is how the various plants named Orchis first appeared in the world.

The particular kind of Orchis we are now going to speak about is called the Spotted Orchis. This is not because of the purple spots which appear on its leaves, for other Orchises have similar markings. It is rather on account of the spots and lines with which the flowers are decorated; though I am bound to say that this is not a sufficient guide in identifying the plant, because here too you find the same sort of thing in certain other Orchises.

The Spotted Orchis grows erectly on a solid stem of up to a foot in height. The leaves are sometimes rather broad, sometimes narrow, and they taper to a point. A singular thing about them is that they are often splashed all over with dark purple spots. When I wrote about the Early Purple Orchis in the first volume, I explained that the leaves of that flower were similarly stained, and I related the story of the name Gethsemane, which was given to the plant because the spots were believed to have been first caused by some drops of the sacred blood of Jesus Christ falling on the leaves. The same story is told of the Spotted Orchis.

The flowers grow in a dense spike at the

top of the stalk. They have six petals and sepals, varying in depth of colour, but usually of a pale pink or lilac, and they are prettily decorated with the spots and lines, of a deeper hue, that I mentioned before. The most prominent part of the flower is the 'lip,' which is notched or divided into three lobes and has a slender tube or spur behind. The whole appearance of the flower is suggestive of a funny little old woman, or a doll, dressed in a full-bottomed gown, with her arms held widely out. Amongst the flowers you will notice some narrow, pointed, leaf-like 'bracts.'

The roots of the plant, like those of the Early Purple Orchis, consist mainly of two tubers, but in this case they are each divided into two or three lobes that resemble the fingers of a hand.

One of the old names of the plant was, in fact, the Hand Orchis; but there are also some very dreadful ones—Dead-man's-fingers and Dead-man's-hand—which it is best to forget.

Many of the other strange and fanciful names of this plant are shared with the Early Purple Orchis. Such names are Adam-and-Eve, Adder's-grass, Adder's-flowers, Butchers, and Butcher-boys; but I have already written about these in the earlier book, and, as this chapter is becoming a long one, I think I had better say no more about them now.

The Spotted Orchis grows abundantly in





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The Water Figwort.

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The Wild Beaked Parsley or Cow Chervil.

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meadows and pastures and on heaths and commons, and it is to be found in flower during June and July. There is another plant, called the Marsh Orchis, which resembles it. This, as its name tells us, grows in marshy places. It is generally taller than our plant, the stem is hollow, the leaves more erect, the flowers of a deeper colour, and the 'bracts' longer. I do not think you should have much difficulty in telling one plant from the other.

### The Water Figwort.

AS we go exploring amongst the wild-flowers we shall occasionally meet with some that are quite unattractive. And yet, as if to make amends for their lack of beauty, these unlovely plants sometimes possess a string of names which makes them full of interest. The Water Figwort is one of these. It is a tall plant with a straight, stiff stem that grows to a height of anything from three to seven feet. It loves wet places for its home, and you will find it standing erect and rigid in its station by the sides of streams and ditches during July and August.

The smooth stem, which gives off a number of short branches, is remarkably square in shape, and grows out at each of the corners into what is called a 'wing,' though it is more suggestive

of a knife-edge. One of the names used by people in Wiltshire is Squarrib, which seems to be a local way of pronouncing the words 'square-rib'; but the old folks there have also a much more curious name for the plant. They call it Scarybæus. Now a scarabæus, or scarab, is a kind of beetle; indeed in Egypt it was anciently considered to be a sacred insect. I expect you will join with me in wondering what the Water Figwort can possibly have to do with beetles, whether sacred or otherwise. I can only suggest that the words 'scarab' and 'scarabæus' may have been confused with the name Squarrib, although the shape of the flowers does show some slight resemblance to a beetle.

Children like to find the stems of the Water Figwort when they wish to play on the fiddle. That sounds an astonishing thing to say, so I will tell you what they do. They take two of the stems and strip off the leaves. Then they draw one stem across the other, and the result is a satisfying squeak, sufficiently like the notes of a fiddle if you are not too particular in your musical tastes. They call the plant Fiddles, Fiddle-sticks, Fiddle-strings, and Squeakers, as well as Crowdy-kit, which I must explain to you. In olden days a certain fiddle-like instrument was called a crowdy or crowdy-kit; so you see that this otherwise forgotten expression is preserved in one of the country names of our plant.

The leaves of the Water Figwort grow in pairs. They are long and heart-shaped, their edges are cut into rounded teeth, and their surfaces are smooth. In the west of England the plant is sometimes called Soap-leaves, because the leaves produce a slight lather if you rub them between your hands.

The flowers are very small for such a tall plant, and their colour is brown in the bud and a dingy reddish-purple when open. They grow in loose clusters at the ends of the stem and branches. They are round in shape, with five very short, broad lobes. The two upper lobes stand erect, the side ones are also upright, but shorter, and the fifth is turned downwards. In the centre you can see four bright yellow ‘anthers.’ As flowers they are dull—they look rather like a tub with an open lid—but their names suggest all sorts of interesting fancies. Some children call them Babes-in-the-cradle, because, if you place the flower on its back, the yellow anthers within look like a baby in its cot. Similar names, which are equally pretty, are Fairies’-beds and Venus-in-her-car; Venus being a lovely goddess whom heathen people used to worship. Another title given to the plant is Huntsman’s-cap, because the round flower, with its pair of petals forming a peak, reminds one of the cap which huntsmen wear. You may perhaps find some likeness to a Money-box if you look very closely at the flowers, for

people give that name to the plant, and they call it Jack-in-the-box as well.

There is another common kind of Figwort, called the Knotted Figwort, because its root-stock produces a number of knots or tubers. The name Figwort refers to these tubers and was given indirectly because they resemble a fig in shape. There are not any tubers on the Water Figwort, but the plant has taken its name from its brother. You can tell the Knotted Figwort by the absence of 'wings' on its stem, though the angles are, none the less, quite sharp.

### The Wild Beaked Parsley or Cow Chervil.

THERE is an extensive family of plants which is distinguished from all other flowers by the arrangement of the flower-heads on a number of stalks set like the spokes of an umbrella. Wherever you go you see these plants growing in great abundance and lining the hedgeways, the waste places, the fringes of woods, and even the sea-cliffs with their white and billowy blooms. The group includes Parsley, Carrot, Parsnip, Hemlock, and many other flowers, and they are so much alike in their general appearance that the beginner who tries to sort them out often gives up the task in despair.

Fortunately, however, we may discover in some

of these perplexing herbs certain signs which will assist us over the difficulties of identification, and one of the more obliging of such plants is the Wild Beaked Parsley. This plant comes into flower early in the season, lasting from April until June, and at its first appearance our problem is a good deal simplified by the fact that many of the other herbs which resemble it have not yet spread their petals.

The plant is to be found in great quantities under hedges and along the borders of fields and woods. It has a branching, hollow, and furrowed stem, which is clothed, at any rate in the lower part, with short hairs. The stem is stiff and lanky, and it grows to a height of some two or three feet. Boys get great fun out of the hollow stems by using them to squirt water at each other, and they call the plant Water-squirt. A very general name for any hollow-stemmed plant, or for the stem itself, is Keck or Kex. The leaves of the Wild Beaked Parsley are soft to the touch, and deeply cut, like those of a fern. The lower ones have long stalks, those higher up much shorter ones.

At the ends of the branches you see the heads of minute white flowers, set on those stalks (generally from eight to ten in number) which I described as resembling the spokes of an umbrella. Each of the numerous blooms that help to make up the fragile cluster has five tiny white petals and the same number of white-topped

‘stamens.’ The effect of the whole flower-head is as neat and delicately fashioned as a piece of lace work, and country people have not failed to observe the resemblance, for amongst the many names which the plant bears are those of Gipsy-lace, Old-lady’s-lace, My-lady’s-lace, Queen Anne’s-lace, and Gipsy-curtains. Our plant seems constantly to put people in mind of the gipsies, for it also bears the titles of Gipsy-flower, Gipsy’s-umbrella, and Gipsy Parsley. Perhaps this is because it is to be found rambling everywhere along the country lanes, just as the caravans of the gipsies are to be seen wandering from village to village.

At the top of each spoke of the umbrella is a cluster of, usually five, very small leaf-like ‘bracts,’ which hang downwards around the spoke. This, with the absence of any such bracts at the junction of the spokes, is one of the features which will help you to tell the plant from its relatives. Another feature to look for is the drooping habit of the umbrellas when the flowers are young.

The blooms are succeeded by the green seed-vessels, which are smooth and shiny and marked by a furrow down the middle. The smoothness of these seed-vessels, and the absence of any ribs on them, are other points of guidance. While I am describing this part of the flower I should mention that the term ‘beaked,’ which is included in the plant’s name, is not a suitable



or helpful one. In one of its near relatives the seed-vessels end in a short beak, but the feature is not distinct in the present case. The seed-vessels are not at all unlike oats in appearance, and I think that must be the reason why some people call the flower Devil's-oatmeal and Devil's Parsley, though I am sure I do not know why they should associate Satan with blooms of such purity and grace.

Our plant is a wild relative of the pot-herb which we cultivate in gardens for cooking purposes; and, because it is a sort of poor relation of that much esteemed plant, people call it by various 'animal' names intended to indicate that, if it were of any value at all, it could only be as a coarse food for animals. Such names are Cow Parsley, Cow-weed, Hare Parsley, and Pig's Parsley.

The name Parsley is applied to about a dozen wild plants. It is not an interesting word, because all we know about it is that it was copied from Latin and Greek plant-names. The name Chervil, which is very commonly given to this flower, has, however, more to tell us. It belonged originally to a garden plant, and, in the language of the Greeks, from which the word was borrowed, it seems to have meant 'the gladdening leaf.' This sounds quite a pleasant name, I think, and it makes us wonder what caused it to be given. The reason is that the garden Chervil yields a fragrant odour, which was con-

sidered so delightful that it made the heart rejoice. Besides this, the plant was said to be a splendid medicine for restoring the spirits, and it was also cultivated for flavouring salads and soups and other nice dishes. The wild Chervils shared to some extent in the reputation of the garden herb, though perhaps with little reason. Our plant was distinguished from its more superior namesake of the garden by such names as Cow Chervil, Mock Chervil, and Wild Chervil.

### The Dwarf Red Rattle.

THIS is a curious little plant. It lies close to the ground and has a way of burying itself in the grass so that it seems to be only a few inches high, though actually it may reach the gigantic size of six inches! When you disentangle the plant you find that it has a number of more or less prostrate stems bearing leaves arranged in small, deeply-cut divisions along their stalks, in such a way as to look like the branches of a tiny tree.

The flowers are quite attractive. They grow out of a puffy-looking vessel, called the 'calyx,' which is coloured light green and often stained with brown or purple. In some districts of Scotland the country people call the plant Dead-men's-bellows, because of the swollen appearance of this part of it. The mouth of the calyx is





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divided into five unequal parts, cut up in the same manner as the leaves, and from it the flower emerges. It has a long pink and silvery neck, and then it swells out into two beautiful rosy portions. The upper portion is notched and curved over rather like a claw, and the lower one spreads out in three flat divisions. Sheltering beneath the upper portion you can detect two pairs of thread-like 'stamens,' standing up in the prettiest and most orderly manner, rather like a small body of gold-and-silver-clad soldiers on parade. In some parts of England and Scotland they call the plant Cock's-comb, and I suppose they see the likeness in the rosy flowers, although I have often thought that the tiny leaves, seen together in a mass, are not unlike the 'rose-comb' of a cock.

When the petals fall the calyx becomes quite interesting to watch. A big green seed-case begins to peep out, and if you shake this when the seeds are ripe and dry they produce a rattling sound. That is why the name Red Rattle was given to the plant. Other names which people use are Rattle-baskets, Rattle-pods, and Shackle-boxes. The word Dwarf is prefixed to the common name because there is a taller plant called the Marsh Red Rattle.

There is a rather unpleasant name which farmers often use. I must tell you that the plant grows chiefly in moist pastures and heathy places, where it is often so abundant as to paint large

tracts of ground with its rosy hue. Farmers say that if their sheep eat the plant they become covered with vermin, so they call it Lousewort. This is a most unjustifiable name, because it is not the flowers, but the damp pastures, that cause the vermin to infect the sheep.

The Dwarf Red Rattle is one of the flowers of early summer. Indeed, it begins to unfold its rosy petals as early as May, and, as it continues to bloom until August, we have plenty of opportunities of studying its interesting features.

### The Yellow Rattle.

THE flowers of the Yellow Rattle have several features that resemble those of the Dwarf Red Rattle. There is the same swollen 'calyx,' containing the seed-case, and the same pattern of flower. Yet there are appreciable differences between the two blooms, and these I am going to tell you about. The green, puffy calyx of the Yellow Rattle is larger than that of its sister plant, and it has only four teeth at its mouth, instead of five. The seed-cases, too, are bigger and flatter. Indeed, their peculiar shape, as well as that of the seeds themselves, both being round and flattened, has given rise to a lot of special names for the plant. Some of these are Penny-grass, Money-plant, Pence, Pennies-and-half-pennies, and Penny Rattle.



Many of the 'coin' names are rather amusing. In parts of Scotland they call the plant Gowk's siller (silver), Gowk's-sixpence, and Gowk's-shillings. Now in Scotland 'gowk' really means a cuckoo; but the people there also use the word (just as we do 'cuckoo') as a slang term for a foolish person. The Yellow Rattle cannot help rattling the ripe seeds in their cases when the wind shakes the plant, just as a foolish person cannot resist the impulse to show off his wealth, when he has any, by rattling the money in his pockets. Hence the names which I have given.

Then there are some other 'coin' names which seem to point to a very ancient custom once observed by country people. I mean the names Hen-pen, Hen-penny, Henny-penny, and Hen-penny-grass. Long ago England was divided up into great estates which the Lords of the Manors who owned them let out to their retainers to farm. The tenants had to pay a special rent as a tax on their hens. The rent was one penny (probably a silver one) and it was called the hen-penny. Is it not likely, then, that these names of our plant are a reminder of the long-forgotten custom? The reason for the 'penny' part of the name is obvious; but there is also a special explanation of the 'Hen' part, though that is not quite so clear. One of the commonest names of the plant is Cock's-comb or Yellow-cock's-comb. There are two explana-

tions offered for these. One is that the leaves, at any rate those growing amongst the flowers, are like a cock's comb. The other is that the likeness is to be found in the way the flowers stand up at the tops of the stalk, as in the case of the Dwarf Red Rattle. I do not myself find the second resemblance at all striking, although the first one is quite plain. In any case you can understand that, as the plant was named after a cock, it was quite easy to name it after a hen, and so help to create the Hen-penny names.

It seems to be taking us rather a long time to look at the calyx of our plant, and we ought really to turn to the other parts; but there are still quite a lot of funny names made up about the way the ripe seeds rattle in their cases, and I must tell you just a few of them. First we get the common name of Yellow Rattle, as well as Rattle-bags and Rattle-traps, Rattle-baskets and Rattle-box. Then we have Shackle-bags, Shackle-baskets, Shekel-baskets, and Shecklers. Besides these there are Baby's Rattle and Pepper-box, and heaps of other names, too numerous to linger over.

I was telling you of the differences between the flowers of the Yellow Rattle and those of the Dwarf Red Rattle. The blooms rise from the calyces in the same manner, but they do not stand out, as the others do, on long silvery necks. They have the same two lips, the upper one

curved like a hood to shelter the thread-like stamens within, and the lower one divided into three lobes. The whole flower, which is yellow in colour and sometimes has a purple spot on the upper lip or on both lips, looks just like a gaping mouth—or, better still, a parrot's beak.

The stem of the plant is erect and rather stiff. It grows to a height of anything between a few inches and a foot or so, and it often bears a few branches. The leaves, which grow without stalks, are set in pairs. They are long, tapering, and bluntly pointed; their edges are rather deeply cut into teeth and the veins are beautifully and deeply engraved. The flowers grow along the tops of the stem, and amongst them are some leaves of a somewhat different shape from the others, being shorter, broader at the base, and more deeply cut.

The Yellow Rattle comes into flower early in June. It goes on blooming through the summer, but, if you wish to find it, you should make your search before the hay is cut, as its chief home is in the meadows and pastures where the grass is grown for hay. One of the West Country names for it is actually *New-mown-hay*, and this is given because the plant is in full bloom, and its seed-cases swelling, about haying time.

Farmers do not like the Yellow Rattle, because its roots fasten themselves on to those of the grass which they are cultivating and suck the nourishment from their crop. They call the flower

Poverty-weed, because it impoverishes their hay, and perhaps because its presence is a sign of poor land. In Buckinghamshire the village people used to call the plants by the curious name Locusts. What do you think was the reason? They had been taught that these were the locusts which St John the Baptist ate when he was dwelling in the wilderness. I wonder how they came by such a strange notion?

### The Red Dead Nettle.

EVERYONE knows what a Nettle is, and everyone knows from painful experience what a powerful sting it has. Now there are other kinds of Nettles which do not sting, and they are called Dead Nettles for that reason. The welcome absence of this undesirable feature is expressed in other ways, for the Dead Nettles are often called Blind Nettles, Deaf Nettles, and Dumb Nettles, meaning that they are not sufficiently alive or active to sting you when you touch them. Sometimes the name is Dunch Nettle, which is an old word meaning much the same thing.

The chief plants of this little group are the Red, White, and Yellow Dead Nettles. At present we are going to look at the first of them, and in another chapter we will talk about the second. The yellow flower is more un-common.

The Red Dead Nettle is a softly hairy plant, generally low and spreading in habit, though, when it grows in the long grass, it becomes taller and lanky. The stem, which varies from only a few inches to a foot in length, is weak and square and hollow. The leaves vary a good deal in shape, but they are always cut into teeth or scallops at their edges, and they always grow in pairs, with each pair standing at right angles to the ones above and below it. The lower leaves are generally small and rounded, and they grow at the ends of long stalks in a manner absurdly like a hen flapping her wings. The upper leaves have shorter stalks and they are mostly heart-shaped. These upper leaves are bunched together at the top of the stem, and they often take on a purplish colour, which, indeed, may extend to the whole plant.

The purplish-red flowers grow in rings crowded amongst the upper leaves. They are small and neither handsome nor striking. They have a long tube opening out broadly into two lips. The upper one is arched over the four 'stamens.' The lower one is divided into two parts, and there is a notch, or tooth, at each side of the flower. Amongst the blooms you can see the empty 'calyces' where earlier flowers have fallen, and you will notice the five long teeth that look like soft prickles.

Both the Red and the White Dead Nettles are called Rats'-mouths because the lips of the

flowers stand open like a mouth, though I do not think you will find any resemblance to a rat's mouth in particular. Another name for the red plant is Rabbit's-meat, and perhaps this too comes from the shape of the flower, as if it suggested the mouth of a bunny eating; unless, indeed, people imagine that rabbits steal out from their burrows and nibble the leaves. In the very north of England they call our plant Bad Man's-posies and Black Man's-posies. Now the Bad Man, and I expect the Black Man too, is Satan; and probably these names were given because the plant has a strong, unpleasant smell which makes it decidedly unsuitable for inclusion in a posy.

The bees are very fond of the Dead Nettles, and they visit the flower so often that they, or at all events the red and white ones, are sometimes called Bee Nettle, our present plant answering also to the title of Bumble-bee-flower.

The three Dead Nettles previously mentioned all bear the further name of Archangel. Of course you know that an archangel is an angel of the highest rank in heaven, and that St Michael is always called the Archangel. This name seems a very high-sounding term for such comparatively humble plants, and it is impossible to say now how they came by it. Perhaps they were thought to possess exceptionally high values as a medicine in the days when most medicines were made from plants. Or they may have been credited with powers against witchcraft and evil





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spirits, as many herbs were in those days. In either of these ways they could have acquired an 'angelic' or 'archangelic' reputation, though I am bound to confess that there may be some quite different explanation of the name.

The common name Nettle is an exceedingly ancient one, and several explanations of its meaning have been given. One suggestion is that it comes from 'needle,' because, I suppose, the sting of the ordinary Nettle smarts like a needle-prick. Other ideas are that the name is made up from 'net,' or else from a word meaning 'sew' or 'spin,' because the fibres of Nettles were at one time used for spinning into thread. But all I can tell you for certain is that the name was used by the Anglo-Saxons when they invaded England fifteen hundred years ago, and even long before.

The Red Dead Nettle is a plant of the hedgerows and of waste and cultivated ground. It is in flower throughout the summer months, though you may discover odd blooms at almost any time of the year. There is another member of this group, called the Henbit or Henbit Nettle. It is very much like the Red Dead Nettle, but the leaves beneath the flowers are without stalks, broadly round in shape and deeply cut, while the blooms themselves have a more slender tube than that of our present plant, so that they stand out more plainly from the surrounding leaves.

## The White Dead Nettle.

IN the chapter on the Red Dead Nettle you can read about the meaning of the name Dead Nettle and of several other names which are shared by both plants; and presently I will tell you of some more titles that apply especially to our present flower.

The White Dead Nettle is a hairy plant that ordinarily grows to about a foot in height, having a square, hollow, branching stem. The leaves are heart-shaped, tapering to a point, and their edges are cut into coarse teeth, more or less rounded off. They grow on stalks in pairs, with each pair set at right angles to the ones above and below, just as in the case of the Red Dead Nettle.

The flowers are of quite a remarkable shape and the whole plant is much handsomer than its red brother. The blooms grow in conspicuous rings above the different pairs of leaves, and they are spotlessly white or slightly creamy in colour, with often a tinge of pink in them. They look exactly like a pair of widely gaping jaws, being composed of two lips, of which the upper one bends like an arch over the thread-like 'stamens,' and the lower one divides into two prominent 'lobes.' Between the lips, at each side, is a long fine tooth.

Like its red brother, the plant is freely visited

by bees for the honey which its flowers yield, and so, in addition to answering to the name of Bee Nettle, it is called Honey-bee. But the busy bees do not get all the sweet liquid, for children love to suck it from the pure white blooms. They call the plant Honey-flower, Suck-bottle, Suckie-Sue, and Honeysuckle; but, of course, the last name is the common name of quite a different flower.

There are some curious titles given to the White Dead Nettle. One of them is Black-beetle-poison, and if you can tell me in what way the plant kills those crawling insects I shall be greatly interested. Another name is Lamb's-ears, and I think perhaps this refers to the way in which the two lobes of the flower's lower lip are arranged, for they do look rather like a pair of baby lamb's ears. Perhaps, however, you can discover a more striking resemblance in some other part of the flowers or leaves. Yet another name is Shoes-and-stockings, and I leave you to guess the meaning of that while I give you a final one. This is a title applied to quite a lot of plants. It is Snake-flower, and it is given to our plant, either because it often grows in long grass where snakes are likely to be lying hidden, or because the 'pistil' of the flower, which is close to the stamens, is forked like the tongue of a snake.

The White Dead Nettle grows in much the same places, and at about the same times, as the

Red Dead Nettle, and it may be useful for you to turn to the chapter on that flower and compare the two plants.

## The Thrift.

IN the month of May the countless blossoms of the Thrift paint all the favoured sea-coasts where they grow with broad bright splashes of delicious pink. Down on the muddy or sandy shore, or, better still, on the rocky cliffs that frown upon the blue sea, they lie in spreading masses of brilliant colour that take your breath away with their beauty. They seem to possess the power of nourishing themselves on the tiniest allowance of soil, for you will often find them perched on the steep slopes of the cliffs, and issuing from the cracks and crannies up and down their sides, where one would think that not a pinch of earth could lodge. So do they flourish and make the sea-coasts lovely throughout the summer months, whilst, curiously enough, they are found as well on some of the mountains of Scotland. I think it must be because they do so much with such meagre sources of food that they are called Thrift, as if they served as a shining example of industry and economy; although the name may mean simply that the plant thrives or flourishes in abundance wherever it makes its home.

Some people say that the Virgin Mary loved

to rest upon the close foliage of the Thrift, and so the plant came to be called Our Lady's-cushion. You have only to glance at the leaves to see how fitting this name is. They are just like grass in shape, which leads some people to call the plant Sea-grass and Sea-turf; but they grow so densely together in a soft round mass, often pressing closely to the ground, that they are for all the world like green, springy cushions. Other people think these masses of leaves are like pincushions, as indeed they are, and they prefer the name of Lady's-pincushion and Pin-cushions.

The leaves grow in tufts from various points in a thick brown rootstock, and, in the centre of these, the flower-stalks spring. The flowers, which have five lovely pink petals, are crowded together in a round head, and, as they resemble the garden Pinks and Gilliflowers, the plant is often called Sea Pink and Sea Gilliflower, as well as Cushion Pink and French Pink. So, too, it is sometimes known as the Cliff Rose and the Sand-flower, from the places where it grows. The flower-stalks vary in height from three or four to eight inches or so, and they are encircled by a downward pointing sheath just below the flowers. When the blooms fade the flower-head becomes a brown chaffy mass, and then, as plant after plant sinks into its winter sleep, the lovely pink blush that overspread the cliffs is gradually changed for the withered complexion of old age.

## The Wild Thyme.

I EXPECT everyone knows the beautiful and fragrant little herb that lies throughout the summer months in warm purple patches on the slopes of dry banks and hilly pastures, that tiny plant of which Oberon, the King of the Fairies, speaks in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when he says:

I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows.

It is one of the daintiest and sweetest smelling flowers of the country-side, and when you walk over the grassy cliffs or hill-sides where it abounds, your feet crushing out its delicious odours, it is like treading a scented carpet.

The plant grows in dense patches, usually close to the ground, where it seems to hug the warm earth with its slender woody stems and crowded branches. The stems divide very freely and the branches bear numerous pairs of tiny pear-shaped or oval leaves. The flowers, which are amongst the very smallest that ever grew, cluster together at the ends of the branches, often forming loose spikes, and they are of a warm mauve or purple hue.

Probably you will wonder whether the name of our little plant has anything to do with that other kind of 'time' which we tell by the clock. Well, there have been people who spelt the



plant-name in that way, but the two things have no connection with one another. When I tell you the correct meaning you will be surprised, for the name comes from a very old foreign word (sounding much like the one we use) which meant 'to burn a sacrifice.' The reason why such a high-sounding name was given to this humble little plant, and to the garden Thyme to which it is related, is this. Long ago the people who lived in Greece were worshippers of heathen gods. They were in the habit of burning sweet-smelling herbs on their altars when they offered up sacrifices, and one of the plants so employed was the Thyme. They thought that such a delightful odour must prove pleasant to their gods, and that it would induce them to accept their sacrifices and grant the petitions with which they were accompanied. Since the coming of our Lord these heathen practices have, of course, been discontinued, but the name which the Greeks gave to the little plants lives on in our language to-day. I think it makes flowers ever so much more interesting when you know the secrets that lie hidden in their names.

There was another curious purpose for which the Thyme was used after it had been burnt. People believed that serpents and scorpions were afraid of the odour, so they used to burn the plants in the hope that the smell of them would drive those dangerous and unpleasant creatures away.

Our little plant has several varieties of its common name, for it is called Mother Thyme, Old Mother Thyme, and Mother-of-Thyme, as well as Sheep's Thyme, Shepherd's Thyme, Horse Thyme, Bank Thyme, Creeping Thyme, and Running Thyme.

### The Comfrey.

ONE day when I was walking down a lane in search of a clump of Comfrey plants, I overtook a farmer going in the same direction. Presently we discovered the plants growing on the top of a moist bank, and the farmer said:

‘Ah, that's what I want, some of that there Backwort.’

‘Why do you call it Backwort?’ I asked.

‘Because it's so good for pains in the back,’ he told me. And then he broke off a root and went home.

Now I thought that was very interesting, because the Comfrey has for hundreds of years been famous as a cure for bruises and sprains and wounds, and even more so for knitting together broken bones. That is why it has such names as Backwort, Knit-back, and Bone-set. Long ago people magnified the healing properties of plants in the most extravagant manner, and one of them, in writing about the root of a herb which some folk say must have been the Comfrey (although I do not myself





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think it was), said that it would 'glue together meat that is chopped in pieces, seething in a pot, and make it into one lump: the same bruised and laid in the manner of a plaster, doth heal all fresh and green wounds.'

The plant owes its common name to its healing reputation, although I confess I find it difficult to read anything of that meaning in the word Comfrey. The name came to us from a foreign tongue, and such terms often change their shape to an unrecognisable extent while they are being adopted into our own speech. In olden times the flower was called, in the language of the Romans, *Consolida* and *Conferva*, which had the meaning of 'to make firm or solid' and 'to heal or grow together.' Other titles of a similar kind were used later on, and I expect that the foreign names gradually became changed, in our own tongue, to the present name Comfrey.

To find this plant you should look along the banks of rivers or in moist pastures, for the Comfrey loves a wet situation. It is a big, coarse, bristly plant, growing in large leafy clumps to a height of two or three feet, with a thick rootstock and many stout branching stems. The leaves are very large, sometimes as much as eight or nine inches in length; they are rough with bristly hairs and they taper to a long point. The biggest leaves are far too extensive to include in the picture, so you must

expect to find the plant looking much bigger than it does there. The lower leaves grow on long stalks, but the upper ones continue for quite a distance down the branch or stem from which they grow. Below each cluster of flowers there is a pair of leaves which stand up with a remarkable likeness to an ass's ears, and so people often call the plant Ass-ear.

The flowers are very interesting to watch. Each flowering branch divides at its end, and there you see the buds rolled up like a snail's shell, or like the tail of a scorpion. As the flowers open they unroll themselves and hang in elegant clusters. At first the mouth of each bloom is closed, and then its shape is extra-ordinarily like an electric-light bulb. Presently, however, flower after flower opens its mouth, and the form changes into rows of little bells, which lead some people to call the flowers by the very suitable name of Church-bells. A long, silvery, needle-like object grows out from every bloom and remains on the plant long after the flower has fallen. This is such a striking feature that children name the plant Needle-cases.

On some Comfrey plants the colour of the flowers is a pale yellow or creamy white; on others it is purple, with varying shades at different stages of growth, from blue to pale pink. The flowering time commences at the end of April and continues right on until the autumn.

The Comfrey is said to be a useful food for



cattle, and pigs are certainly fond of it, for in Wiltshire it goes by the name of Pig-weed, as if it were the especial property of that animal.

### The Shining Crane's-Bill.

THERE is quite a numerous family of plants called Crane's-bills, and I have selected the Shining Crane's-bill for the present chapter because it is one of the prettiest of the group, and its features are sufficiently distinctive to make it easy to re-cognise. It is a beautiful little plant, for although its flowers are quite small they are very charming, and the rich colouring of the stems and leaves makes ample amends for any lack of floral display.

The plant is sometimes no more than a few inches high, but often its branching stems grow to a length of a foot or so, though their habit is to spread in tangled masses rather than to stand erect. The leaves are almost circular in outline, and they are deeply divided into five 'lobes,' each of which is less deeply cut. In their early state they are of a fresh shining green, and the stems have the same glossy finish at every stage of their growth. That is the reason why the plant is called the *Shining* Crane's-bill. As the leaves and stems grow older they change in colour to a rich deep red, which gives the plant a striking and lovely appearance. The Herb Robert, which

is a sister of the present plant, changes colour in the same way, but the leaves are quite different in shape, as you can learn from the chapter on that flower contained in the first volume.

The flowers, which grow in pairs, are very tiny, with five petals of a rich rose or magenta hue and a small cluster of golden-headed 'stamens' set in their midst. The attractions of wild-flowers do not by any means cease when the blooms have fallen. Indeed, if we failed to observe the Crane's-bills at that period we should never learn the meaning of the name. You will notice that underneath the petals there is a green, swollen-looking object set with five projecting angles. This is the 'calyx' of the flower, and within this is a vessel where the seeds lie hidden, awaiting their time to fall to the ground and develop into new plants.

Before this happens, however, a needle-like object begins to grow out from the top of the vessel, and this continues to lengthen until the entire growth resembles a cobbler's awl. It also suggests the head and beak of the bird called a crane, and that is why the plant is named a Crane's-bill. The Crane's-bills are also known as Wild Geraniums, and this name has the same meaning as the other, for it comes from a Greek word meaning 'a crane.' The cranes used to make their homes and build their nests in marshy places in England, but they have long since ceased to do so, though a few of them are

occasionally seen in our land when they migrate from foreign countries.

The Shining Crane's-bill grows in waste and stony places, on hedgebanks and old walls. Its flowering time commences, in favoured situations, as early as the beginning of April, and it continues throughout the summer. For some reason which I do not understand, children in the west of England name the plant Baby-cakes. Perhaps, if you study the flower carefully, you will discover where the cakes are kept. Another name these children use is John's-flower, and this may have been given in memory of St John. Many plants have been dedicated to particular saints, especially those which are in bloom when the feasts of those saints are celebrated.

### The Bladder Campion.

THE Bladder Campion is quite well named, for every flower has a big smooth bladder beneath the petals. It is rather a pretty bladder, too, for it is stained with light green and purple hues and ornamented with a delicate tracery of brown and purple veins. A striking feature like this is enough to set all the children, to say nothing of the grown-ups, coining descriptive names for the plant. So we find the flowers called by such fanciful terms as White-bottles, Bladder-bottles, Bladders-of-lard, Bird's-eggs,

and, in Scotland, White Cockles. The Red Campion, and also the Ragged Robin, both of which are sisters of this plant, are often called Cock-robin and Robin Hood; so this white flower is distinguished as White-cock-robin, White-Robin, and White-Robin Hood. It is also called White-hood and White-riding-hood, though I think there must be some confusion in these names, as there is nothing in the flowers to suggest a hood.

Another name, which is used in parts of Scotland, is Cow-bell, given because the bladders of the flowers—they are really the ‘calyces’—with the five broad teeth at their open end, remind cow-herds of the bells which are hung on their cattle so that they will not get lost on the mountains.

Another ‘cow’ name is Cow-crackers, which When brings me to a further interesting point. the flowers are in bud the calyces are sealed up at their mouths and you can ‘pop’ them, as you do the little green ‘snappers’ on the Greater Stitchwort. That is probably how the Bladder Campion came by the name of Cow-crackers, besides many others of the same character, such as Pops, Poppers, and Pop-guns, Billy-busters, Snappers, and Thunderbolts. By Thunderbolts I suppose thunder is meant, which, of course, is quite a different thing.

The seeds of the plant are concealed in a green case set within the calyx. When they

are quite ripe they rattle distinctly as you shake them, and this habit has occasioned another crop of names for the plant: Rattle-weed, Rattle-bags, Rattle-baskets, Cow-rattle, and Shackle-backle. Some of these titles are given also to the Yellow Rattle because the dry seeds of that plant behave in the same way. The ripened seed-case makes a crackling sound if you burst it, so perhaps some of the names which I mentioned earlier have been made up from this circumstance.

Now perhaps we had better leave these amusing names and turn to the plant itself. The stems, which branch loosely at the base, grow to a height of from six inches to as much as two feet. The leaves, which grow in pairs, are fairly long and tapering, of a deep green hue and stalkless. Both stem and leaves are more or less covered with a fine bloom. The flowers grow in erect or usually slightly drooping clusters at the ends of the stems. Around the mouth of the calyx five petals spread in a circle of pure white, each one so deeply cleft as to look like two, and from the midst of these the long, white, curving 'pistils' emerge.

The Bladder Campion is to be found in flower from June until August. It is to be sought in fields and waste places, about banks and road-sides, and on railway embankments. Of the other kinds of Campion with white flowers two

only need be mentioned. One is the Sea Campion, which is a lower and denser plant, with larger blooms, growing near the sea. The other is the White, or Evening Campion, a rather coarse plant whose flowers, which have a slight fragrance, open in the evening when the night moths are flying.

The story of the name Campion takes us back to the times when the victorious athletes in the public games which were held amongst the ancient Greeks and Romans were crowned with chaplets of flowers. I have told the story in the chapter on the Red Campion contained in the earlier volume; so I will only explain briefly that the name of the plant is supposed to have the meaning of ‘champion,’ and to have been first given to some relatives of our plant because one of them had been used in the chaplets with which the victorious athletes, or champions, were crowned. You will see, therefore, that this common wild-flower has quite an important place in one of the pleasanter by-ways of history.

### The Bindweed.

THROUGHOUT the summer months the hedges are hung with the snow-white bells of the Bindweed. So big and pure they are that you would think they were Lilies run wild, and indeed they are often called Hedge Lilies and Bine





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Lilies. The plant clambers eagerly up the leafy hedges, striving for a clear view of the sunlight, and securing its hold by the long, twisting stems that wander onwards and upwards and twine around the other plants that come in their path, like a lot of riotous children out at play. From this habit comes the common name Bindweed, for the plant is a *weed* that *binds* itself to the hedge and other plants. In the same way we get the names of Creeper, Robin-run-in-the-hedge, and Jack-run-in-the-country, besides that of Devil's-garters, given because people think the thick, strong stems would serve excellently for those articles.

Many and many a name has been given to the lovely white blooms, likening them to bells and trumpets and nightcaps and lots of other things that fancy suggests. They are Hedge-bells, London-bells, and Bell-bind. They are used by the fairies as trumpets to summon their happy bands to frolics in the woods and meadows when we are all asleep. At least that is the reason, I suppose, why they are called Fairy-trumpets. They serve all sorts of people as articles of clothing, or so it would seem from their names. Everybody knows that they are called Nightshirts, and Lady's-nightcap, Granny's-nightcap, Old-man's-nightcap, Old-womans'-nightcap, Devil's-nightcap, Mother's-nightcap, and all kinds of other 'nightcap' names, as if every-body in the world went to the plant to pick the

blooms and wear them on their heads at night. Then, for day-time wear, they offer themselves in a variety of ways, as you can tell from the names of White-shirts, Daddy-white-shirt, Old man's-shirts, Old-woman's-bonnet, Holland-smocks, White-smocks, Old-lady's-smocks, and also Lady's-smock and Our Lady's-smock, as if the Virgin Mary herself, who is often called 'Our Lady,' thought that the spotlessly white flowers would make a dainty garment for her wear. You will readily see the fitness of these names, for the bell- or trumpet-shaped flowers are as white as the snowiest linen, and their shape, with the aid of a little fancy, sufficiently suggests a nightcap and the other garments I have mentioned.

The flowers are borne singly on stalks that spring from the rambling stems at the points where the leaf-stalks grow. When they are in bud they look like the head of a pretty paintbrush dipped in creamy paint, the lower part embraced by two green, heart-shaped leaves, or 'bracts,' as these are really called.

So varied are the pretty fancies that have arisen about the blooms that it is really more interesting to talk about these than to describe the flowers themselves, especially as the latter are so easy to recognise. Do you not think that the names Lady's-umbrellas and Lady's-sunshades are rather happy ones? That is what some children call the flowers, though I think

that only very little ladies, such as fairies, would find the silken petals of any use to protect them from rain or fierce sunshine. Then, just to show you that children are still going on making up new names for the plants they love, as they have done for centuries, I will tell you of another title which they give to the plant. It is Gramophones, and you will at once see the likeness of the long, tapering, wide-mouthed horn of that instrument to the flowers of the Bindweed. Yet another name is Cups, the reason for which is just as easy to see. Some people call the plant Morning-glory, because its shining blooms glorify the hedges morning after morning as they display their pure beauty to the sky; but what they mean by the strange name of Nit-clickers I really cannot imagine.

The leaves of the Bindweed are smooth, and they grow, each on a separate stalk, at intervals along the twisting stems. Some of them are shaped like a heart, others almost like a triangle. They are pointed at one end and have a pair of square lobes at the other.

The Bindweed is often called the Greater Bindweed, or the Larger Bindweed, to distinguish it from a similar plant known as the Convolvulus or Field Bindweed, about which there is a separate chapter. The name Convolvulus, too, the meaning of which you will find in that chapter, is frequently given to both plants; but it will be better for you not to use

it for the present one. The two flowers are frequently confused by children, and many of the nightcap' and other names which I have told you about are applied to them without distinction. these names.

### The Convolvulus or Field Bindweed.

THIS plant is frequently confused with the Bindweed, or Greater Bindweed, which forms the subject of another chapter. It certainly has the same general habit of growth, but there are several features which make it quite easy to tell it from the other plant. It climbs up the hedges by means of its long, twisting stems, but it does not often get so high as the Bindweed, and it is more frequently found lying in the long grass, or amongst the corn, and entwining itself—rather too affectionately—with the neighbouring plants.

The leaves grow on separate stalks in just the same way as those of the Greater Bindweed, but their shape is somewhat different. They vary a good deal, but in the main they are broad and pointed, and the end nearest the stalk is extended into two ears, more or less pronounced, either pointed like an arrow-head, or squared, or rounded off. The flowers are bell-shaped and grow on long stalks which spring from the stems at the points where the

leaf-stalks grow. The Greater Bindweed has only one flower on each stalk, but the flower-stalks of our present plant often branch into two or even three stalks with a flower on each, though the buds do not open at the same time. The flowers are much smaller than those of the Greater Bindweed, and they are usually pink and white, though sometimes the pink is very faint or almost entirely absent. They begin to bloom as early as the first part of June, and continue right on until the autumn months.

I expect you will find the name *Convolvulus* rather hard to pronounce. It is not an English word, and that is why it does not convey any meaning to you. It was used as a plant-name by the Romans some two thousand years ago, and it came from a similar word which in their language meant 'to roll together' or 'to roll around.' Even as an ordinary word I think it rather suits its meaning, because it makes you roll your tongue around your mouth to pronounce it! As the name of this plant, too, there can be no question about its suitability, for it describes perfectly the way in which the creeping stems roll or twine about the other plants, and also their corkscrew manner of growth. The Romans used to give the same name of *Convolvulus* to a kind of caterpillar because it rolled itself up into a leaf.

I have told you, in the chapter on the Bindweed, how the name *Convolvulus* is sometimes

given to that plant as well, and I also explained the meaning of the term Bindweed. The Field Bindweed is sometimes referred to as the Lesser Bindweed, to distinguish it from its larger brother. It has other names as well, given with the same object, but I think it will only confuse you to mention them.

Many of the funny names which you can read about in the chapter on the Bindweed are used for this plant as well because they have the same shaped flowers, but there are some additional ones which seem to belong especially to our present flower. One of them is Kettle-smocks, though I cannot imagine where people find the 'kettle.' Another is Earwig, and I suppose children believe that the flowers harbour those insects, for there is nothing about the plant to explain the name, unless it is the ears at the ends of the leaves. Then there is rather a pretty title—Fairies'-wine-cups—given because the pink-hued flowers are likened to a cup filled with ruby wine and small enough and dainty enough to be offered to the 'little folk.' And there is Gipsy's-hats, which explains itself, and Ragged-shirt, which does not explain itself, unless it means that the red and white flowers are like a white shirt patched with red; and Ropewind, because the twining stems are like long ropes binding the plant to its unwilling victims; and many more too numerous to mention.



## The Viper's Bugloss.

THIS is evidently a plant which we must examine cautiously, for as we all know that a viper is a dangerous kind of snake, we shall want to discover what connection there is between the two things.

We can find the plant at any time from June to September, and the best spots in which to seek it are the waste parts of roads and fields and about old walls and gravel pits. It has a stiff, erect stem, growing from one to two feet high and set with strong bristly hairs. When you look at the stem you will notice that it is covered with dark spots. At once, therefore, we have discovered some connection with the snake family, for, as I expect you know, many such reptiles have a spotted skin. In the olden days folks used to believe that almost every plant yielded some or other kind of medicine, and not only that, but that the healing powers of any particular plant were revealed by signs appearing on its different parts. When, therefore, they noticed the spots on the Viper's Bugloss, they read them as a sign that the herb was a cure for the bites of vipers and other venomous reptiles. Another reason which they gave in support of this notion was that the seeds of the plant were like the head of a viper. These

seeds turn black as they ripen and they are pointed at one end, but I cannot say that they really bear any such resemblance as was fancied.

Once people got the idea that the plant was a cure for snake-bites they allowed their imaginations to carry them farther still, and they said that if you took the precaution of drinking some medicine made from the root it would even safeguard you from being bitten in future. They also believed that no serpent would come near any place in which the plant was growing. No wonder they named it the *Viper's* Bugloss and Snake's Bugloss and Viper's-herb!

The lower leaves of the plant are much larger than the upper ones, and they usually wither by the time the flowers appear. The upper leaves are narrow, tapering, and pointed, and, like the stem, clothed with bristly hairs. It is to the shape and roughness of the leaves that the plant owes the second part of its name, for Bugloss comes from two Greek words meaning 'ox- tongue.' There is another plant called simply Bugloss, without the Viper, and this has leaves of a similar appearance. Another old name of these and other plants was Langdebeef, which is formed from French words having the same meaning of 'Ox-tongue.' People were reminded of the long, rough tongues of oxen when they observed the leaves of these plants, and that is why they made up such names. The country





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folk of Kent thought the leaves felt like pieces of flannel, and so they called the Viper's Bugloss Our Lord's-flannel and Our Saviour's-flannel.

The flowers grow all on one side of a number of curved spikes, which have the same bristly covering as the other parts of the plant; and the manner in which these spikes are rolled up in one stage of their growth has earned for the plant the name of Cat's-tail. The blooms open a number at a time as the spikes lengthen out; and, as the new flowers expand, so the older ones die, leaving behind a bushy-looking row of empty green cups, or 'calyces,' as they are called, divided into a number of long pointed teeth. The flowers are of the bell-shaped pattern, with five 'lobes' or divisions at the mouth. Their colour is a reddish-purple at first, but, strange to say, instead of becoming dingy or faded with age, it changes to a clear bright blue as deep as the blue sky of a summer's day.

The general appearance of the plant is stiff and bristly, and it is not at all surprising that it should sometimes be called the Blue Thistle.

### The Lady's Fingers or Kidney Vetch.

TO see this beautiful plant at its best we must travel to some place by the sea where the coast stands out in rugged cliffs and grassy downs. It loves, indeed, to make its home in hilly places

everywhere, and it also flourishes in dry pastures and on high banks; but it is only when you see it growing in golden and crimson and creamy masses, spread like a richly worked carpet over the grassy cliffs, that you realise how entrancing it can be. Early in June, before the summer flowers are really awake, it begins to paint the land with its varied colours, and it continues to bloom until the summer is nearly gone.

It is, of course, the flowers that attract us most, but every part of the plant is interesting. The rootstock throws up a number of strong stems of a pale-green colour which grow sometimes to a foot in length. These stems, and indeed almost the entire plant, are thickly covered with soft, silky hairs of a greyish hue, that give the plant the appearance of having been frosted over and make it delightfully soft to touch. The fleshy leaflets, which are long and narrow, are often of a dark-green colour on their upper surfaces. They grow in pairs on either side of the stalk, with a single leaflet, usually very much bigger than the others, at the end. They are deeply marked by a rib which runs along their centres, and they have a habit of partly folding themselves together and showing the greyish-green of their silky undersides.

The flower-heads grow at the ends of the branching stems, and directly you look at them you notice something odd in their appearance. They resemble the Hop Clover and many other



plants in one way, for each of the 'florets,' or little flowers, which crowd together in the flower-heads is a separate flower. This is quite a usual feature in plants, but the odd thing about the Lady's Fingers is that, instead of there being one flower-head at the end of each stalk, there are generally two, and these are so closely pressed against each other that they look uncomfortably crowded, and so create that odd appearance which we noticed.

Each flower-head is clasped underneath by a circle of long, pointed, leaf-like 'bracts.' If you pull these off in fives they look like the outspread fingers of a hand, and some people say that the name Lady's Fingers was given because of this. Every floret stands in a soft and downy cup or vase of a pale greenish-yellow colour and puffy appearance. The florets are usually bright yellow, but very often, especially near the sea-coast, they display the most charming creams and crimsons and reds. I do not know whether you will think that these flowers look like a cluster of fingers, but, although the likeness is not by any means striking, I think the name of Lady's Fingers is just as likely to be due to their appearance as to that of the leaf-like bracts. Other pretty names are Butter-fingers and Cheese-cakes, given because the flowers have the rich yellow hue of fresh farm butter and cheese.

Children often call the flowers Lamb's-toe,

from their shape, while others think they are like the claws of a cat, or the feet or the beak of a crow, and so they name the plant Cat's-claws, Yellow-crow's-foot, and, in Scotland, Crawnebs (or Crowbeaks).

I cannot tell you for certain who is the 'Lady' referred to in the common name of the plant. Long ago it was a practice to name flowers after the Virgin Mary, so that, when people saw them growing in the fields around them, they would be reminded of the Mother of our Lord. Several plants are named in this way, such as the Lady's Thistle and the Lady's Bedstraw, and perhaps the Lady's Finger is one of them; though sometimes the plant is called My-lady's-fingers, as if the lady in question were a dame of high degree. The Bird's-foot Trefoil and other plants are often called Lady's Fingers, but it is better to use the name only for the present plant.

The Lady's Fingers was used of old as a medicine for diseases of the kidneys, and so it is often known as the Kidney Vetch. Vetches are plants which belong to the same family of flowers as our present plant, and you can read about their name in the chapter on the Tufted Vetch. Another purpose for which the plant was employed was to staunch, or stop, the bleeding of wounds, because its downy softness suggested that it would be very suitable for that purpose. From this use, the plant came to be called Stanch

or Staunch, and it was regularly sold in the herb-markets under that name. So also it was called Woundwort and Rustic-woundwort; but here again it is better not to use those names to-day, because Woundwort is the common name of another group of plants.

### The Hop Clover.

THERE is a cultivated plant, known as the Hop, whose withered flowers, called hops, are used in brewing beer, and the little Clover shown in the picture is called the Hop Clover because, when its flower-heads wither, they are just like small hops. There are ever so many kinds of Clover, and we have already looked at two of them, the Red Clover and the White Clover, in the first volume of this work.

The Hop Clover grows, often in large spreading masses, along the borders of roads and fields, in dry pastures and in all sorts of waste places, and it is to be found in bloom from about the middle of June until August. It is a very tangled plant, sending out a maze of slender stems, from six inches to a foot or so in length, which do their best to stand upright, but often, like very young children, only succeed in crawling along the ground. These stems are slender and wiry and, generally, clothed with soft hairs. The leaves grow on short stalks, and they are

made up of three leaflets which look like three separate leaves, each one shaped like a pointed egg or a heart. If you look closely at them, or hold them to the light, you will see that they are ruled all over with straight parallel lines of veins, all running from the centre of the leaves. The Hop Clover is often called the Hop Trefoil, and I will tell you the meaning of this name. 'Trefoil' is made up from two Latin words meaning 'three' and 'leaf,' and it is applied to this plant, as well as to other Clovers, because the leaflets grow in threes.

At the points where the leaf-stalks join the stems the long flower-stalks spring, bearing their round heads of yellow flowers. Every one of these heads, although you would think it was a single flower, is really a complete little family of from thirty to fifty separate blooms, all packed tightly together. As the flower-heads wither they behave exactly like those of their sister-plant, the White Clover. The lower flowers, or 'florets,' as they are called, turn brown and droop, as if they were too tired to hold up their heads any longer. Then in time the higher florets follow their sleepy example, until the whole flower-head has become a cluster of withered blossoms like the hops I mentioned before. Some children call the plant Mustard-tips, because the bright yellow hue of the flowers suggests that they have been dipped in mustard. Others name it Tom Thumb, as they do the

The Bird's-foot Trefoil, another sister of our little plant.

I have told you about the name Clover in the earlier volume, so I will only repeat briefly what was said there. The name is a very old one—no one can say how old—and some people think that it means 'cleave,' because the leaves are cloven into three leaflets. Others think that it came from a Latin word meaning 'a club,' and that the three leaflets of the Clover plants were likened to an enormous three-headed club which was carried by a famous hero named Hercules.

There is a plant which is rather like the Hop Clover, called the Lesser Clover; but you can easily recognise it when you see it, because it is a smaller plant in every way, its flower-heads in particular being not nearly so large as those of the Hop Clover.

## The Flax.

THE members of the little family of plants called Flax are amongst the most useful herbs of the field. We love them chiefly for their delicate beauty, their slender forms, and the heavenly blue of their flowers; but, besides the pleasure which these features give us, we value the plants for their varied usefulness. It will surprise you to be told that one kind of Flax,

Called the Common Flax, provides the thread of which our linen garments are made. Its stems contain a tough fibre, and when they are stripped the fibre within them is spun into thread and afterwards woven into linen. The seeds of the same plant contain a valuable oil, called linseed oil, which is used in mixing paint and varnish. Linseed poultices, too, are made from the seeds.

There are four kinds of Flax growing in our country, though the most useful one is not really a wild-flower, but is cultivated specially for the purposes I have mentioned. The particular plant shown in the picture is called the Pale Flax, because its flowers are of a lighter blue than those of the Common Flax and those of another of its sisters called the Perennial Flax. The fourth kind is easily distinguished because its flowers are white.

The Pale Flax grows in sandy pastures and other open spaces, as well as in waste places by the roadsides and elsewhere. It blooms chiefly in June and July, but you can often find it again quite late in the summer. It has a woody root, from which several smooth wiry stems arise and divide themselves into delicate branches. The leaves are very narrow and pointed, like short blades of grass. They grow singly all the way up the stalks, first one on one side and then, higher up, another on the opposite side. The flowers are of a delicate blue or mauve, with pretty purple veins, and if you pluck them the





The Rest-Harrow.





The Common Mallow.



petals quickly fall. There are five petals, and they are set in a ring of five green 'sepals' with sharply pointed teeth.

When the flower has fallen you will find that, while it was holding up its pretty petals to the sun and air, it was producing a tiny object which looks like a peg-top turned upside down. Split this open and you will see that it is divided into a number of neat little compartments, each containing a hard, glossy seed. It is from these seeds that new plants will grow next year.

The word Flax is so old that, if we could travel backwards through history on a magic carpet, we should have to journey for thousands of years before we came to the time when it was first used. The warlike Anglo-Saxons knew the name long before they raided our shores fifteen hundred years ago; and, indeed, if we could reach back to the very earliest times mentioned in our oldest history books, we should still be a long way from the age when the savage tribes of Europe employed the Flax for making their garments and gave it a name like the one we use to-day. What the word means is not quite clear, but probably it has to do with 'flaying' or 'weaving,' because the fibres of the plant are flayed, or stripped, in order to be made into thread and woven into cloth. You will see, therefore, that once we understand the meaning of the common name, we learn something about the purpose for which the plant is used.

## The Rest-Harrow.

SO many of the plant-names which we are meeting with in this book are made up of foreign words that it is quite a pleasant change to find one written in our own language, even if we still have to guess at its meaning. And although we all know what 'Rest' means, and that a harrow is an implement with which farmers rake over their cultivated fields before sowing the seed, yet I think you would have to make several guesses before you arrived at the reason for the name of Rest-Harrow.

Let us look at the plant and then perhaps we shall discover some feature that will help us to understand its curious name. The Rest-Harrow varies a good deal in its appearance. Sometimes it stands erect, nearly a foot high, but generally it is a low, shrubby plant with stems that creep humbly along the ground. These stems tough, of a brown or reddish colour, and, like the rest of the plant, more or less thickly clothed with soft hairs. They bear a great number of smaller branches, all arranged in a regular manner, and sometimes these end in a thorn. The leaves, whose abundant growth gives the plant such a shrubby appearance, are shaped remarkably like a very small egg. Their edges are cut into the tiniest of teeth, and their surfaces are often quite sticky.

The plant produces a large number of flowers of a rosy colour, but with a distinct suggestion of blue in it. There are five petals, and they are arranged in the same interesting manner as those of the Bird's-foot Trefoil: that is to say, there is one large petal, called the 'standard'; two smaller ones, called the 'wings'; and two others, which are joined together, called the 'keel,' because their shape suggests the keel of a boat.

Now let us look at the root, for we have not yet discovered anything about the plant to account for its name. Well, we may pull and pull as hard as we can, or we may even dig with a spade or a pick, but we shall find that the root is so thick and tough and woody, and its hold on the ground so strong, that it is almost impossible to tear it up. And that is why the plant is called Rest-Harrow; for 'Rest,' in this case, means 'arrest,' or 'stop.' The roots are so firmly fixed in the ground that when the farmer's horses are dragging the harrow over the fields they arrest or stop them in their work. They hinder the plough in the same manner, and so sometimes the plant is called Stay-plough. So, too, it is known as Horse's-breath, because it makes the poor labouring horses pant over their work.

These great roots, although they do not look at all appetising, are often nibbled by children because they have something of the taste of

liquorice, and for this reason the plant is called Liquorice-plant, Wild Liquorice, Spanish-root, and, in parts of Scotland, Liquory-stick. There is another name, a very old one indeed, given to the plant, on account, it is said, of the roots. That name is Cammock. Now this word meant 'crooked,' and, in some parts of Scotland, a crooked staff or stick is known as a cammock. The roots of the Rest-Harrow are often extremely twisted, and I expect the plant was called Cammock for that reason.

The Rest-Harrow belongs to the same family of plants as the much larger Furze or Whin, its flowers being of a similar shape. For this reason it is known in various parts of England and Scotland as Petty-whin (which means Little-whin), Cat-whin, and Lady-whin.

The plant, which remains in bloom throughout the summer and autumn, is fond of ornamenting barren places and poor or badly cultivated fields, and it is sometimes called Poverty. The name means, either that the presence of the plant is a sign of poor land, or that the farmer who owns the land will surely be brought to poverty.

### The Common Mallow.

MOST country children know this handsome plant by the name of Cheeses, because of the little cheese-like objects which they pick from the flowers and eat.

The sitting down when school was o'er  
Upon the threshold of the door,  
Picking from mallows, sport to please,  
The crumpled seed we call a cheese.

There are several kinds of Mallow, all bearing a family likeness to one another, but we will confine ourselves for the present to the commonest of them.

The Common Mallow varies greatly in size, but it is quite often a sturdy plant with an independent air of announcing that it is quite equal to maintaining its position in its own little world of flowers. It has a stout stem, from one to three feet high, and it branches out vigorously and clothes itself with big broad leaves, as though it meant to take up as much room as it possibly could. The stem and branches are covered with soft hair or down. The leaves, which are broad and spreading and soft to touch, grow on long stalks. They are divided into large, pointed lobes and their edges are cut up into little teeth.

The flowers are large and showy, and when you chance upon a plant in full bloom, its branches covered with the bright purple flowers, you will feel that it has some right to be so proud of its handsome appearance. The blooms grow in clusters on stalks that spring from the same points as the leaf-stalks. They have five petals of a beautiful mauve or pale purple, and they are boldly streaked with lines of a darker

hue. At the heart of each flower is an object so beautifully and so daintily fashioned that you are driven to believe it must have been conceived by the fairies. It is like an enchanted tree, the tiniest you ever saw; not green in colour like other trees, but a rich purple and mauve, and gleaming like silk. This fairy-like tree serves a most useful purpose, for it prepares the seeds at the base of the flower so that they will be ready to produce fresh plants when they find a new home in the ground.

In talking of the seeds we have arrived at the 'cheeses' which children know so well; for it is in those wrinkled 'cheeses,' flattened and rounded like a Dutch cheese, and lying at the bottom of the flowers, that the seeds are snugly stored. Many are the names which these seed-cases have earned, either for themselves or for the plants which produce them. Sometimes they refer to cheese alone, without anything to eat with it, as in Cheese-cakes, Cheese-flower, Jacky's-cheese, or Chucky-cheese, as some children pronounce it. There is one name—Fairy-cheese—which suggests that the fairies are glad to make some of their dainty meals off the plant; and another one—Frog-cheese—which sounds curious, because you would hardly expect to see a frog jump up into the plant to help itself to a meal. At other times the cheese is supposed to be served with some other kind of food, and the names become Bread-and-cheese, Bread-and-cheese-and-cider,



Bread-and-cheese-cakes, Butter-and-cheese, and even Bread-and-cheese-and-kisses. Some of these names are given also to the Wood Sorrel and other plants, because children eat the appetising leaves. In some districts they call the plant Loaves-of-bread, and this is really rather a fitting name, because there is a tiny object on the top of the flattened cheeses which makes the whole look rather like a 'cottage' loaf.

But while the favourite names of the seed-cases are mostly about cheese, there are quite a number of them which show that children are reminded of Shrove Tuesday when they look at the plant. Such names are Pancake-plant, Pancakes, and, what must surely be a mistake for these names, Pans-and-cakes.

There is one very curious name which children use in a little village in the west of England. It is Flibberty-Gibbet, and I am sure I do not know why it was given to the plant. Flibberti- gibbet is a term which people apply either to a person who is always chattering or to a frolicsome or mischievous urchin, like the grotesque boy in Sir Walter Scott's story Kenilworth; but there is nothing of either of those characters about the Mallow.

The common name of the Mallow plants is not an English word, and that is why it does not express to us what it means. It was first given nearly two thousand years ago by the ancient Greeks who lived along the shores of the

Mediterranean Sea. The name in their language, as far as we can understand it to-day, meant 'soft,' and it sounded something like the word 'Mallow.' Some people think the name was given because of the softness of the leaves, but there is a better reason than that. In days of long ago, when plants were extensively used for making medicines, the Mallows were discovered to have a *softening* or *soothing* effect in various complaints, so it is probable that this is the true reason for the name.

The Common Mallow grows in waste places along the borders of fields and by the roadsides. You will find it displaying its rich mass of flowers throughout the summer months.

## The Silverweed.

A LEARNED man who wrote an enormous book about flowers ever so long ago said that this plant was called Argentina, which comes from a Latin word meaning 'silver,' because, if you prepared a glass of the distilled water or essence of the plant, you would see a lot of silver drops rolling and tumbling up and down in it. This would be a very pretty sight to see, but I do not think it is the true reason for the name Argentina, or for the common name Silverweed, so perhaps we had better examine the plant and see if we can discover it there.





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The Silverweed resembles, in some ways, the Cinquefoil, of which we read in the earlier volume. Like that plant, it sends out long reddish shoots, which run along the ground and send down little roots at intervals to form the beginnings of new plants. In this clever manner it makes sure that it shall never die out, and the runners enable it to cover quite large expanses of ground. Like the Cinquefoil, too, its flowers grow singly on long stalks, which often have the same red tint as the runners; and they have five soft, yellow petals resting on the circle of green 'sepals' beneath. The leaves, however, have quite a different appearance from those of the Cinquefoil. In the first place, instead of the leaflets into which they are divided being spread out like the fingers of a hand, they are set on either side of a long stalk, with some very small ones in between, and a final one at the end. The leaflets have their edges deeply cut into beautifully regular teeth, and their colour is so striking that you will easily recognise them. They have a soft, silky appearance even on their upper surfaces, although these are often of a rich deep green colour and glossy finish; but the lower sides are so densely clothed with white silky hairs that the whole plant looks as if it had been dusted with silver.

You will easily understand now why it is called the Silverweed, and I think you will agree that it is a very fitting name. Some people know

the plant as Silver-leaves, and others call it Silver-fern, because its leaves are shaped like those of a fern. Other names are Silver-feather and Prince-of-Wales'-feathers, because the form and appearance of the leaves remind people of feathers, and particularly of the ostrich feathers in the Prince of Wales' crest.

There are some other names which, I think, must have been made up by children who live in fishing villages by the sea. They are Mackerel-weed and Fish-bones, and I can only imagine that these homely names were thought of because the veins in the leaflets, or perhaps the leaflets themselves, are arranged in 'herring-bone' pattern, and the silvery surfaces are like the bright sheen on mackerel.

The Silverweed was supposed to be a favourite food for the geese that you see running about village greens and gobbling amongst the herbage, and so it is often called Goose-weed, Gander-grass, and Goose-grass, though the last name is more often given to the plant called Cleavers. The leaves have something of the same feathery appearance of another, but very much bigger and taller plant, called the Tansy, and for this reason people often used to call the Silverweed the Goose Tansy, and, in Scotland, the Dog's Tansy; but the name Tansy does not belong to this plant at all, and so it will be better not to use it. The plant is also known in some parts of Scotland by the pretty name of Fair-



days, and people say that the flowers only expand their fragile petals in sunny weather; but I do not think this is a suitable name, because you will find the flowers wide-awake whether the sun is shining or not.

The delightful softness of the herb has caused it to be used for soothing the tired feet of people making long journeys on foot, and in this way the plant has earned the name of Traveller's-ease. I do not suppose that the Silverweed is ever used for this purpose nowadays, as there are so many other remedies for footsore travellers, but in olden times people were much more dependent on the herbs of the field to cure their bodily ailments than they are to-day.

The Silverweed likes to make its home where the ground is rather damp, but you may find it in all sorts of waste places, and especially along the sides of roads, where it often spreads in close leafy masses. It begins to bloom late in May and continues at its best through June and July, though you may often see the golden flowers, which some children call Golden-sovereigns, much later than that.

### The Agrimony.

WHEREVER you may ramble during the summer you will find this graceful plant beautifying the roadsides, the hedgebanks, the borders

of fields, and other waste places with its spires of golden flowers. Children call it Church-steeples, and the name is quite a happy one, for you may easily be reminded of a steeple soaring into the blue sky when you look at the strong tapering flower-spike of this plant. The flowers, with their five small and widely spreading petals, grow closely all the way up the higher portion of the stem, but they do not all open at the same time or the plant would be much more showy than it is. The stem often bears one or more flowering branches, and then you get extra steeples on the same plant. The stem varies in height from one to two or even three feet, and it is covered with soft hairs.

Church-steeples are by no means the only objects which the plant calls to mind. Some children liken the flower-spikes to a rat's tail, and call the plant Rats'-tails, as they do some of the Plantains. A prettier name is Fairies'-wand, and you can readily picture the fairies flying up to the plant and breaking off the golden spikes to carry in their white hands for working their magic spells. Another name is Golden-rod, and still another is Aaron's rod, both of which are given to other flowers as well. I expect that the last name is meant to recall the story of how Aaron's rod, when it was lodged in the tabernacle, broke out into blossom as a sign that the Lord had chosen Aaron to be His priest.

When the flowers of the Agrimony have finished blooming they undergo an interesting change. The petals fall away and a tiny 'bur' appears, fringed with small, hooked bristles. Inside are two little seeds, and, if they are lucky enough to fall on suitable ground, they will grow into new plants next year. Children name the plant Clot-bur, Cockle-bur, and Cockles, just as they do the Burdock, because of the bristly burs. So, too, they call the burs Sweet-hearts, because the hooked bristles cling to you like a loving sweetheart.

The leaves of the Agrimony are somewhat like those of the Silverweed in shape, but not in colour. The leaflets of which they are composed are borne in pairs on the long leaf-stalk, with a single leaflet at the end. Several pairs of very much smaller leaflets grow in between the larger ones. The leaflets are broad and pointed, their edges are deeply cut into big teeth, and, like the stems, they are usually hairy. The lower leaves are much larger than the upper ones and the leaflets more numerous.

The blossoms often yield a pleasant scent, though the strength varies with different plants. The odour is somewhat suggestive of lemons, and some people actually call the plant Lemonade and Lemon-flower. A more useful beverage is mentioned in the name Tea-plant, which old-fashioned people in the west of England use. It seems a surprising thing to say, but it is

none the less true, that, up to quite recent times, some of these folk had never tasted any kind of tea but that which they brewed from the different parts of the Agrimony. This tea was not drunk merely to quench the thirst, as ordinary tea is, but it was considered to be a health-giving medicine, and it was administered to children in the spring-time to purify their blood.

I should like to tell you the meaning of the common name Agrimony, but unfortunately nobody knows what it is. Certainly it is a very old name, and also a foreign one. Some people say that the word meant an 'inhabitant of the field,' from the places where the flower grows, or perhaps 'alone in the field,' because, as a medicine, it stands 'alone,' or superior to all the other herbs of the field. Others think that the name was similar to one which was given to a certain complaint of the eyes which this plant, perhaps, was supposed to cure. Altogether, therefore, you will see that we really do not know what the word means.

## The Self-Heal.

MANY of our wild-flowers have such curious names that it is impossible to understand their meaning. In the subject of the present chapter, however, we have found a name that speaks

for itself, for anyone who gathers the plant is supposed to be able to heal himself without the aid of a doctor. The Self-Heal had a widespread reputation in olden times for healing cuts and wounds. Indeed, so wonderful were its powers supposed to be that people also called it Heal-all, All-heal, Touch-and-heal, and even Hospital-plant.

There were two kinds of people to whom the plant was particularly useful—carpenters and farmers. If a carpenter cut himself with a chisel he applied the leaves, or some special preparation made from the plant, to the wound and thought he had done all that was necessary to heal it. From this practice the flower came to be called Herb-carpenter, Carpenter's-herb, Carpenter's-grass, and Proud-carpenter. In the same way farmers resorted to the Self-Heal when they cut themselves with the sharp curved bill-hooks and sickles which they used in trimming hedges and cutting corn; and this resulted in the further names of Hook-heal and Sickle-wort.

When you look at the flowers you notice that they are curved rather like these bill-hooks and sickles, and this likeness may have been the origin of the plant's fame as a healer of the cuts and wounds which such implements were prone to inflict. People used to say that you could tell what complaints a plant was good for from such likenesses.

But although the farmers found the plant so useful in cases of accidents they were not altogether pleased to find it growing too freely in their fields. They thought it took all the 'heart,' or nourishment, out of the soil, and so they named it Heart-of-the-earth. Indeed, they became quite cross about it and dubbed it Pick-pocket, as they did several other plants, because they said that, in robbing their land of its goodness, the flower was taking money out of their pockets. The real truth is that the Self-Heal is accustomed to grow in land that is already poor, and I do not suppose that its presence makes very much difference.

The Self-Heal has long since lost its ancient fame as a medicine, but that does not prevent us from admiring its pretty colours, its handsome appearance, and the interesting features it presents. The plant commences its life by creeping along the ground. After that it sends up a number of stems, which are grooved on two sides, and these grow to a height of anything between a few inches and about a foot. The leaves, which are slightly hairy and often rough to the touch, grow in pairs on short stalks. They are something like a heart in shape, only rather narrow in proportion to their length. Their edges are indefinite in outline; they have not any of the 'teeth' which we so often find in other plants, but they are sometimes more or less wavy and marked with a brown line.





The Meadowsweet.





The Field Gentian.

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The flowers grow closely together at the ends of the branches and they are arranged in quite an interesting manner. They are just like a very small Chinese pagoda, with the different stories represented by the rings of blossoms. Beneath the flower-heads is a pair of leaves. Above these rise the rings of flowers, tier on tier when fully developed, with a pair of pointed, basin-like leaves, or 'bracts,' beneath each ring. Every little flower stands in a flattened tube with long, pointed teeth, and this tube often takes on a maroon or reddish-brown tint. The flowers themselves are like gaping jaws standing out all around the 'head' and crowning it as well. The upper lip is curved like the hooks and sickles which I mentioned just now. Some people call the flowers Prince's-feather, and they really do remind one of the Prince of Wales' badge. They vary greatly in their hue, being anything from bright bluish-purple to reddish-purple or violet. I think the name Blue-curls is rather a pretty one, for the flowers stand out just like a curly head.

The flower-heads are short at first, but they become longer as the plant grows, and it will help you in finding them to remember that they do not taper, as most flower-heads of this kind do, but retain the same thickness all the way up and finish off bluntly at the top.

One of the names of the Self-Heal is Bumble-bees, and I think this must have been given

because the blunt outline of the flower-heads has something of the appearance of those busy workers.

The Self-Heal grows freely in fields and on hedgebanks, especially where the ground is rather moist, and its handsome blooms are to be found from June until the end of the summer.

### The Meadowsweet.

IF we wander out into the moist, low-lying meadows, or, better still, along the hedges that border the banks of a stream or ditch, at any time from June to August, we shall probably be rewarded with the sight and scent of one of the sweetest and most interesting of our lovely flowers. Some children call the plant Summer's-farewell, because, they say, it only ceases to bloom when the summer is passing. The Meadowsweet has been loved and christened and rechristened in our land through all the centuries that have passed since the savage Anglo-Saxons first invaded our shores; and presently I will tell you, not only the name those tribes gave to the plant, but the purpose for which they used it.

We will scramble into the water-side hedgerows where the Blackberries and wild Roses are entwining with all the teeming growths of the warm summer days, and there we shall discover the plant we are seeking. You see that

it is tall and slender, with angular, rigid, and slightly branching stems, stained with a deep red tint and growing, in different specimens, to a height of between two and four feet. The leaf-stalks branch out from the stems, bearing pairs of rather large, sharply-pointed leaflets, very handsome to see, with surprisingly tiny pairs set in between them, like babies set between their parents. The leaves are deeply wrinkled, green above and greyer beneath, and their edges are cut into fine, sharp teeth like those of a saw. At the end of each leaf-stalk grows a leaflet of a different shape from the rest, for it is divided into three parts.

The flowers are clustered at the ends of the stem and its branches. When they are in bud they look for all the world like greenish-yellow pearls; but when the buds expand in the happy sunshine, and each flower unfolds its five tiny petals with its bushy collection of golden-headed 'stamens,' the plant becomes a sweet-scented mass of creamy blossoms. In great billowy clusters they grow, gracefully waving like plumes in the breeze, delicate and dainty and rich as a piece of old lace. It is because the plant is so sweetly gracious and queenly in its pose, so rich in blossom and so delicious in smell, that it is called not only Meadowsweet, but Queen-of-the-meadow, Lady-of-the-meadow, Maid-of-the-meadow, and Pride-of-the-meadow. We must remember, however, that, despite all

these high-sounding titles, the plant is only Queen of the wet meadows lying in the valleys, for it does not flourish in the high fields and dry pastures. And this reminds me of my promise to tell you of the purpose for which the Anglo-Saxons used the plant and the name by which they called it. The chief beverage which those warriors drank was made out of honey and water, and it was called 'mead.' Whether or not they did actually steep the flowers of the Meadowsweet in this beverage cannot be said for certain, though we know that, at a later time, the blooms were used to give a pleasant flavour both to mead and to beer and wine. At all events the Anglo-Saxons called the plant Meadwort, after the liquor which they drank; so that, at first, the name really had nothing to do with the meadows where the plant grew. That, however, was a very long time ago; for hundreds of years now we have used the name *Meadowsweet*, and I think it is much pleasanter to associate this lovely flower with the green fields than to allow it to remind us merely of a kind of liquor.

It is because of the exquisite fragrance of the blossoms that, in some villages, the people name the plant Honey-flower, Honey-sweet, New-mown-hay, and Sweet-hay. And, from the plume-like arrangement of the flowers, they call it Queen's-feather. Old-man's-beard and Goat's-beard are yet other names given to the plant, as if the long sprays of flowers reminded

people of grey beards; but I do not think these names are nearly pretty enough to use, and besides, 'Old-man's-beard' belongs properly to the wild Clematis, and 'Goat's-beard' is the common name of another plant.

Only a few hundred years ago there were practically no carpets in our country, and even rich people, living in castles and great mansions, covered the floors of their dwellings with rushes and sweet-smelling herbs. Amongst these the fragrant Meadowsweet was a great favourite, and it is said that Queen Elizabeth preferred it before all other herbs, and loved to have it strewed about her private chambers. When any festivity was to be held, such as a banquet or wedding, the delicious leaves and blossoms of the Meadowsweet were used to deck the banqueting halls and bridal chambers. One of the old names of the plant was Bridewort, and although some people say that this was given because the blossoms resembled the white feathers worn by brides, I think it is just as likely that the name was linked with the happy marriage ceremony, because the plants were strewn about the bridal chamber and the hall where the marriage-feast was given.

While we are talking about brides and marriages I must tell you of another name by which the Meadowsweet is known in different parts of the country. It is Courtship-and-matrimony, and I must leave you to guess the mean-

ing of it, for I cannot tell you for certain myself. Some folks think that it signifies a disappointing marriage, when, as sometimes happens, the bride and bridegroom do not live happily ever afterwards, as they do in all the nicest stories. These people say that the flowers, which smell so sweet at first, have a much less pleasant odour if they are bruised. The sweet scent stands for courtship and the unpleasant one for the unhappy marriage. But I think it is only ill-natured people who would give this as the reason for the name, especially as there is not actually any striking difference between the scent of the flowers before and after they are bruised; and perhaps the real explanation is that, while courtship is altogether sweet, lovers are bound to meet with *some* troubles in their after life.

### The Field Gentian.

ABOUT two thousand years ago there was certain king who reigned over a far-distant country called Illyria. He was a great warrior, but after inspiring the courage of his subjects through a war with the powerful Roman legions, he was defeated in battle and made subject to his conquerors. The really interesting thing about this king, however, is that it is not his fame as a fighter that has kept his name alive, but something of quite a different character. In



times of peace the king was fond of studying the plants that grew amongst the mountains of his kingdom. He loved them for their beauty and for their usefulness; and the most important use to which plants were put in those days was the making of medicines.

The king one day discovered that a certain plant, which no one had taken any notice of before, possessed a bitter quality that would be extremely useful for certain illnesses. So he told all his learned men of the discovery, and they were very proud of him for his cleverness, and marked their esteem by naming the plant after him.

The name of the king was Gentius, and the plant whose healing properties he had discovered was given the title of Gentiana. The name was afterwards extended to a number of other flowers which are related to that plant, including the one which forms the subject of this chapter, and in English it became Gentian. So you see that although the king's fame as a warrior has long been forgotten, his name is still spoken whenever we look upon this simple flower.

All the Gentians share in the bitter property which King Gentius discovered in his plant, and in later times some of them took the name of Felwort. Many people think that this comes from a foreign word, '*fel*,' meaning, gall,' which is a very bitter fluid. This idea, however, is a mistaken one, as the name is really formed from

an old an old English word, 'feld,' which is the same as 'field.' The name, therefore, means Fieldwort, or the plant, or root, that grows in open fields.

The Field Gentian is a small upright plant that seldom grows more than six inches high. Its stem, which is often a branching one, is purple in colour, and crowded with leaves and flowers. The leaves grow in pairs; the upper ones rather broad, pointed at the ends and closely clasping the stem; the lower ones somewhat narrower. All of them are quite plain around their edges.

The flowers grow on purple stalks, the lower or tube-like part enclosed in the greenish 'calyx,' which is divided into four parts, the two broader ones overlapping the others. Above the calyx the flower opens out into four purple divisions, with a pretty ring of bluish hairs fringing its mouth. The blooms expand only when the sun is shining brightly. At other times they fold up their petals and look just like a paint-brush dipped in purple colour.

The Field Gentian is often quite an inconspicuous plant, and sometimes it is quite lost against the background of the open fields and commons where it grows. It is one of the latest flowers of the season, for it makes its appearance mostly in August and September. There is another plant, called the Autumnal Gentian, blooming about this time; but you can easily tell it from the Field Gentian because its flowers have five lobes.





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The Borage.



## The Groundsel.

SOME plants are so common, and flower for such a long period, that we like to know something about them even if they are of rather an unattractive character. Such is the Groundsel, of which I am now about to speak. Its flowers are so curious in form and so lacking in display that they never seem to be really open at all; but, such as they are, you can find them practically all the year round.

Through storm and wind,  
Sunshine and shower,  
Still will you find  
Groundsel in flower.

This is a fortunate thing for the little birds, because they love to peck at the seeds; and the ripe flower-heads are also collected and dried as a winter food for canaries and other birds kept in cages. That is why the plant is often called Bird-seed, Canary-seed, and Canary-food.

The Groundsel has a mass of fibrous roots, from which the stem grows to a height of from six inches to a foot. The stem bears a number of branches near the top. It is often tinged with purple and clothed with a little loose down. The leaves are cut and jagged like those of the Ragwort, which I have described in another chapter.

The humble flower-heads grow in close clusters at the tops of the stem and branches, and they are like a green, ribbed tube tipped with a dull yellow. Altogether they make a very poor show, and yet they could hardly be better adapted for their own particular purpose, which is to produce plenty of seeds and ensure that they shall find an opportunity of growing into fresh plants. To appreciate this you have only to split open one of the flower-heads when the yellow top has given place to a ball of gleaming fluff, rather like the silvery hair of an old man. Inside you see a numerous collection of brown seeds, each one attached to a silky tuft like a parachute. When the wind takes them, it wafts them away in all directions and deposits them on new ground, where, if the conditions are favourable, they will spring into fresh plants. This is admirable from the plant's point of view; but the gardeners, who are constantly working to keep down the weed—for the Groundsel is very partial to cultivated ground—do not by any means share in its satisfaction.

When the tufted seeds have all sailed away on the breeze the flower-head becomes a flattish, bald circle, ringed by what was formerly the green part of the tube. At one time, therefore, the flower-heads have silvery hair, and then they turn bald. You may imagine that people soon found a name to suit this change. They called the plant *Simson* and *Sencion* and other similar



names and when I explain that these were copied from a foreign word meaning 'an old man' you will find them easy to understand. As an ancient writer described it, the names were given because the flower 'hath white hair, and when the wind bloweth it away, then it appeareth like a bald-headed man.'

The common name of Groundsel is a curious one. In Scotland and the north of England the people spell it Grundy-swallow, and that gives us a clearer idea of its meaning, for the second syllable of *Groundsel* really does seem at one time to have meant 'swallow,' although you would hardly think so now. I am referring to the action of swallowing, not the bird called a swallow, though some people, who have confused the meaning of the plant's name, do call it Grinning-swallow! The next question is: What does the plant swallow? The answer is to be sought in the first syllable, *Ground*; but it is not certain what that answer should be. Perhaps it is simply the ground which the plant swallows, or covers, by spreading over it so rapidly. But it may be quite a different thing. The leaves have long been used in poultices to draw out, or swallow, the impurities in abscesses and sores. This impurity used to be called by an old forgotten word 'gund'; and as that word sounds sufficiently like 'ground,' it may be that the original meaning of the name Groundsel points to the plant's use in that homely form

of doctoring which we all know as a poultice. What strange things we learn from these old names!

## The Cat's-Ear.

PEOPLE of olden times certainly did conceive the most curious and homely names for the flowers growing around them. You have perhaps already read, in the earlier volume, of the plant called the Mouse-ear Hawkweed, and now we have found another one called the Cat's-Ear. Let us follow the plan we adopted with the first plant, and then perhaps we shall discover how this one acquired its name.

The Cat's-Ear is often called the Long-rooted Cat's-Ear, because it has a particularly long and thick root, and the name distinguishes it from two other plants which are also known as Cat's-Ear. These can easily be told from our present plant, because one of them, the Smooth Cat's-Ear, is much smaller and has smooth leaves; while the other, the Spotted Cat's-Ear, usually has spotted leaves and unbranching flower-stems.

The Long-rooted Cat's Ear is a coarse-looking plant that produces one or more good-sized rosettes of long and fairly narrow leaves which hug the ground closely as if they were afraid of being blown away. The outline of the leaves varies very much. Sometimes it is

wavy, and sometimes it is cut into teeth, which may be either long or short, and may point forwards or backwards. The first thing you will notice about these rather shapeless leaves is that they are thickly covered with greyish bristly hairs, and I expect that, as soon as you see them, you will begin to guess at the meaning of the plant's name. Run your finger over the leaves and you will, I am sure, agree that they are quite sufficiently like the soft feel of your cat's ear to suggest the title which has been given to them. Of course, their shape, except for the 'lobe' at the end, is not in the least like that of pussy's short and pointed ears; but the people who gave such names as these to our wild-flowers were quite satisfied with a partial resemblance, provided it gave them some idea for christening a plant. I expect that if you had to invent names for all the flowers of the country-side you would be only too glad to act on any such suggestions.

The flowers grow on a number of long, smooth, branching stems, of between one and two feet in height. The stems are fairly thick, yet have a wiry appearance. They are set with a few small 'scales' at intervals and are swollen just below the flowers. The flower-heads, with their crowded rays of golden, strap-shaped petals, each one notched at its end, are large and striking. In Cornwall the people sometimes call them Goldilions. Each petal,

with its accompanying 'stamens' and 'pistils,' is really a separate bloom, so that there are scores of distinct flowers, or 'florets,' crowded into each head, though they look as if they were one blossom composed of many petals.

One of the most interesting features of the plant appears only when the flowers have ceased to bloom; for then, wherever a flower-head grew, you will find one of those balls of soiled white or greyish down which we saw on the Mouse-ear Hawkweed, only it is much larger. We really must look carefully at these downy balls, because they are most beautifully made. They contain dozens of the prettiest parachutes you could imagine, and to each parachute is attached a little seed. The slightest puff of wind is enough to send them sailing away over the fields and lanes and woods, and when at last they come to rest in a suitable place the seeds will strike baby roots into the ground and in time produce new plants.

The Cat's-Ear is not at all particular where it grows, and you can find it in all sorts of waste places along the roadsides and in the fields. It is at its best in July and August, but the flowers go on blooming until well into the autumn months.

The plant belongs to a very large family of similar-looking flowers called Hawkweeds. This name was given to them because people used to believe that a certain plant (which may have

been one of these) was used by the keen-eyed hawk to strengthen its sight and that of its young ones.

## The Borage.

THIS is not a plant which you are likely to meet with frequently. It grows mostly on stony rubbish heaps and other waste places, and it is said that it first appeared as a wild-flower as an escape from gardens. Certainly it was much cultivated in olden times, not merely for its beauty, though that would be a sufficient reason, but because of the fame which it acquired.

It will amuse you to read of the extravagant praises which used to be lavished on this plant. The chief reason for them was the belief that it raised your spirits if you felt at all unhappy, and strengthened your heart with courage and new life. The leaves and flowers were steeped in wine and then, as an old writer said, the drink would make you glad and merry, driving away all sadness, dullness, and melancholy.

To enliven the sad with the joy of a joke,  
Give them wine with some Borage put in it to soak.

The Welsh people called the plant Herb-of-gladness. Another old country name was Cool-tankard, and this was made up because the leaves were, and indeed still are, put into claret-cup, cider-cup, and other cooling summer drinks.

This useful heartening quality is such a famous and familiar part of the plant's history that it has even been pointed to as explaining the meaning of the common name Borage. There was once a popular rhyme which went like this:

I, Borage,  
Bring always courage.

People said that the word 'Borage' was closely connected with the word 'courage'; or else that it came from a foreign word, *borrach*, which meant 'a courageous man.' As a matter of fact the true meaning seems to be much less interesting, as we shall see presently.

This old-fashioned favourite has branching stems of about a foot or more in height. The whole herb is thickly covered with whitish bristly hairs, and it is here that we shall probably discover the true meaning of its name. Long ago there was a foreign word, *borra*, meaning 'rough hair,' and another, *burra*, meaning 'a shaggy garment.' It is not difficult to imagine that the name of our plant, with its shaggy coat of bristly hair, has something to do with these words.

The leaves of the Borage are somewhat variable in shape, though for the most part they range from a broad to a narrow pointed oval. They have not any teeth along their edges. In olden days they earned more than one additional name for the plant because of their shape and





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roughness, namely Ox-tongue and Langdebeef, the latter of which is the French way of saying the same words 'Ox-tongue.' Both these titles were shared by other plants having similar leaves.

Borage flowers are amongst the most beautiful of the whole country-side. When the buds first open they are tinted with reddish-purple, but it seems as if they change their mind on the subject of colour directly they catch sight of the blue sky. I can imagine them saying, 'What a perfectly entrancing colour! I must really see what I can do about it.' At any rate, soon after the flowers open they begin to change their original hue, and they do not stop until they are of a deep, clear blue, as deep and clear as the sky on a summer's day. The blooms expand in five pointed parts like a brilliant blue star, and in the centre is an unusual cone-shaped feature, made up of the 'anthers,' of so dark a purple that it looks almost black. People call the plant Star-flowers in Devonshire, and other country names are Blue-Robins and Bee-bread. You have only to observe how the bees throng round the brightly coloured blooms to appreciate the fitness of the last name.

Altogether the Borage is a most attractive plant, and you must really see if you cannot find it when it is in full bloom, that is during late June and July.

## The Tufted Vetch.

THE flower we are now going to talk about is a relative of the Sweet Peas which adorn our gardens with their vivid and various hues. There are many kinds of wild Vetches, and they often go by such names as Cat Peas, Mice Peas, and Birds' Peas. The birds at least are said to feed on the seeds, so perhaps the cats and mice do the same, though I expect the mice take good care not to have their meals at the same time as the cats. Our plant is also known as the Cow Vetch, but I do not think this name means that cows eat it. Probably it is a way of saying that the plant is not fit to be eaten by human beings, but only by animals.

The Tufted Vetch is easily picked out from its numerous relatives. All through the summer months it sends out its long branching stems, which clamber amongst the bushes and hedges, sometimes to a length of three feet, or even very much more. It has rather a clever means of doing this, and you can discover what it is by looking at the leaves. These consist of a large number—sometimes as many as a dozen or more—of pairs of narrow, pointed leaflets covered with a soft bloom rather like that on the leaves of Lady's Fingers. At the ends of the leaf-stalks you find some fine curly

tendrils, and it is by means of these that the plant climbs up the hedges to seek the bright sunlight.

The flowers are very showy, and their bold colours form a striking ornament to the tangled greenery amongst which they spread with such riotous joy. They are crowded all along one side of the flower-stalks, and their five petals consist of the same arrangement of 'standard,' 'wings,' and 'keel' as that which we saw on the Rest-Harrow, though you have to look more closely at the blooms to detect this. The flowers range in colour from purple to the deepest of deep blues. The flower-stalks and the main stems of the plant have ridges running along them.

After the blooms have withered their place is taken by seed-pods like those on the garden Peas which we eat, only they are scarcely an inch long and the seeds are quite small. They would hardly furnish us with a satisfactory dish, whatever the cows and the cats and the mice might think of them.

The common name Vetch comes from a Latin word, and although it is uncertain what that word means, some people say it was made up from another Latin word meaning 'to bind,' because the tendrils of the Vetches bind themselves to the hedges where they grow. The word 'Tufted' was given to our particular plant because the flowers grow in bunches or tufts,

though they are hardly ‘tufts’ in the ordinary meaning of the word.

## The Wood Betony.

THE name of this plant always amuses because of the roundabout way it travelled before it reached our country. If we follow it backwards in its course we find that we copied it from the French—who shared it with the greater part of the countries of Europe—who took it from the Romans of Italy—who found that it was used by an ancient tribe of Gaul, or old France—who conferred the name because they said that the plant was first discovered by a Spanish tribe called the *Vettones*.

At first the name given to the plant was *Vettonica*, which, of course, sounds not at all unlike Betony. It was after this name had been travelling around for perhaps fifteen hundred years or so that it eventually settled down in England in its present form. When I see the pretty little plant sunning itself in our quiet English woods I love to think of those primitive warlike tribes who roamed the wild mountains of distant Spain and Gaul so many centuries ago, and are quite forgotten now, except in the least expected of all ways, the name of a common wild-flower.

I told you, in the Introduction, something of

the fame which for a long time belonged to the Betony as a plant of healing. Thinking of this reputation, some people say that the name of the flower really comes from two Celtic words, *ben*, meaning 'a head,' and *ton*, 'good,' as if the plant were good for diseases of the head. But I do not think this is really the meaning of the word.

At one time the flower possessed the puzzling name of Bishop's-wort, and it is difficult to say how it was acquired, for I have never heard of any particular bishop who was supposed to have worked miracles of healing or magic with the herb. It is true that the Betony was reputed to possess supernatural powers against witches, devils, and other evil spirits, and that, because of this almost sacred character, it was specially grown in churchyards. This practice, of course, would lead people to connect it with the clergy, but it does not satisfactorily explain why it should have been named after bishops in particular, unless, indeed, the herbs were blessed by the bishop after they had been planted in the churchyards. Similar names were, however, borne by other plants, and there is always the possibility that they have somehow got mixed up.

The Wood Betony, as its name tells us, grows in woods and copses, but it may also be found quite frequently in hedgerows and open spaces. Its flowering season extends from late June until August. It is a rather slender, square-stemmed plant, from one to two feet in height,

and more or less clothed with down or soft hair, but never to anything like the same extent as the Hedge Woundwort. The leaves grow in pairs, mostly near the root, and they have quite an elegant appearance. The lower ones are stalked and of a narrow heart-shape. The upper ones are narrower still, and pointed like the others; but they are not heart-shaped, and they have no stalks, or only very short ones. There are long spaces of bare stalk between the higher leaves. Both kinds of leaves have their edges marked with rounded teeth.

The flowers are of the same general pattern as those of the Hedge Woundwort, but their colour, a fairly light purple, is altogether brighter. They are arranged in dense rings, which form themselves mainly into a close head or spike. The spike does not taper to a point, but has a somewhat blunt appearance at the top.

One of the old Welsh names of the plant is St Bride's-comb. St Bride was a saint of the early Christian Church, and she was held in great affection by the Welsh people. I expect they dedicated this valuable healing herb to her as a pretty compliment; though it is a little difficult to tell whether the plant was likened to a 'comb,' or crest, of her saintly hair, or whether she used it in some manner as a comb in the ordinary meaning of the word.

There is rather a funny name which children in Dorsetshire use for the Betony. They call



it Harry Nettle. I expect you guess at once that this is only their way of saying *Hairy* Nettle, because both plants are clothed with hairs, and probably your guess is correct. But it does show what amusing shapes these names can take when village people follow their habit of loose pronunciation.

### The Wild Carrot.

DID you know that the vegetables cultivated in our gardens first grew only in a wild state? In early times men and women noticed them growing among the other wild-flowers, and when they pulled up a root of the Carrot, for instance, and smelt it, they thought it might be good to eat. Then they really did eat it, and it tasted quite nice, so they went on looking for more roots. After that, instead of searching for them in the fields, they began to grow them in their gardens, giving them richer soil, and manure, until the roots grew ever so much bigger and sweeter to the taste. From that time people ceased to eat wild Carrots, and, indeed, almost forgot that they were the parents of those which they cultivated in their gardens.

The root of the Wild Carrot, which is pale in colour, is much thinner than the kind we eat though it has the same unmistakable smell. The stems are stiff and bristly. They often branch

very freely and they grow to a height of from one to three feet. The leaves are cut into innumerable tiny leaflets which give the plant a feathery appearance. Their stalks grow from sheaths which clasp the stems.

The flowers appear at the ends of the stems and branches. They are frequently tinted with red or pink when in bud, but after they open they form a large mass of lovely white blooms. The shape of the entire flower-heads varies a great deal. Sometimes they are almost flat on top; generally they are more or less rounded, and I have seen some that had become so round that they looked like a snowball. If you look beneath the flowers you will find that they grow on a number of stalks arranged like the ribs of an umbrella. You will also notice a ring of finely divided, leaf-like 'bracts' growing around these ribs.

There are many plants that bear large heads of white flowers like those of the Wild Carrot, and you may sometimes find it difficult to distinguish them. Let me tell you of two features that will help you. In the very centre of the flower-head of our plant there is often one single 'floret,' or little flower, of a purple colour, or there may be a little group of them. You do not always find these purple florets, but when you do you will know that the plant is a Wild Carrot. Again, our plant has a very distinct habit of altering the shape of its flower-head,





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as the blooms wither, until it is deeply hollow like a cup, and this will be another guide to you in identifying it.

These cups look exactly like a bird's nest, and I have often wondered that the birds do not lay their eggs in them, for they would make a delightfully snug home for their little ones. However, people do call the plant Bird's-nest and Crow's-nest because of this striking resemblance. They also name it Bee's-nest, because, although bees do not live in nests, it is said that when those busy little workers happen to be caught out late, and the dew damps their wings so that they cannot fly back to their warm hives, they find a night's lodging in the hollow flower-heads of the Wild Carrot.

I cannot tell you for certain what the word Carrot means, because it was made up hundreds and hundreds of years ago, and no one now remembers. I have heard that it comes from a foreign word meaning 'red,' because of the colour of the cultivated root; but I think this is only a guess. Perhaps it is made up from a Greek word, *kara*, meaning a 'head' or 'top,' because the flowers grow in heads, or because the stems sprout from the top of the bulbous root.

The stalks and leaves of the Wild Carrot are all rather rough, owing to the stiff hairs which grow on them. The plant grows in great masses in fields and waste places and along the borders



of roads, and it seems to be specially fond of living near the sea. You will find it in flower through all the summer months.

### The Scentless Mayweed.

THIS is quite a common plant in fields and waste places throughout the summer and autumn months; but unfortunately there are two or three other plants which resemble it so closely that you will find it difficult to sort them out. Because of this similarity, too, the names of the flower have got rather mixed up, for they are all loosely spoken of as Mayweeds and Camomiles. However, let us do our best to disentangle them.

The Scentless Mayweed is not at all suitably named, for it is *not* scentless, and it does *not* bloom in May. There is, none the less, some reason for both words. The plant is called 'Scentless,' not because it has no smell, but to distinguish it from one of its sister-plants, called the Stinking Mayweed, which has a distinctly rank odour. The word 'Mayweed' is, I think, a mistake for Maid-weed, and this name has a very long history. Even so far back as the Anglo-Saxon times a name which afterwards came to be spelt Maythe was applied to at least one of this group of plants, and in time it was given to all of them. The name is supposed



to have meant 'a maiden,' and later on one of the plants was actually called Maid-weed, as if it was the special plant of young ladies. I do not know of any particular heroine in whose honour the flowers were so called, and I think the names must have had something to do with the fact that the plants were frequently used as a medicine by maidens in general.

The Scentless Mayweed grows generally to about a foot or so in height. It has a large number of rather weak spreading stems that branch very freely, and they bear such a mazy growth of soft feathery foliage that the plant takes on quite a bushy appearance. The leaves are cut up so finely that they might almost be likened to feathers or hairs. The flowers are like those of the Ox-eye Daisy, about which you can read in the first volume, though they are of a smaller size. They grow singly at the ends of the branching stems, and the round-topped button, of a deep yellow hue, which forms the centre stands out prominently. Children call the plant Fern-leaved Daisy, Gipsy Daisy, and Horse Daisy.

Our plant is often loosely termed a Camomile because of its likeness to the other flowers which bear that name, but the title does not properly belong to it and should not be used. The name Camomile was given to one of these plants by the ancient Greeks, and it is more than two thousand years old.

You will be rather interested to learn

what it means, because you can prove its fitness for yourself. If you smell the plant called the Common Camomile you will be delighted by its fragrant odour of fresh apples. Now the name of the flower, in the language of the Greeks, means 'the ground-apple,' which is to say, that this plant, growing low down on the ground, recalls by its delicious smell the fruit growing on the more lofty apple-trees. You can tell the Common Camomile from the Scentless Mayweed by this striking odour.

I have now spoken of two of the plants which resemble the Scentless Mayweed and told you how to distinguish them by their smell. The last flower to be mentioned is the Wild Camomile. This, I am afraid, is even more difficult to pick out, but it will help you if I tell you that it has the same apple-like odour as the Common Camomile, only it is much fainter.

### The Field Scabious.

THE Field Scabious belongs to a group of plants which we spoke about in the chapter on the Devil's-bit Scabious contained in the earlier volume of this work.

Our present flower is one that grows abundantly in pastures, corn-fields, hedges, and indeed almost everywhere, and it is in bloom during July and August. It is a bristly plant, and

varies a great deal in size, being sometimes a foot, sometimes as much as three feet, in height. The leaves, which, like the rest of the plant, are generally very hairy, grow mostly near the bottom of the stem. They are usually divided into several pairs of long strap-shaped leaflets, with a still longer leaflet at the end.

The flower-heads are placed at the top of a long, stiff, almost leafless stalk that rises from the centre of the root-leaves, and also at the ends of a pair or more of branches which grow out near the summit of the stalk. The appearance of these branches gives a distinctive attitude to the plant, for they make it look as if it were holding out a pair of arms. The flower-heads are large and handsome and of a beautiful lilac or heliotrope hue. Each head contains scores of tiny separate 'florets,' or complete flowers, all crowded together to look like a single bloom, the outer ones being comparatively large and spreading, the inner ones much less striking.

The whole flower-head is set with a mass of projecting 'stamens' that make one think of a pincushion full of pins, or even of hatpins. And that reminds me that the plant has all sorts of names, made up on account of this striking feature, such as Robin's-pincushion, Lady's-pincushion, Gentlemen's-pincushion, Queen Mary's-pincushion, Pincushion-flower, Pins-and-needles, and Lady's-hatpins. Sometimes the

fancy takes people to liken the flower to an ordinary cushion, without any pins stuck in it, and then they call it simply Cushions, or Lady's-cushion. Then there are folk who think the flower-heads (especially when they are in bud) would make rather pretty buttons for soldiers and sailors and coachmen and all sorts of people, so they must make up a lot of names of that kind—Soldier's-buttons, Sailor's-buttons, Coach-man's-buttons, Bachelor's-buttons, Billy-buttons, Teddy-buttons, Blue-buttons, and so on.

There really seems to be no end to the funny names which people give to these flowers. Sometimes it is Blue-blankets and Blue-caps, and sometimes Blue-men. Then it is Gipsy Rose and Gipsy Daisy, and also Egyptian Rose, because the gipsies were supposed to belong to an Egyptian tribe. Sometimes the plant receives names which I think really belong to a garden variety—Mournful-widow and Mourning-bride; and I expect it gets these because the colour of its blooms is one of those which people wear when they are in half-mourning. So, too, it shares, in certain places, in the names of Curl-doddy and Curly-doddy, which I told you about in the chapter on the Devil's-bit Scabious.

The common name Scabious was given to this group of plants because in olden times one of them was thought to be good for curing a certain skin disease called 'scabies.' You will find that quite a number of the flower-names

which we use to-day were made up because of this practice of using plants in the making of medicines.

## The Sundew.

THIS really is a curious little plant, and when, during the summer months, and especially in July and August, we are roaming over the moors and amongst the wet bogs where it grows, we must certainly make a good search for it. It has so many unusual features, and its name is such a pretty one, that we are bound, out of curiosity, to examine it. It is easy to find once you know what it is like, but you must not look for any help in its flowers, because they only open in prolonged sunshine, and not always then. What we have to look for rather is a tiny plant that is strongly tinged with red.

Let us suppose that we have found our plant, and, having removed it from its exceedingly wet and mossy bed, where its slender roots obtain a very slight hold, are in a position to examine it carefully. The first thing that strikes us is that the leaves are often sprinkled with glistening drops of some liquid that must surely be dew. There is, of course, nothing strange in this, because in the early morning, before the sun has been up long, all the plants of the fields are sprinkled with sparkling dew-drops; but it does become strange when you find that, no

it matter how long the sun has been up, or how deliciously warm it has made the air, the little Sundew plants continue to wear those clear and sparkling jewels that all the other plants have put off hours ago. Plainly we must look more closely if we are to solve the mystery.

Directly we do this we see that the whole appearance of the Sundew differs from that of other flowers. The plant has no stem, but it sends out a circle of long, reddish stalks, much in the manner of the spokes of a wheel, only you must picture the wheel as lying flat on the ground. Each stalk has a curiously shaped leaf at the end. It is almost round in shape and slightly hollow; indeed, it is not at all unlike a little pale-green plate. And now we discover the most striking feature of the plant. The leaves are thickly covered with short hairs or bristles of a beautiful bright-red colour, with longer ones around the edges; and at the tip of every hair stands one of those gleaming drops that first attracted our attention. Touch one of them and you will be surprised to discover that it is not dew at all, but a very sticky liquid. This liquid serves a most useful purpose for the plant. It attracts flies and other insects, who probably mistake it for honey, and once they are caught in it they can never release themselves, struggle how they may. The hairs bend over and imprison the unhappy insect, and then the plant makes a meal of it in much





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the same way as a spider does when it has trapped a fly in its web. It is very disappointing and very unpleasant to learn that a flower can behave in such a cruel manner, but unfortunately the soil on which the Sundew grows is so poor and sour that the plant is forced to seek its food in this manner or it would die.

I expect that by now you are beginning to guess that the second syllable of the name *Sun-dew* was given because of these dew-like drops. The reason for the first syllable—*Sun*—is not quite so obvious, but probably it is meant to show that these drops must be dependent on the sun, seeing that, instead of disappearing like other dew-drops, they seem to grow bigger and bigger the longer the sun shines upon them. It is as if you were to alter the name to the *Dew-of-the-Sun*, meaning that the sun actually caused, or helped, the little drops to appear. There are other names which country people have given the plant because of the sticky drops, though they are not so pretty as *Sundew*. Such names are *Catchfly*, *Fly-catcher*, *Fly-trap*, *English-fly-trap*, and *Sticky-backs*.

The flowers of the Sundew grow on long, wiry stalks, and mostly on one side of them. The stalks spring prettily from the centre of the plant and sometimes they branch into two. At first they are curled up, but, as the flowers one by one expand, they straighten themselves

out. Each stalk bears a row of green buds, and if you are fortunate enough to find one of them open you will see that it has five white petals.

Old-fashioned farmers believe that their sheep feed on the Sundew and that it makes them ill, for which reason they call the plant Red-rot. But this is quite unfair to the flower, because it is the boggy land on which it grows that causes the disease, and not the plant at all. Several plants have been given this name and for a similar reason; but in every case it is due to the same mistaken idea.

There are three kinds of Sundew growing in England: the Round-leaved Sundew, the Long-leaved Sundew, and the Great Sundew. The particular kind we have been talking about is the Round-leaved Sundew, and it owes its name to the shape of its leaves; but there is really no very great difference between it and its sister-plants.

### The Bog Asphodel.

THIS is a plant which, like the Sundew, we must search for in bogs and wet moorland places. That is why it is known as the *Bog Asphodel*, and also the *Marsh Asphodel*. It is an easy plant to recognise, for it has a character all its own.

Under the ground lies a thick rootstock, bearing a close mass of fibrous roots, and from this the stem rises, straight and stiff and from six inches to a foot in height. So erect and straight it is (in its own little way) that the plant was called of old the King's-spear. The leaves grow mainly about the base of the stem, and they are just like coarse blades of grass. Along the stem itself are some much smaller leaves, or scales.

The flowers are very beautiful, like golden-yellow stars. They grow together in a spike at the top of the stem, each with six long, narrow, pointed divisions, yellow within and green or yellowish-green without. In the heart of the flower are six beautiful thread-like objects curiously clothed with dense woolly hairs and crowned with little heads that are sometimes of a lovely red or orange colour.

These heads, which are called 'anthers,' serve the purpose of preparing the seeds of the plant to grow into new Asphodels next year. In order that the seed of a flower may produce another plant it has to be 'fertilised,' that is to say, it must receive some of the dust, or 'pollen,' borne by the 'anthers.' The pollen is carried, either by the wind or by bees and other insects which visit the flowers in search of honey, and shaken on to another object, called a 'stigma,' which grows from the centre of the flower. The fertilising pollen then acts on the seeds which

lie hidden in the heart of the blossoms, and they become ready to put forth little roots and leaves of their own when they fall to the ground. The stigma of the Bog Asphodel is the little knob forming the top of the object (looking like an Indian club) which you see in the centre of the flower.

In olden times it was considered fashionable for ladies to have yellow hair, and the maidens of Lancashire, and other parts of the country where the Bog Asphodel flourished, were so attracted by the golden flowers that they made a dye of them with which they obtained the desired colour for their hair. From this practice the plant became known as Maidenhair, though the title is shared by other flowers, as well as by a certain delicate kind of fern. The Bog Asphodel was discovered abundantly in Lancashire in those times, and, as that locality was evidently considered to be specially favoured by it, the plant was sometimes called the Lancashire Asphodel. We know now, however, that it grows in bogs everywhere.

No one is quite sure what the name Asphodel means, though some people read it as 'the unsurpassed,' meaning that its beauty is matchless. It is a very ancient name, being one of those which the Greeks made up centuries and centuries ago.

The Bog Asphodel grows very much like coarse tufts of grass, several plants being matted

together in one clump. You will find the starry flowers open from July until September.

### The Fine-Leaved Heath or Bell Heather.

THOSE of you who live near the moors and mountains, or have paid visits to those vast open tracts of country, and those broad, steep slopes that climb up towards the sky, whether it be in Scotland or Ireland, Wales or England, will need very little help from me in describing the Heaths or Heathers that grow so abundantly there from July until September. In their flowering time they turn the wild, sad-coloured expanses into a sudden glory of purple, till you would think some invisible artist, with magic in his brush, had painted all the world and set it afire with glowing colour.

There are several kinds of Heath or Heather, besides that other member of the family which is called Ling in the greater part of England; and the commonest are the Cross-leaved Heath and the subject of our present chapter, the Fine-leaved Heath or Bell Heather. The latter is a bushy plant with tough, wiry stems and fine, narrow, pointed leaves which usually grow in threes, with clusters of smaller ones amongst them. The flowers, which are bluish- or reddish- and

purple, or occasionally white, grow in long, blunt clusters all around the stems and branches, and, notwithstanding the name *Bell* Heather, they are shaped like an egg. At the mouth they are divided into four very small lobes or teeth.

There are certain marked differences between our plant on the one hand and the Cross-leaved Heath and the Ling on the other. The Cross-leaved Heath produces its leaves, which are less pointed than those of the Bell Heather, in rings of four; and its flowers, pink or rosy in hue, grow in small clusters at the ends of the branches. You can read about the Ling in another chapter.

Let me tell you a story about the name Heath. Long ago, in the early days of Christianity, the warlike tribes, called Picts, who inhabited parts of Scotland were worshippers of heathen gods. The early Christians who heard of these tribes were anxious to teach them about our Lord and win them to His faith, so they sent out missionaries to preach the Gospel to them. These soon found, however, that the Picts, instead of heeding their words, were more disposed to attack them and put them to death. The Christians, therefore, decided that they must send an army to subdue the heathens before they could hope to convert them. Accordingly, they invaded the country of the Picts, and again tried to win them over to the true faith; but the fighting men of the tribes once more set



upon them, and a great battle was fought. The Christians realised that they must not allow themselves to be overwhelmed, and they wielded their arms so valiantly in defence of their lives and their religion that, at the end of day, the heathen army was utterly defeated and only two of their warriors—an old man and his son—were left on the field.

Now comes a rather ignoble incident in the story. The heathen tribes possessed a secret which everyone was eager to discover. This was merely a way of making a special kind of beer brewed from Heath. The old man and his son were brought before King Kenneth, the victorious leader of the Christians, and told that if they would divulge the secret their lives would be spared. Both men refused to open their lips, so fierce was their hatred of those who had conquered them. The king thereupon put the son to death, and again demanded the secret from the father; but the old man was stubborn and brave, and still refused to speak, even though his obstinacy meant the loss of his life. The king was greatly impressed by his victim's steadfastness, and being a brave warrior himself, he spared the old man who had so courageously resisted him. So he was allowed to go away free, and the secret of the Heath-beer was never divulged.

The reason why I am telling you this story is that it was supposed to explain how our

plant and its relatives came to be called Heaths. You see, the battlefield was an open moor or mountain-side covered with these herbs. As the great fight was waged, the plants were stained with the blood of the fallen *heathen*, and ever afterwards those plants were called Heathen, or Heath for short. Of course that is only a tale, and the real reason for the name is that the open tracts of moor and waste on which the plants flourished were themselves called heaths, and the flowers were named after them. The word Heather, for all that it is so much like Heath, seems to have rather a different history, but it is a very obscure one and rather uninteresting.

The terms Heath and Heather (as well as Ling) are used loosely in different parts of England and Scotland for most of the plants of this family. You can read further about the subject in the chapter on the Ling.

### The Ling or Heather.

IN another chapter we have talked about the Fine-leaved Heath or Bell Heather; in the present chapter we are going to look at another plant which is closely related to, and indeed often confused with it. The Ling is often called Heather, especially in Scotland, where it is the general name for all the Heath-like plants.





The Fine-Leaved Heath or Bell Heather.

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The Ling or Heather.



There is one very curious pair of names to be heard there. The people call the Ling the He Heather, and the Bell Heather the She Heather. The reason why they do this is rather amusing, but not very gallant. The herdsmen who tend the sheep on the high mountains say that the Ling makes much better fodder for their flocks than the Bell Heather, and they indicate its superiority by naming it after their own sex, which, of course, they rank higher than the female! In Yorkshire, where the name Ling is applied very generally to Heath-like plants, they sometimes call our present flower Black Ling or Crow Ling, and also Moor. In parts of the west of England the children name it Honey-bottles, Mountain-mist, and Satin-balls. In several places they have a very old name, spelt variously Grig, Griglum, Griglans, &c.; but it is so old that no one can say whether it ever had any special meaning. The name Ling itself is a very ancient one too; and although here again we do not know what it means, we do know that it came from the language of the Norsemen who first descended on our shores over eleven hundred years ago.

The Ling usually grows from one to three feet in height, and some people say that its name really means 'long,' though I hardly think that is correct. Its stems are tough and woody, and they bear many shrubby branches. The leaves, which are of a bright green colour, are

very tiny, closely and neatly packed and arranged in four rows along the shoots which spring from the main branches. The flowers grow numerous in long, pointed spikes, and the pointed form of these spikes is one of the features that distinguish the plant from the Bell Heather.

The blooms are small and bell-shaped and their colour is usually pink, though it varies from a deeper tint to pure white. There is an outer portion, called the 'calyx,' which is divided into four parts, and an inner portion, deeply divided to look like four petals. In most flowers the calyx is green and the coloured part of the bloom rises out of it. The flowers of the Ling, however, are rather unusual, for the calyx is of the same rosy hue as the 'petals,' and these are completely enclosed by it. You will find the plant in the same kind of country as the Bell Heather, but it is often somewhat later than that plant in coming into flower.

It is very confusing that our plant should be so widely known under two names, for one can hardly decide whether to call it Ling or Heather. Personally, I think it would be a good thing if everyone learned to use the name Ling and no other for this plant, and leave the other Heaths and Heathers to go by those terms; but the two expressions have been in use so long that I have thought it best to write both of them at the head of this chapter.



## The Common Valerian.

THE Common Valerian has something of a Jack-and-the-Beanstalk air with its tall, lanky stem, so sparsely decked with leaves. It looks as if it might very well have sprung up in a night. It wastes no time in producing a mass of foliage, but shoots upwards as fast as it can, and contents itself with a few big stalks of leaflets that expose long, bare spaces of stem in between. You may find the plant as much as five feet in height, its stem finely furrowed and hollow, and its leaf-stalks bearing pairs of leaflets, with a single one at the end to finish off, all coarsely cut into teeth and deeply marked with veins. The lower leaves are much bigger than the higher ones, and sometimes they contain as many as a score of leaflets, though usually there are not so many as that.

The Common Valerian is really quite a famous plant. In olden times it had an astonishing reputation as a medicine and healer of wounds. Even to-day an extract of the root is sometimes used in medicines for colic and whooping-cough, and headaches and other unpleasant complaints. In fact so varied is the list of illnesses for which the plant has, at one time or another, been employed that it has acquired the name of All-heal, as if there was

no malady under the sun that could withstand its healing virtue. In the north of England the country folk valued the herb so highly that they called it Poor-man's-remedy, and they never forgot to avail themselves of the plant when they were making soups or broths for invalids. With such a useful growth at their door they considered themselves independent of expensive doctors' medicines, and that is why they named the plant Poor-man's-remedy.

This famous flower is frequently called the Great Valerian, because it has a smaller sister-plant, known as the Marsh Valerian; but it also answers to the curious name of Cat's Valerian. Now the plant has a surprising attraction for cats. They dig up the root and smell it, and rub their noses against it, and roll their soft bodies over it in a state of absolute ecstasy. It is the smell that appeals to them so much, a smell that, to our taste, becomes unpleasantly strong as the root dries. So extreme is this appetite for the plant that sometimes when a neighbourhood is overrun with cats people will set traps for them, using the root of Valerian as a bait. They call the root Cat's-trail, because the cats so readily trail towards the cruel snare.

We cannot be quite sure what the name Valerian means. In the great Empire of Rome there was a noble family named *Valeria*, and it is quite possible that one of its members

first discovered the healing powers of the plant and gave his name to it. Many people, however, think that the name has nothing to do with a Roman family, but comes from a Roman word, *valere*, signifying ‘good health,’ because of the great services the plant renders as a medicine.

The flowers of the Common Valerian grow in heads at the tops of the stem and branches. They are of a warm heliotrope hue when in bud, but as the florets open they grow paler, until at last they become a faint pink or almost white. Each little flower has a tube which opens out into five lobes, and the entire mass of them, with their projecting ‘stamens,’ has a pretty, feathery look.

The time to seek the flowers is from late June until August, and as they grow freely along hedges and in woods and pastures wherever the situation is damp and shady, you are not likely to fail in your search.

### The Harebell or Bluebell of Scotland.

IN the first volume of this work we had a chapter on the Bluebell or Wild Hyacinth, and in it I explained that that flower was called simply a Hyacinth in Scotland and the north of England, while the true Bluebell of those parts was the flower which goes by the name

of Harebell in the rest of England. In the present chapter we are going to examine the latter flower, which we will call the Harebell or Bluebell of Scotland.

First of all let us talk about that name Harebell, because there have been all sorts of arguments about it and as many ways of spelling it. Some people prefer the spelling *Hair*-bell, because they think the name is intended to point to the slender flower-stalks, whose delicacy suggests the fineness of a hair. In some books the word is even spelt Air-bell, while one volume says that the proper form is Ayr-bell, and that this is made up from some Welsh words meaning a balloon or similar object blown out by air. I suppose the people who use these names see a likeness to such objects in the swelling shape of the flowers. Then there have been people who declare that all these forms are wrong, and that the really correct spelling is Ha'er-bell, a contraction of Heather-bell, by which name folks in certain parts of the country do actually call the flower.

For myself, I think all these notions are distinctly fanciful, and that we shall do well to keep to the best-known spelling—Harebell. But if we are to do this you will want to know why the flower should have been called after that long-eared animal, for it certainly does not resemble it in any way. Well the reason is—at least that is what seems to me most probable

—that it is so called because it loves to grow in the dry, hilly pastures and open heaths where the hare makes its home. There are many districts of England where you never see a Harebell, and it is much more abundant and widespread in Scotland, where there are vast areas of the free, open heath and moor and mountain-side that both the hare and the Harebell love so well. Doubtless that is one reason why our present plant, and not that other blue, bell-shaped flower, the Wild Hyacinth, is usually regarded as the true Bluebell of Scotland.

The plant commences its growth with a creeping rootstock, from which it sends up stems to a height of anything from a few inches to a foot or more. Sometimes in books you will find the plant called the Round-leaved Bell-flower (as if there were not already sufficient names for it!), and you will wonder how such a name ever came to be given, for the leaves which you see are not round at all, but long and narrow. The reason is that the lowest leaves of all are in fact round, or, rather, heart-shaped; but you do not often notice them because they are generally hidden by the surrounding grass and other growths, and they mostly wither before the flowers appear. These root-leaves grow on stalks and their edges are cut into little teeth.

The flowers grow, sometimes singly, sometimes in small clusters, on long, slender stalks which spring from the stem and its branches, and there

is a ring of five little ‘stamens,’ surrounding the club-like ‘pistil,’ inside them. The little bells hang gracefully on their hair-like stalks, and you can almost imagine them ringing out a sweet and silvery chime of fairy music as they sway lightly in the breeze. They are so elegant in their silken texture, so prettily shaped with their swelling outline and the five broad, pointed divisions that curl backwards at the mouth, that it is no wonder people call them Fairy-bells and Fairy-ringers. Their colour is usually a delicate blue or purplish-blue, but they vary a good deal in tint and are sometimes quite white.

If the fairies find these lightly poised bells a fitting means of ringing them to their moonlight frolics, so too do they employ them for the more practical purposes of their happy lives. We can guess at this in such names as Fairies’-caps, Fairies’-thimbles, and Fairy-cups, which show us that the ‘little folk’ find in the blooms attractive headgear, a useful aid in sewing, and a dainty vessel from which to drink the shining dew that falls upon the fields at night.

The delicate beauty of the little flowers has led people to make up other names for them. In Somersetshire they sometimes call the plant Lady’s-thimbles, and the same title is given in certain parts of Scotland. Then there is a name which I should say was invented by children on their way to school. I mean the name





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School-bell, which is used in the west of England. Other titles are Ding-dong, Bell-flower, Sheep's-bell, Meadow-bell, and Heath-bell. In the north-east of Scotland the people call the flowers Aul' Man's-bell (or Old Man's-bell), by which they refer to Satan. For some reason which it is difficult to understand, they are rather afraid of the harmless little plant, and so they never pick the flowers. Then, in other districts of Scotland, they connect the blooms with witches, and name them Witch-bells and Witches'-thimbles; though I should hardly think those horrid creatures would dare to use such a sweet and winsome object in their evil work, whether for summoning them to their midnight orgies or for the more harmless industry of stitching.

There is still another name to be mentioned, and it comes from the west of England. It is a very strange name, and, I think, rather a pretty one: the Nun-of-the-fields. The people who use it seem to have copied it from the French. I expect it was given because folks thought the flowers, with their drooping heads, looked as chaste and pure as a holy nun with her head bent in meditation. Or perhaps there is some old story telling of how a nun was once changed into a Harebell, for you do read of such tales sometimes.

Now I think we have said sufficient about the Harebell or Bluebell of Scotland, so I will

just add that the plant is to be found in flower from July until quite late in September, and then conclude this chapter.

### The Vervain.

THE Vervain is by no means a strikingly handsome plant, although, like all flowers, it has its attractive points; but I think you will be just as eager to look for it as you would for a more beautiful bloom, because it has such a remarkably interesting history.

For hundreds of years the plant was known in England as the Holy-herb and Holy Vervain, and to understand the reason for these names we must go right back in history to the times when the Greeks and Romans were the most famous nations in Europe. Even in those days the plant was held in the greatest reverence. Indeed, the Greek people called it the Sacred-herb, and they used it in their religious ceremonies and credited it with miraculous powers.

The Romans, who became so powerful that they ruled over nearly all the countries of Europe, gave even greater honour to the plant, and it is while we are seeking the meaning of the name Vervain that we discover the great reputation it had with them. As I have told you elsewhere, these people, for some time after

the coming of our Lord, worshipped a group of heathen gods, and, of course, they held religious ceremonies in which they offered up worship and sacrifices and performed other rites to obtain the divine favour. On such occasions they employed certain plants for decking the altars and for other purposes, and those plants were held to be of a sacred character and specially pleasing to the gods.

The sacred plants also played an important part on the occasions when the Romans dispatched ambassadors and heralds to foreign countries to transact state affairs, whether it was to demand satisfaction for a wrong done or to debate solemn questions of peace and war. On such occasions the messengers carried with them some of the sacred plants, as a sign that their mission was under the special protection of heaven, and that no injury or insult must be offered to their persons, under penalty of the extreme wrath of the gods.

A wreath of Vervain heralds wear,  
Amongst our garlands named;  
Being sent that dreadful news to bear,  
Oppressive war proclaimed.

Now the sacred plants included Olives, Myrtles, Laurels, &c., and, what is of more immediate interest to us, they also included our common little Vervain. This unassuming flower, that abounds in our own English fields, actually served the most important purposes of state

and religion amongst the greatest empires the world has ever known.

And now we are coming to the meaning of the name Vervain. In addition to the ordinary name, such as Olive, Myrtle, or Laurel, which each of the sacred plants bore, there was one inclusive term for all of them. They were called *Verbenae*, and it is from that word that the name Vervain comes. You will see, therefore, that the name, greatly altered as it is, is trying to tell us that it means a sacred plant.

The holy character of our plant was preserved long after the fall of the Roman Empire, and there is an old story which says that it was first found growing on the Mount of Olives, or Olivet, where our Lord was betrayed by Judas Iscariot.

Hail to thee, Holy Herb!  
Growing on the ground.  
On the Mount of Olivet  
First wert thou found.

Thou art good for many an ill,  
And healest many a wound;  
In the name of sweet Jesus,  
I lift thee from the ground.

You will notice from the last verse that the plant had acquired a great reputation as a healer of wounds. I expect this was due to its sacred history. The people of those days thought that such a famous plant must necessarily be a powerful medicine for the diseases that afflicted

mankind, and so they employed it in all manner  
of

cases: swellings in the throat, diseased livers, snake-bites, bites of mad dogs and poisonous spiders, and other injuries too numerous to mention. Such medicines were called 'simples' in those days, and the people who prepared them were 'simplers.' The Vervain soon became known as the Simpler's-joy, because it was such a profitable plant to the simplers who so freely used it.

There were all sorts of other uses to which the herb was put, such as averting witchcraft and making up love potions and magic amulets; but I have already spoken about this kind of superstition in the Introduction, so I will say no more about it here.

Now let us look at the herb about which we have told so much. The stems are stiff and erect and they taper towards the top. They bear a number of branches which gradually lengthen out and grow upwards in a wide curve. The whole plant has a rather 'spidery' look, due to these stiff and widespreading branches.

The leaves are rough on both sides with a light sprinkling of bristly hairs. The lower ones are often roughly pear-shaped and cut, more or less deeply, into a number of coarse teeth or 'lobes'; the upper ones, which also are divided into lobes, are narrower and more pointed; but all of them vary a good deal in shape. Some people think the leaves resemble the foot of a frog, and they call the plant Frog's-foot. Others



name it Dove's-foot and Pigeon's-foot, as if the leaves were more like those objects; although two further names—Pigeon's-grass and Columbine—were supposed to have been given because pigeons and doves had a fondness for the neighbourhood of the plant, and even fed on its leaves.

The flowers grow in long, slender spikes at the ends of the stems and branches. They are very small, of a pale lilac tint, and divided into five lobes. So delicate is their colour that they are almost lost to sight against the background of green grass when found growing in the fields. The Vervain grows freely on waste ground, in fields, and on the roadsides, and it is to be found in flower from July until September. And whenever we do find it I expect we shall fall to wondering about its long and romantic history, and marvel that so much could be hidden in its simple name.

### The Hedge Woundwort.

THE plant we are now going to look at is one of a number of herbs, all called Woundworts, which owe their name to the great value which used to be attached to them in the healing of wounds. Our particular plant is called the *Hedge Woundwort* because it is so commonly found in the hedgerows, though it grows on the edges of woods and in waste places as well.

One of its sister-plants held a marvellous reputation in olden times. Tales are told of men who cut a leg right to the bone, or were cut and stabbed in various parts of the body so grievously that they were hardly expected to live, and yet this common wild-flower healed them in a surprisingly short time. The Hedge Woundwort was not, perhaps, regarded quite so highly as some of its relatives, but it shared to some extent in their fame.

The stem of the plant is erect and from two to four feet high. It is square in shape and bears several branches. The whole plant is softly hairy, and it has a strong, disagreeable smell, especially if you bruise it. The leaves, which feel just like pieces of flannel, grow in pairs on rather long stalks. They are broadly heart-shaped and their edges are cut into rounded teeth.

The flowers grow in numerous rings, forming long spikes of a dark reddish-purple or claret colour, at the ends of the stem and branches. The rings are separated from each other by intervals of bare stalk, and each ring has a pair of small leaves beneath it. The general shape of the flowers is like that of the Dead Nettles. The two lips have a curiously gaping appearance, and the purple hue of the lower one is decorated with white. Whenever I look at the flowers I am strongly reminded of a little red baby seated in a chair. The upper lip is the baby's head, the central part of the lower lip stands for its

legs, and the side portions (which are bent down) are its arms. To make the image complete you find the legs of the chair in the long tube of the flower.

Sometimes the plant is called the Hedge Nettle, or the Hedge Dead Nettle, because of the shape and soft surfaces of the leaves; but these are names which it is well not to apply to the Hedge Woundwort, because they will only cause you to confuse the plants. In Yorkshire people sometimes call our plant Toad-flower. I wonder what use they think the toads make of it?

You will find the purple spikes in flower from late June until August. There are three other kinds of Woundwort, but the only one I need mention is the Marsh Woundwort. This plant, as its name indicates, grows only in marshy ground, or by the moist banks of rivers. It has many resemblances to the Hedge Woundwort, but many differences from it as well. The smell is not so strong, the leaves are much narrower and grow on very short stalks, and the flowers are of a pale bluish-purple colour.

### The Dog Rose.

WHEN the Dog Rose blushes in the hedges in the months of June and July we know that summer is really here. The doubtful warmth of the spring months gives place to the enduring





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heat of the long, bright days; the trees load their branches with a fresh burden of leafy green; the hedgerows throng with birds busy over their little families; the growing corn begins to rustle in the warm breezes; and in the meadows and pastures the mild-eyed cattle and woolly sheep browse contentedly on the luscious herbage. Many of the earliest spring flowers have disappeared or dwindled to a few lingering blooms. Primroses, Celandines, Cow-slips, so welcome to our eyes in the first awakening of the earth, have shed their yellow petals, and now it is the turn of the later plants to gladden us with the beauties they have reserved for the flood-tide of summer.

Now is the time to wander in the green lanes and revel amongst the rich harvest of luxurious blooms that make the hedgeways glad; and, amongst all the flowers so lavishly displayed on every hand, there are none we love more than the wild Roses. Let us take note of their features as we pluck them from the prickly branches. The flowers of our particular plant, the Dog Rose, vary in depth of colour, being sometimes almost white, but more ordinarily blushing in varied delicate shades of pink. The broad, spreading petals, so quick to fall, are five in number, and in their centre the golden-headed 'stamens' form a bushy ring around the greenish tops of the 'pistils.'

These stamens and pistils serve to fertilise



the seeds that lie in the oval-shaped feature beneath the petals which, later on, will develop into the scarlet and orange hips we know so well. And, if we admire these brilliantly coloured seed-vessels, the birds love them even more, and for a reason which shows the cleverness of the plant in producing them. The fleshy covering of the hips is pleasantly sweet to the taste, and the birds, in feeding on them, scatter the ripe seeds within, and so disperse them over the country-side, where they spring up in new homes far away from the parent plant. In Cheshire the Dog Rose is called the Bird-brier because of the little songsters' fondness for the plant.

The hips have a number of names all to them-selves: Cankers, Canker-berries, Dog-hips, Cat- hips, Dog-berries, and, in Devonshire, the funny name of Pigs'-noses and the prettier one of Pixy Pears. A pixy is a Devonshire fairy, and as the birds find the hips sweet and pleasant to eat, I expect the fairies consider them a delicacy as well. In Kent the children call the hips Soldiers, because their scarlet hue calls to mind the red coats soldiers used to wear before they took to khaki. In Scotland and the north of England the hips are known as Choops, Cat-choops, Dog-chowps, Cat-jugs, Catti-jugs, Dog-jugs, Dog-jumps, Dog-jobs, and by similar outlandish names. The last of these may refer to the prickles of the plant, for in Scotland prickles are often called jobs.

Children sometimes eat the young shoots, or suckers, of the Dog Rose, and they evidently find in them a satisfying meal, for they call them Daily-bread.

The seeds enclosed within the hips are hairy, a fact which mischievous boys know well, and they torment their playmates by thrusting them down their backs. This sets up a most dreadful tickling, and they call the seeds Itching-berries and Tickling-Tommies.

Our plant has been known from olden times by a variety of other names, such as Briar and Briar Rose, Hip-briar and Hip Rose, Canker Rose and Canker-flower. Canker is the name given to certain destructive diseases and to the caterpillars that devour the tender leaf-buds of plants. One kind of disease causes a great deal of harm to fruit trees, where it often shows itself in the form of little reddish balls growing out of cracks in the bark. The galls, often bright scarlet in colour, which you see on the branches of wild Roses are likewise a kind of disease. They are caused by an insect which bores into the leaf-buds and lays its eggs there. The grubs which hatch out from the eggs disturb the leaf-bud and cause it to change its growth into mossy or hairy galls. Country people call such growths Canker-balls, but children know them also as Robin-redbreast's-cushions and Robin's-pincushions.

While you are looking at the flowers you

should observe the fringed, green, leaf-like 'sepals' below the petals. These protect the tender blooms while they are in bud, and fall back when they open. The leaves of the plant are divided into five or seven leaflets with sharply toothed edges.

Have you ever wondered why the plant should be named the *Dog Rose*? And do you know that in various counties it is called after other animals as well, as in the names *Pig Rose* and *Horse-bramble*? Many people assert that the name *Dog Rose* was given to distinguish the plant in a disparaging way from the more highly perfumed garden *Roses*; for the word 'dog' is frequently applied to plants that are humble relatives of more attractive or more useful flowers. But in ancient times the people of Greece, from whom we took the name of our plant, are said to have believed that the roots of the wild *Roses* would cure the bite of a mad dog; so other people say that this is the reason for the name.

I do not know whether the Greeks really did conceive this quite inaccurate fancy. It is true that the Romans did so at a later date, for one of their writers tells a miraculous story about it. He relates that the mother of a certain soldier received warning in a dream to send her son a root of wild *Rose* and to tell him to drink the extract of it. It so happened that her son had just been bitten by a dog and was develop-

ing a horrible malady as a result. As soon as he read his mother's letter he did as she bade him, and, although the disease at that time had always resulted in death, his life was saved.

The name Rose was copied by us from the Greeks and Romans, and it is said that it was first made up from a word meaning 'red' and given to the plants because that was the colour of their blooms.

Besides the Dog Rose there are many varieties of wild Rose, of which three only need be mentioned. The Field Rose is of a trailing habit and its blooms are white and scentless. The Burnet Rose, or Scotch Rose, is a small, erect bush, with many branches and innumerable prickles, which are mostly straight, whilst those of the Dog Rose are curved. The Sweetbriar, or Eglantine, is usually a more slender plant than the Dog Rose; the leaflets are small, and, if you bruise them, they yield a sweet fragrance; the flowers, too, are rather smaller than those of the Dog Rose, and they usually grow singly, whilst our plant produces most of its blooms in clusters of three or four.

### The Cornflower or Corn Bluebottle.

I OFTEN wish this flower were spread a little more freely over the country-side, for the peculiarly rich deep blue of its petals would be a

welcome sight anywhere. Its chief home, however, as you can tell from its name, is in the golden cornfields, and it is there that we must seek it during the months of July and August.

The stem and leaves of the plant have a grey-green appearance, due to the mealy-looking down which covers them. In Somersetshire the people sometimes call the flower Miller's-delight, and I am wondering whether this is because it reminds millers of the flour into which they grind the corn. The stem, which may be as high as two feet, branches freely. It is so tough that it used to blunt the farmers' sickles in the days when they reaped corn with those implements; and this led them to call the plant Hurt-sickle. A certain poet, speaking of this feature, gives the herb a very bad character, for he says:

Thou blun'st the very reaper's sickle, and so  
In life and death becom'st the farmer's foe.

The leaves are not at all attractive. Indeed it always seems to me that the plant was so much taken up with the work of producing its beautiful blooms that it paid very little attention to its other parts. The lowest leaves are usually toothed or jagged around their edges, but the others are long and narrow and plain like grass.

The flower-heads grow at the ends of the stem and branches. The blooms spring from a green,

oval-shaped object which, from its fancied resemblance to a bottle, caused the plant to be called the Corn Bluebottle. At the top of the 'bottle' you see the ring of brilliant blue flowers, or 'florets' as these are called, their petals cut into pointed 'lobes,' or divisions, in a manner that gives the flower-head a jagged appearance. In the centre of the ring is a mass of purplish-blue tubes, every one of which, with its accompanying parts, forms a separate floret, although you would hardly think so unless you pulled it out to see.

Many a name has been given to the plant on account of its heavenly blue colour. In different parts of Scotland it is the Blaver or Blavert, the Blawort and Blue-bonnets. In those parts, too, they sometimes name it Witches'-thimbles and Witch-bells, as if the lovely blossoms had some evil association with witches. Other names are Blewball and Blewblow, Blue-buttons, Bobby's-buttons, and Blue-caps. One very curious title, which was copied from the French, is Break-your-spectacles. There is an old country superstition about the Parsley to the effect that if a housewife lifts her spectacles after having bruised Parsley in her hands, they will suddenly snap. I cannot imagine how such a ridiculous fancy ever came to be entertained, but I expect the same story was told about the Cornflower, and the name Break-your-spectacles given to it for that reason.

## The Hairy Mint.

YOU will have noticed as you read these chapters that many of the names of our wild-flowers have been taken from those which were made up by the Greeks who lived by the Mediterranean Sea some two thousand years ago. The various plants which we call Mints belong to this group, and now I will tell you an old, old story which explains how the name came to be given.

The gods whom the Greeks worshipped divided the kingdoms of earth and heaven and the lower regions between them. The lower regions were a most dismal district, situated in the bowels of the earth, where departed spirits wandered about in dim twilight shades. The god who ruled over this melancholy place was called Hades. He was a fierce and gloomy monster, and was accompanied by a dog with three heads. Although he was such a fearsome creature, he had taken for his wife a lovely maiden, whose name was Persephone.

These two did not remain always in their dismal kingdom, but issued forth from time to time through a cave which led up into the open air. One day, as Hades was walking upon the earth, his eye fell upon a young and beautiful maiden, and he immediately fell violently in love with her. The maiden, whose name was Minthe,







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was terrified when the great god of the underworld began to court her, for, of course, she knew quite well that he already had a bride.

None the less she found it impossible to rid herself of Hades' attentions, but a time came when their relations were ended in a tragic manner. The god's bride discovered the two together, and she was furiously angry at her wicked lord's unfaithfulness. She soon devised a plan for putting a stop to his 'goings on,' and the plan was this: she turned poor Minthe into a flower. That flower ever afterwards took the maiden's name, and it was one of those which we now call a Mint.

The Mints are rather a numerous family, and some of the different kinds are so much alike, and so changeable in their different parts, that it is as difficult to distinguish them as to tell twins when they are apart. One of the commonest kinds is the Hairy Mint, which owes the first part of its name to the fact that it is covered all over with soft hairs. It has a tough, square, straggling stem, and it attains a height of from one to two feet or even considerably more. Quite a number of branches grow from it; they are extremely small at first, and it is rather interesting to watch them lengthen out and become bigger and bigger as they produce their share of leaves and flowers. The leaves, which grow in pairs, are stalked and broadly egg-shaped, except that they end in a point,

and their edges are cut into more or less irregular teeth. They are soft to the touch, owing to the hairs which clothe them on both sides.

The flowers are mauve in colour and they grow in dense round heads at the ends of the stem and branches, with often one, two, or more additional, but smaller, collections at the points where the upper leaf-stalks spring. Every flower-head contains an uncountable number of separate flowers, or 'florets,' each made up of a little open mouth divided into four 'lobes' or parts, one of them having a small notch.

The Hairy Mint, which flowers during August and September, is often found in large, spreading masses, and it multiplies itself by means of its branching and creeping rootstock, which sends new roots downwards to peg the plant to the ground and fresh stems upwards to bear new leaves and flowers. The whole plant has the strong familiar odour of the garden Mint, but with a difference that makes it sickly. It seeks a damp situation for its home, and is to be found chiefly about ditches and brooks and marshes, for which reason it is often called the Brook Mint or Water Mint.

Another name, which is applied to most of the wild Mints, is Horse Mint. The term 'Horse' does not mean that the plants are eaten by that animal. It is simply a way of distinguishing them from the garden Mint; the latter being a cultivated kind fit for consumption by human

beings, the former a wild growth of no use at all, unless indeed the animals care to eat it.

## The Corn Marigold.

THE Corn Marigold is like a big yellow Daisy, or, better still, a yellow Ox-eye Daisy, and it is often called the Yellow Ox-eye. Its flower-heads (which are made up of numerous complete little flowers, or 'florets') have the same golden, button-like centre; but the surrounding circle of 'florets,' instead of being white, is of the same deep golden hue.

The names which have been given to the plant from the bright gilding of its flowers are so numerous that, if I were to try to tell you all of them, I should never come to an end. In Scotland and the north of England our plant, like many other yellow flowers, goes by such names as Golds, Goles, Gools, Goolds, Gules, Yellow-gowans, and Gowlans; and these words, strange as many of them appear, all have to do with the word 'gold.' Farmers dislike the Corn Marigold, because its abundant growth is so injurious to the corn amongst which it makes its home. At one time there was a Scottish custom of riding through the fields to discover whether any farmers were neglecting to weed out the plant, and these visits were called Gool-ridings. A farmer who allowed the weed to flourish un-

checked was fined for his negligence. Similar punishments were inflicted in England.

There is one curious old name of the plant that is rather interesting. It is Bossell. Now a bossell was the medallion-like ornament which appears in the bottom of old-fashioned drinking bowls, and I expect the name was given to the flower because its centre reminded people of that decoration. Other puzzling names which you hear sometimes in country districts are Bothen and Botherum. The latter word sounds very much like the sort of exclamation an angry farmer might make on being fined for allowing the weed to increase in his fields; but actually both names seem to be nothing more than ancient forms of the familiar word 'button.' I do not think I need to tell you where to find the button in the flower.

Two more strange titles which the Corn Marigold has received are Boodle and Buddle. I cannot really say what they mean, unless they are mere mispronunciations of 'bottle'; for the flower is sometimes called the Yellow-bottle, though it is not a fitting name, as there is nothing bottle-like in it. I *have* read that the names are made up from a foreign word meaning 'a purse,' and really this would be quite a happy title for a plant that bore bright golden blooms like sovereigns; but I do not think the explanation is the correct one.

Two of the names which the plant shares

with the Ox-eye Daisy are Moons and Moon-flowers, because the golden circle of the flower reminds one of the full moon. Sometimes the plant is called Harvest-flower, because it is in full bloom when the corn is cut, though you may chance upon it at any time between June and October, or even later.

The Corn Marigold is a remarkably smooth plant with a branching stem that grows to a height of a foot or more. The leaves are roughly of an oblong shape, but variously cut into jagged or irregular teeth. There are no stalks to the upper leaves and their ends clasp the stem. Like the rest of the plant, they are quite hairless.

The name Gold which I mentioned before was of old the common name of the garden Marigold, and probably the syllable 'Mari' was affixed later to show that the plant had been dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In fact there is an old legend to the effect that the flower was called after her because she used to wear it in her bosom. The Corn Marigold copied its name from the garden plant.

### The Chicory or Succory.

WE have often talked of the ways in which our forefathers used different plants as medicines, and now we have come to a flower that has long served, and indeed continues to serve, a



purpose of another kind. You may have learned that when you are making coffee a quantity of chicory is generally mixed with the ground berries; and Chicory, you will notice, is one of the common names of this flower. The plant is specially cultivated for its intended purpose; the long, thick roots are roasted and ground, and then they are ready for mixing with the coffee.

The plant is one of those whose names are so old that no one can say what they mean. But to show you how old the word Chicory is, and also over what far distant countries it has travelled to us, I can tell you that it was known in the times of the great Roman Empire, and by the Greeks who lived more than two thousand years ago. The other common name of the plant, Succory, has no separate meaning of its own, for it has only grown up through people mispronouncing the word Chicory. That word used to be spelt *cicoree* and then *sichorie*, and so in time it became what it is to-day.

There are few flowers that can equal the brilliant blue of the Succory, and it has such pretty habits that it is well worth our while to study them. The flower-heads grow mostly in twos and threes, cuddling closely to the stiff, branching stems. Their petals, each one of which, with its 'stamens' and 'pistil,' is really a separate 'floret,' are of a heavenly blue, made up of long narrow strips with sawlike teeth at their ends. Children call the plant Strip-for-

strip, because of the shape of the petals, though I cannot say exactly why they put the name in that way. Inside the circle of ray-like petals you find a collection of lovely blue threads, dusted with fairy frost, that curl back in the most delightful manner every afternoon when the flower is thinking of going to sleep. In Germany they name the plant the Keeper-of-the-ways, because they say that it opens its flowers at eight o'clock in the morning, when people are beginning to travel, and closes them at four o'clock, when they are returning home. They also say that this name was given because the flower was once a young maiden who sat at the roadside day by day, patiently looking for the return of her sweetheart, who had voyaged a long way over the seas. But her lover never came back, and in time the hapless maiden was changed into a Succory flower, whose brilliant blue petals matched the bright hue of her anxiously gazing eyes.

The leaves of the plant are of two kinds. The lower ones are large and hairy and divided into several pointed lobes growing on either side of the middle rib, with a final lobe at the end, and all the lobes are cut up at their edges into coarse teeth. The upper leaves are much smaller and simpler in shape, and each one clasps the stem with a pair of 'ears.' The longer leaves are used as a salad, although those of a garden plant called Endive are better known

to us in that form. The Succory is a near relative of this plant, and it is often called the Wild Endive.

The Succory is a stiff and rather bristly plant, and it grows to a height of anything between one and two feet, or even more. It likes a nice dry soil, and you will find it at any time during the summer and autumn decorating the roadsides, the borders of fields, and other waste places with its wealth of sky-blue flowers.

### The Greater Plantain.

THERE is a story told about the Greater Plantain which is similar to the one related in the chapter on the Chicory or Succory. It is said that the plant was once a maiden who stood by the roadside patiently watching for the return of her lover who had gone a long journey over the sea. She waited there day after day, fondly hoping that any moment might bring her the delight of beholding his beloved form striding eagerly towards her out of the distance. Time went on and he never came, and the poor maiden grew forlorn and despairing, until at length she was changed into this plant that grows so frequently at the roadsides where she stood.

There are certain names of the plant that connect it with travellers and the roads over which they journey. One of the oldest is Way-





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The Greater Plantain.



bread, which comes from two old words meaning 'way' and 'broad.' You have to reverse the order of the syllables, and then read them as meaning 'the *broad*-leaved plant growing beside the *ways*.' If you look at the leaves you will notice that they are of a very broad, oval shape, with long, grooved stalks, ribs that run in a parallel manner from stalk to tip, and a frilled or wavy edge. Generally they lie in a rosette, closely pressed to the ground, as if they had been trodden into the dust by the feet of the wayfarers, though in certain situations they lift themselves up clear of the earth. Sometimes people make a mistake about the meaning of this old name. They think the second syllable refers to the bread we eat, and call the plant Wayside-bread, but the correct meaning is 'broad.' Other names are Broad-leaf and Wayfaring-leaf.

There are several plants called Plantain, and the name comes from a Latin word meaning 'the sole of the foot.' People thought that the leaves of the Greater Plantain rather suggested the shape of a foot; and they said that the name was doubly or trebly suitable because the plant was so constantly pressed underfoot by travellers, and also because it seemed to press itself close to the ground and look like a footprint. The Plantain has a curious habit of suddenly making its appearance in different parts of the world where white men go exploring. When Englishmen first began to settle in the wild forests of



North America the savage Red Indians who lived there noticed that the Plantain sprang up wherever the white man set his foot, so they named it the White-man's-foot or the English-man's-foot. A very charming name of the same kind was made up by the people of Wales, for they called the plant the Follower-of-the-heel-of-Christ, as if it sprang up by the dusty roadside wherever our Lord journeyed on His teachings.

In the Highlands of Scotland, and also in parts of Ireland, the country folk name the plant *Slan-lus*, which means 'the plant of healing,' and there are also the names *Healing-blade* and *Healing-leaf*. In olden times the Greater Plantain was supposed to be useful for curing all sorts of illnesses, and it was of particular use to people going on a long pilgrimage, because they said that if you placed a leaf of it inside your stocking it would relieve the soreness and fatigue of your feet.

Now I will tell you of an interesting name, the fitness of which you can test for yourself. In the west of England children call the Greater Plantain and other plants *Fiddle-strings*, because the ribs of the leaves and the fibres of the leaf-stalks are so wiry and elastic. If you tore them out you could make quite a good fiddle with them—at least, that is what they say. Or if you snap the leaf-stalk, without breaking the fibres, and then pull it, you will see the fibres stretched out just like the strings on a fiddle. Sometimes

the plant is called Lamb's-tongue, because the shape of the leaves reminds people of a little lamb's tongue; but the name is more frequently given to another kind of Plantain called the Ribwort Plantain.

The flowers of the Plantains do not look in the least like other flowers, and you will not think them handsome, although their various names and uses make the plants themselves so interesting. The flowers are very small and colourless, and they are crowded together in spikes at the ends of stiff stalks. The flower-spikes of the Greater Plantain are slender and tapering, and may be anything from two to six inches in length. The flowers are green and hard at first, but become a little more attractive when they produce their long, thread-like 'stamens' tipped with purplish 'anthers.' You can see these anthers spreading in a ring about the flower-spikes and ascending gradually from the bottom to the top. Children call the plant Mouse-tail, Rats'-tails, and Ponies'-tails because of the appearance of the flowering stalks. They also name it Chimney-sweep and Chimney-sweep's- brush; and very suitable terms they are too, for when the spikes are surrounded by the fluffy stamens they at once make you think of a long- handled brush suitable for sweeping chimneys.

If you watch the birds flitting about the roads and fields you may often see them pecking at the seeds of the Greater Plantain, for they are

fond of these as a food. Canaries and other birds which we keep in cages have the same liking for them. That is why country people so often name the plant Bird-seed, Canary-flower, Canary-food, Canary-seed, and Lark-seed.

The Greater Plantain does not confine itself altogether to the sides of roads, but may be found also in fields and waste places. Its modest flowers appear from early until late summer.

## The Great Willow-Herb.

MANY of our loveliest flowers make their homes in the quiet valleys, by the sides of streams and in the midst of wet, low-lying pastures. One of these is the fragrant Meadowsweet, about which you may read in another chapter, and now we are going to seek another plant, equally beautiful in its own way and with a scent of a different character.

Of all the numerous kinds of Willow-herb which are commonly to be found growing wild the Great Willow-herb, or the Great Hairy Willow-herb, as it is sometimes called, is the biggest. Down by the water's edge, throughout the months of July and August, it grows, often in great masses. Its strong, round stems, which bear many leafy branches, stand boldly erect, and they reach a height of anything between that of a child and that of a tall man.

The whole plant is overspread with fine, soft hairs, which is the reason why it is called the Great *Hairy* Willow-herb.

The leaves are long, narrow, and pointed, and their edges are bordered with small teeth. They do not grow on stalks, as so many leaves do, but spring straight from the stem, which they clasp at their lower ends. You will notice the same feature in the Teazel. The leaves are not unlike those of a kind of Willow tree, and that is why the plant is called a Willow-herb, the association being strengthened by the fact that both the tree and the plant grow in the same wet places.

The flowers, which are of a beautiful rose or bright magenta colour, have four large petals, deeply notched. They grow in loose clusters at the tops of the branches, and when the plant is in full bloom the numerous showy flowers make it a delightful sight. It is most interesting to watch the blooms day by day as they develop. First you see the unfolding petals, standing in a little, green, hairy cup, and you notice a strangely beautiful cross of a rich creamy tint crowning them. The cross is mounted on a thread-like object hidden in the bud, and its purpose is to help in preparing the seeds to grow into new plants. Perhaps it is the lovely contrast of the rich creamy hue of the cross with the bright magenta of the opening petals that leads some children to call the plant Custard-

cups, as if the flowers were green- and rose-coloured cups filled with creamy custard. Or perhaps there is some other reason for the name which you can tell me? Later, when we come to the plant again, we find that the brightly coloured petals have spread their beauties wide open to the sunshine, and then we can see the whole of that thread-like object which splits into the four parts of the cross, together with the group of 'stamens' clustering round it.

You will have noticed, from your first glance at the flowers, that they are borne at the ends of what appear to be ordinary stalks, square in shape, reddish in colour and covered with the downy hair that clothes the rest of the plant. And you will have seen too, that, as the flowers bloomed, this 'stalk' became longer and longer. If we look again after the flower has fallen, we shall discover not only that the 'stalk' remains attached to the plant, but, what is a very surprising thing, that its four sides are splitting into four long and narrow strips, which are curling back on themselves in the prettiest manner. Not only this, but, on peeping at the inside of the now open 'stalk,' we see that it is full of tiny seeds, all arranged in the neatest possible way and covered with fluff. Now let us pick out some of the seeds. Directly we do so we find that each one has a delightful little parachute of white hairs to help it to fly away to a new home and set up house for itself as an

independent plant. These fluffy seeds, I should mention, may have helped in associating the plant with Willows, for those trees also have tufts of cottony hairs attached to their seeds.

The secret of all this is that the so-called 'stalk' is not a stalk at all, but a beautifully constructed case—you might almost call it a portmanteau—for holding the seeds until they are ripe. Long ago, when people first studied these very unusual seed-cases, they thought it very singular that the seeds should be produced before the flowers were open, because as a rule they saw the flower of a plant first and only noticed its seed-vessel after it had bloomed. Well, they were so astonished at what they considered the topsy-turvy behaviour of the Willow-herb that they named the plant Son-before-the-father. 'Because,' they exclaimed, 'the children' (that is to say, the seeds) 'come into the world and grow up before their parents, the flowers!' You will remember, from what was said about the Cudweed and the Colt's-foot in the earlier volume of this work, that the same curious name was given to those plants, though for different reasons.

The flowers of the Great Willow-herb, and also the young shoots, have a decided odour. I should not like to be compelled to say exactly what this odour reminds me of, but I will tell you the names which country-people have given to the plant, and then you will know what

they think about it. First, and best known of all, is Codlins-and-cream and also Sugar-codlins, a codling being a kind of cooking apple which is delicious to eat, boiled or baked, and served with plenty of cream. Then there is Apple-pie, and Cherry-pie, and Gooseberry-pie; and, after that, Gooseberry-pudding, Gooseberry-fool, and Plum-pudding. What a delightful odour the plant must have to suggest all these delicious dishes!

### The Purple Loosestrife.

IN other chapters, such as those on the Meadow-sweet and the Willow-herb, I have told you of the handsome plants that grow by the sides of streams and in other wet situations. The Purple Loosestrife is another of these flowers, and it is one that you will be delighted to find when you are exploring the rich valleys of the country-side during July and August. It is big and handsome, and it grows amongst the rustling sedges in bushy masses of showy purple that attract the eye from a great distance.

Before I tell you about the plant I should like to give you a warning. Do not confuse it with the Willow-herb. Children are apt to do this merely because both plants bear reddish flowers and grow in the same localities. There is no real resemblance between them, and I am sure that, once you have read about the plants







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and compared them with what I have told you of their different parts, you will never mistake one for the other.

The Purple Loosestrife is a plant that rears its strong, and often downy, stems to a height of between two and four feet. These stems have sometimes four, and sometimes six, angles. They bear a number of branches which grow as nearly upright as they can, instead of standing straight out from the stems. The leaves grow either in pairs or in sets of three. They have no stalks, but their lower ends, which are heart-shaped, clasp the stems. In their general outline they are long, tapering, and pointed, and there are no teeth along their edges. They are rather large, and their colour is somewhat dark above and lighter beneath.

The flowers grow in rings around the tops of the stems and branches, forming long spikes which, when in bud, look like soft little lambs'-tails. A single plant may bear as many as a dozen flower-spikes, and when the flowers are fully opened they make a bold splash of colour as they wave softly in the wind. People call the plant Long-purples, Purple-grass, and Round-towers, though I am afraid they are much too narrow to be really like a tower. They also name it Soldiers, as they do many other flowers whose colour recalls the red-coated soldiers we used to see. Another name is Red-Sally, but I do not think that 'Sally' is used here as a

Christian name. In school botany books the Purple Loosestrife is called *Salicaria*, which is a foreign word indicating that the plant grows amongst Willow trees, while Willow trees themselves are called in those books by a somewhat similar name. You will see, therefore, how probable it is that the name Red-Sally has been suggested by these more difficult foreign words.

The flowers of the Purple Loosestrife are full of interest. They have six petals of a bright purple colour. Generally they are a good deal crinkled, and this gives them a soft and ragged appearance. Inside the flowers are a number of 'stamens' of the daintiest pattern and prettiest colours. The thread-like parts of the stamens are sometimes silvery, with golden-yellow tops, and sometimes silvery below and purple or magenta higher up, with tops that may be either jade-green or purple. In the centre of all is another delicate thread bearing a little green ball. This part of the flower is called the 'pistil,' and it is the duty of the pistil and the stamens to prepare the seeds for growing into fresh plants.

I expect that you have often thought what a strange name the plant has. I have explained its meaning in the chapter on the Yellow Loosestrife contained in the earlier volume; but I will repeat shortly what I said there. The word 'Loose' is used with the meaning of 'end,' or 'put an end to'; and the thing it put an end to was *strife* or warfare. The plant was called

after a certain Greek king, whose name, in his own language, had the same meaning. I suppose he was called King Loose-strife because it was hoped that he would put an end to strife amongst his subjects. Later on people declared that the plant had a strange and wonderful power, for they said that it would prevent plough-horses from quarrelling and make them pull together when they were yoked to the plough. In this way it 'loosened,' or put an end to, the strife between them.

### The Common Fleabane.

THIS plant is called the Fleabane because it is supposed to be useful in dispelling fleas; but as that is not a pleasant subject I will tell you a story. Several of our plants are, used to be, called Herb Christopher, and the Fleabane is one of them. This is the story which tells you why the name was given. St Christopher, before he became a Christian saint, was a heathen. He was a giant in size and enormously strong. For many years he lived by the side of a deep river, and, as there was no bridge over it, he acted as a sort of ferryman for travellers, only, instead of rowing them across in a boat, he carried them on his broad shoulders.

One dark night, as he was sitting meditating in his little hut, he heard a gentle rap

on the door. He rose to his feet and opened the door, and was surprised to find a little child standing there. 'What do you want, little one?' he asked kindly. And the child, in a very sweet voice, like an angel's, replied, 'Please take me across the river.'

The good saint was puzzled to know how the strange child came to be out alone in the dark night, and why he should wish to be taken across the water; but he concluded that the little one had lost his way. There was something strangely holy and beautiful about his appearance, for all that he was so small and fragile. Now it was a very stormy night and the river was in flood, so that it seemed dangerous to attempt the crossing. St Christopher gently explained this to the waiting child, but the latter pressed him so earnestly to carry him to the farther bank that at last the saint determined to comply with his wish.

So he tenderly lifted the child onto his shoulders, and, taking his staff in his hand, stepped into the stream. The water was racing and roaring along in a seething torrent, and the saint feared lest they might both be carried off their feet. Moreover, the child, who at first had been an easy burden, became heavier and heavier the farther they proceeded. Yet a strange circumstance was noticed by the struggling saint. As he forced his way through the racing stream the waters abated their force and made way

for him, so that, except for the crushing weight of his burden, he found the task easier than he had expected. The child's weight, however, was fast becoming more than he could bear, and he was lost in astonishment at its unaccountable increase.

At last he reached the opposite side and stumbled up the bank, breathless and exhausted, but safe. As the boy slipped from his shoulders St Christopher panted, 'Never have I carried such a burden, and for a little child like you I marvel at it.'

The child turned to him with a heavenly smile on his face and said, 'Do not marvel: thou hast carried one who beareth with him the weight of the whole world and its sins. For I am Jesus, and as a sign of me, I bid thee plant thy staff in the ground yonder and behold what shall come to pass at dawn.'

St Christopher fell on his knees before the radiant figure, but already it had vanished as if in a vision. Then he rose to his feet, and, remembering what the child had commanded, planted his staff in the ground and left it there. When he returned at dawn he discovered to his amazement that it had burst into leaves and flowers. He sank once more on his knees and worshipped Jesus. So was he converted to Christianity, and, because of the miracle of his staff, thousands more believed and became followers of the Lord.



That is the story of St Christopher and the Christ-Child, and the saint's name has been kept fresh in our memories by being conferred on some of our wild-flowers, especially those which grow near rivers. Our present plant is fond of such places, though it grows also in other wet situations, in pastures, and by the sides of roads that are not too well drained. It has a curious way, too, of carrying its flowers at the ends of branches which stand out like arms near the top of the stem, so that you might imagine the flowers to be little children which the plant is carrying on its shoulders as St Christopher carried the Christ-Child.

There are several plants called Fleabane, but I do not think you will have any difficulty in recognising the one we are speaking of. It is a common herb, and for this reason it is often distinguished by the name of the Common Fleabane. It varies a good deal in size, being usually from a foot to two feet in height. It is often a very woolly plant, having a round downy stem and many branches. The leaves, which are soft and downy and hoary-looking, grow so thickly and closely that the whole plant has the air of being swaddled in them. They are shaped like a heart, or the head of an arrow, at the end where they clasp the stem, and their outline is wavy and irregularly notched.

The flower-heads, which are made up of dozens of complete little flowers, or 'florets,'

grow in small clusters at the top of the plant and the ends of the branches. They are like a yellow Daisy with an unusually big centre, which, too, is of a darker colour than that of the encircling florets. Some children call the plant Pig Daisy, as if it were an inferior sort of Daisy. The plant has a strong smell that is not unpleasant. It is one of the later blooms of the season, and you will find it at its best during August and September.

In Cornwall they call the Common Fleabane the Harvest-flower, and they have a custom of using it to crown the very first 'stook' of corn which is cut and stacked ready for carting away. In another part of the west of England they use the name Job's-tears, because, they say, Job applied the plant to the boils with which God had afflicted him, and they really believe that it relieved him of his pain. This tale seems to have come from a great way off, for I have heard that the Arabs who live in the deserts of Africa have long held the same belief.

### The Ragwort.

THIS is the fairies' horse. I cannot say that I myself have ever seen the 'little people' riding on the plant to join their moonlight parties, but the Irish people use the name Fairies'-horse and say that the fairies really do gallop through the

air on the Ragwort. In fact I have heard—although I think the story really belongs to the St John's Wort—that, if you tread down one of the plants after sunset, a darling little pony will rise under you and gallop around with you on its back. It will race all over the country-side until the next day dawns, and then it will suddenly sink into the earth, leaving you perhaps miles from your home.

Whatever we may think about this tale, the plant has certainly been associated with horses for a very long time, for it was dedicated to St James, who is said to have been their patron saint. It seems a curious thing that a mere animal should be placed under the special providence of a saint, but this is one of the superstitions that used to be taught in olden times. St James's Day is celebrated on July the 25th, when the plant is well in flower, and that may have been the reason why it was dedicated to him and called St James's Wort. In the early days of the Church, when many people were still given to heathen customs, and many plants bore ancient heathen names, it was the practice of the priests to link the flowers with the saints in order to keep their flock in constant remembrance of the Christian faith.

Another way in which our plant was connected with horses was its use as a medicine for certain of their illnesses. Thus, there is a complaint which causes the poor animals to stagger





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The Ragwort.



about. This was called 'the staggers,' or 'staver,' and, as the plant was supposed to be a cure for the malady, it came to be known as Stagger-wort and Staver-wort. Another name was Stammer-wort. You would hardly think that this had anything to do with horses, for, of course, as they cannot speak, they cannot stammer in their speech; but actually the word 'stammer' has another meaning besides its ordinary one. That meaning is 'stagger,' so you will see that the name Stammer-wort is only another way of saying Stagger-wort.

There are several kinds of Ragwort, and the one that you will meet with most frequently is called the Common Ragwort. It is a handsome, sturdy plant, often of a considerable size and bushy appearance. The stem is thick, green in colour and stained with purple, and it grows from about one to three feet in height. The leaves are easy to recognise, as they are cut and snapped and torn into such ragged and irregular shapes. They grow all the way up the stem, and are made up of a number of leaflets growing on either side of the leaf-stalk, with another leaflet at the end. It is because of the ragged appearance of the leaves that the plant is called Ragwort and also Ragged-Jack. Pigs are supposed to be fond of the leaves. At least I presume that is why the plant is sometimes called Swine's-grass and Swine's-cress, though I have not noticed the pigs feeding on it.



The flower-heads, which, like those of many other plants, consist of a large number of separate little flowers, or 'florets,' grow in dense, showy masses on the branching tops of the stem, and they are very much like yellow Daisies. When they are in bud the big yellow outer petals stand upright like a circle of teeth and their edges are curled in; but, as the flower-head develops, these petals unfold and begin to bend backwards. I wonder whether it is because of these golden teeth that the plant is occasionally called Scrape-clean, as if the teeth were like those of a comb or scraper? It does not seem a very suitable name, and perhaps there is some other reason for it. The golden flower-heads rest on what looks like a pretty, green vase decorated with upright ribs and ringed at the top with black-pointed teeth. After the blooms have fallen the plant is covered with a mass of downy balls. These contain the seeds of future plants, each of which is fitted with a pretty little parachute to help it in its flight towards a suitable home.

People call the plant Canker and Canker-weed, because, I am told, Canker is the name given to a certain caterpillar that feeds on the plant while waiting to be changed into a beautiful moth. They also call it Fly-dod and Fly-flower, because you often find the flowers covered with dusky yellow flies, which also seem to find the plant a pleasant feeding-ground. Another

name, which children use in parts of Scotland, is Fizz-gigs, and yet another, which comes from the west of England, is Devildums; but I have not the slightest idea what such outlandish terms mean.

### The Spotted Persicaria.

THE Virgin Mary was once preparing an ointment. She collected the various ingredients which she was in the habit of using, and then she found that she had run short of one of them. This did not trouble her at all, because she knew that she could obtain a fresh supply from a certain plant that grew freely about her dwelling-place. So she went out of doors and began to look for the plant. She searched here, she searched there, and she searched everywhere, but, strange to say, the plant, which had always until then grown ready to her hand, was now nowhere to be seen.

This was extremely annoying because the Virgin Mary was unable to make her ointment without it. Some days after, when, of course, it was too late, she found the plant blooming gaily and quite undisturbed by her displeasure. This made her so cross for the moment that she gave its leaves a good pinch and declared that the plant should never be useful again.

She could not find it in time of need,  
And so she pinched it for a weed.

The plant I am speaking of was the Spotted Persicaria, and, if you look at the leaves, you will often see the dark purple blotch caused by the Virgin's pinch. People call the herb Virgin Mary's-pinch, Pinch-weed, and Lady's-thumb to this day; though some think the story had to do with Satan, and call the flower Devil's-pinches.

The Spotted Persicaria is quite an attractive plant, though the lack of showiness about its flowers causes it to be overlooked. It grows abundantly, from July until as late as October, about waste ground and the neglected borders of gardens, as well as by the roadsides, and it particularly likes a damp situation. The freely branching stems, which may be from one to two feet long, grow either more or less upright or in a spreading manner along the ground. They are remarkably smooth and round, and they often assume such a deep red colour that people call the plant Red-legs, Red-shanks, Red-weed, and Red-joints.

The leaves are rather broad in the middle and taper at both ends, terminating in a long point. The lower ones have short stalks, but those higher up grow straight from the stem, and there is a chaffy sheath at the base which completely enfolds the stem. It is to the leaves that the plant owes its common name, for Persicaria comes from a Latin word for 'peach,' the foliage of our plant having some resemblance to that of the Peach tree. For the same reason

the flower was also, at one time, called Peach-wort.

The tiny waxen blossoms grow in close spikes at the ends of the stems and branches, and they look just like an ear of corn, though their colour varies from a pretty red or rose-pink to green or greenish-white, according to the stage of growth. Often you find an additional cluster of blooms a short distance below, the spikes. Some folks are reminded of a pincushion full of pins when they see the flower-spikes, and they call the plant Pincushions.

The Spotted *Persicaria* varies a good deal in size, for sometimes it is quite an insignificant growth, while at others its spreading branches, long leaves, and numerous spikes of flowers make it a plant of some pretensions to size. There are several other kinds of *Persicaria*, but I think you will be able to recognise the Spotted one from the description I have given and from the picture.

## The Wood Sage.

MOST of you have heard of the Sage which is cultivated in kitchen-gardens for use in stuffing poultry and flavouring dishes; but I wonder if you have ever reflected that the word 'sage' taken by itself means 'wise'? We speak of a wise man as being sage. Can there pos-

sibly be any connection between wisdom and the plant of our kitchen-gardens? And, if there is, what can that connection be? Surely no one would suggest that we can make ourselves wise merely by eating this herb? That would be an astonishing thing to say, for, if it were true, not one of us need be lacking in such a desirable quality.

Well, let me tell you at once, though it is hardly necessary to do so, that there is actually no such connection between the two things. Something of the kind, however, was believed in many years ago, owing to an exaggerated idea of the good qualities of the plant. In those days people placed great faith in the medical powers of one or other of the various kinds of cultivated and wild Sage. They used the different plants in lotions and poultices for sores and similar complaints, as well as for disorders of the eyes; and they also believed that they cured the palsy and a certain kind of fit. Further than this, they regarded the Sage as a general preserver of the bodily health and spirits, and they considered that it was particularly wholesome if one ate it in May. Indeed, there was an old saying to the effect that

He that would live for aye  
Must eat Sage in May.

This sounds sufficiently wonderful, I think, but I have not even yet come to the end of the fanciful notions which these simple folks enter-

tained; for they said that the plant was called Sage because, not only did it make men safe and sound in health, but it comforted and strengthened the head and memory to make men *sage* or *wise*.

Now that is not really the meaning of the name, for the word comes from the ancient Roman title, which was *Salvia*. This word held the meaning of 'to save' or 'to heal,' and it was given to the plant because of its wholesome healing properties. The old Roman name does not sound very much like the present English one, but it is quite the common experience of words to change their spelling as they travel from one language to another.

The Wood Sage, although it was extensively used as a medicine, was not the original plant to earn the great reputation of the tribe, for this belonged more to the garden plants. The Wood Sage owes its name to the odour and appearance of its leaves, which resemble those of the garden Sage. There is another plant, called the Clary or Wild Sage, to be found fairly commonly in a wild state, and it is closely related to the garden plant. You will, however, have no difficulty in telling it from the Wood Sage, because its appearance is quite different, the colour of the flowers, in particular, being blue.

There is one other name of our plant which I must tell you about before we go on to look at the herb itself, because it further illustrates the lofty ideas which were held concerning the

virtues of the tribe; though I am bound to say that there is some doubt whether it is to the Wood Sage that the name really belongs. I have more than once told you of the Greek people from whom we have borrowed so many of our wild-flower names, and I have mentioned that they worshipped a large number of heathen gods and goddesses. These beings dwelt on a high mountain called Olympus, and they enjoyed everlasting life, because they fed on a divine food called ambrosia and drank a delicious liquid known as nectar. They also anointed their bodies with a rich heavenly oil which went by the same name as the food.

Now the people who worshipped these gods knew of the exquisite delicacies they enjoyed, and they gave the name of Ambrosia to certain herbs which were remarkable either for their healing properties or for their fragrant scent. In later times, long after everyone had ceased reverence to the Greek gods, the name of Ambrosia remained in use as the title of various plants, though those plants were not always the ones which originally had borne it.

One of the herbs which, rightly or wrongly, has shared in the famous title of Ambrosia, or Ambrose, as it came to be spelt, is our humble little Wood Sage; and when you recall what I have said about the health-preserving reputation which the Sages enjoyed, you will have no difficulty in understanding how people came







The Spotted Persicaria.



The Wood Sage.



to associate the plant with the miraculous food of the ancient gods of Greece.

This little herb, which attracts to itself such famous and romantic associations, can be found in flower abundantly in our woods and hedges, especially in hilly and stony situations, from July until August. In Cumberland it is sometimes spoken of as the Mountain Sage because of its liking for such elevated districts. Another name, which is in very general use, is Wood Germander. This comes from a foreign word meaning 'ground oak,' but it does not fit our plant at all well, so we will say no more about it.

The Wood Sage is a downy plant with a square and slightly branching stem, tough and woody at the base and stained with a reddish tint. The stem grows, generally, to a height of about a foot, though it often greatly exceeds that measure. The stalked leaves, which grow in pairs, are heart-shaped but narrow, and they are cut into teeth at their edges. Their colour is a dull green, or sometimes a yellowish-green, and their surfaces are wrinkled all over. The leaves have a distinctly bitter taste, which has earned for the plant the names of Bitter Sage and Garlic Sage. At one time the plant was used instead of hops for brewing beer, and everyone said that it served the purpose excellently.

The flowers are not remarkable for any great beauty of colouring, yet they are so prettily

arranged and so curiously fashioned that the plant becomes quite one of the attractive features of the country-side. The blooms grow in long, branching spikes and they are arranged in pairs, all facing in the same direction. They are of a pale yellow, or greenish-yellow tint, and their most noticeable feature is the broad middle 'lobe' which hangs downwards like an apron.

There was once a curious name given to the flower (or perhaps it was to some other plant, for here again it is difficult to speak with certainty), and I must tell you about it because it carries with it a pretty fancy. The name was Hind-heal, and it was used in the days when men could still hunt deer in the vast forests that then spread over England. A hind, as I expect you know, is a female deer, and the reason why the plant was called Hind-heal was that the hinds sought it out in their forest homes and ate it as a medicine. At least that is what old writers tell us, and it is not by any means an improbable tale, because most animals have an instinctive knowledge of what herbs are good for their sicknesses. The deer were said to browse on one particular plant when they were stung by serpents, and there is another story of a certain herb which they would look for when they chanced to be hit by the cruel darts or arrows of the hunters. Directly they cropped this wonderful herb the weapons fell out of their bodies. You can

imagine how pleased the beautiful brown-eyed deer would be to find such a useful plant growing amid their woodland haunts.

### The Tansy.

DO you remember how, in the Bible stories, the courtiers greeted their king with the salutation, 'O King, live for ever'? Daniel addressed King Darius in this manner when the latter visited him in the lions' den, and you often read the same thing in the Eastern fairy tales. Of course everyone knew that the king could not possibly live for ever, and yet I am not at all sure that there were not times when people believed that the Tansy had the power of conferring everlasting life. At all events that is what a very old fable seemed to say; and the name of the plant might easily deceive them into accepting the notion, for it comes from a Greek word meaning 'immortality,' or 'ever-lasting life.'

I will tell you the story. There was once a young man named Ganymede, and he was the most beautiful youth in the world. He lived in a country far beyond the sea, and in a time long before our Lord came down to earth. His people were all heathens, and they worshipped a number of false gods, of whom the chief was called Jupiter. Ganymede often wandered on

the slopes of a high mountain; and on its summit the false gods sometimes descended to watch the battles which men fought in those times. One day Jupiter's eye fell on the youth, and he was so struck with his beauty that he decided to carry him off from the earth and keep him as his cup-bearer. So he dispatched an eagle to the mountain, and the enormous bird swooped down on the unsuspecting youth as he was walking there and bore him swiftly away up into the sky.

The eagle flew rapidly on its way through the blue air. It crossed over the sea, and, after a long journey, came to rest on the topmost height of another mountain, which reared up so high that it stood quite out of men's sight, far above the clouds. This place was called Olympus, and it was here that Jupiter and the other heathen gods dwelt. When the eagle deposited the trembling youth at the feet of the god, Jupiter looked down on him, and then he called for his messenger, and said, 'Take him away, and, when he has drunk of *immortality*, bring him back as cup-bearer to us.'

Thereupon Ganymede, who was too much frightened to utter a word, was conducted out of the presence of Jupiter and proffered a draught of 'immortality.' You see it was necessary for him to drink this before he could serve as Jupiter's cup-bearer, because then he would be able to live amongst the false gods for ever.



Afterwards, because the name Tansy, as I told you just now, means 'immortality,' or 'everlasting life,' people said that the draught which Ganymede drank was prepared from that plant. Of course this is just a story, though I think it is rather a nice one; and perhaps the name really means that the flowers, though not everlasting, remain fresh for a long time after they have been picked.

This wonderful plant has a stout, erect stem, and often it grows in such close masses that it presents a distinctly bushy appearance. The stem is from two to three feet, or even much more in height. It bears a large number of leaves composed of numerous long and short leaflets, which grow on either side of the stalk, with another leaflet at the end. The leaflets are deeply cut into 'lobes,' and each lobe has its edges further cut into sharp teeth; all of which gives the plant a feathery look. In some parts they call the Tansy the Scented-fern, because of the shape of the leaves and the strong and not unpleasant smell. They also name it Traveller's-rest, because in olden days travellers used to soothe their tired feet with the fresh leaves.

The flowers grow in close clusters on numerous branching stalks at the top of the plant. They are the queerest little things, and look exactly like a Daisy that has had all its white petals plucked out, leaving nothing but the golden

centre. Many plants are named after buttons because their flowers suggest those articles, but the flowers of the Tansy are the most button-like blooms that you will ever see. Sometimes they are called Golden-buttons, or Yellow-buttons, or Bachelor's-buttons; and in parts of Scotland they are known as Bitter-buttons, because the plant is exceedingly bitter to taste. For the same reason it is often called Ginger-plant.

The Tansy grows on the borders of fields, at the sides of lanes, and in all sorts of waste places. It is rather late in opening its tight little buds, as if it thought that, as it was expected to be an 'everlasting' flower, it had better not awaken too soon; so you must only expect to see the blooms at about the end of July, after which they last until the beginning of September.

### The Spear Plume Thistle.

WE shall need to examine this plant at a respectful distance, for, judging from the number of strong, defensive prickles with which it arms itself, it is evidently a thing not to be trifled with. The reason of its being called the Spear Plume Thistle is that its leaves terminate in a long spear-shaped division (with a great stiff prickle at the end to serve as the point), and its flowers are followed by feathery collections, or plumes, of silky hairs, to which the seeds are attached.

This particular member of the great family of

Thistles is a big sturdy plant with a stout and much branched stem that grows to a height of from three to five feet. The leaves, which are rough on the upper sides, are divided into toothed 'lobes,' which grow out at the sides; and they continue a long way down the stem and branches in the form of wings. Every point is set with a strong, pointed prickly, and so numerous are these that you will find it exceedingly difficult to handle the plant without getting pricked. Some people say that this is the true Scotch Thistle which long ago saved a Scottish army from destruction. The soldiers were about to be treacherously attacked one dark night by an army of fierce Danes, and were without warning of the approach of the enemy until one of them accidentally trod on a Thistle. The unfortunate soldier's shout of pain, as the sharp prickles pierced his bare foot, aroused the Scottish camp and enabled the men to save themselves from slaughter. Nobody knows what kind of Thistle it was that proved their salvation, for you may imagine that the wounded Dane did not stop to examine it; and so the title of the true Scotch Thistle is claimed by three or four different plants. In parts of England people give the name of Scotchmen to various kinds of Thistle, because the plant is the national emblem of Scotland.

The Spear Plume Thistle is covered with a loose, cottony down. The flowers grow out of

a prickly ball which becomes oval in shape as the flower-head develops. Each head, which stands erectly at the end of a branch, is an assembly of hundreds of complete 'florets,' crowded together to look like a single purple bloom. When the flowers fade the thistle-down takes their place, each tuft of down branching like a feather at one end and carrying a tiny seed at the other. Do not fail to examine this thistle-down carefully it is one of the most beautiful examples of the perfect work of Nature which she loves to lavish upon our common wild-flowers.

The prickly ball from which the florets grow is very much like a bur in appearance—such, for instance, as grow on the Burdock—and one name of our plant is the Bur Thistle. Other names are Boar Thistle and Bird Thistle, the latter given, it is said, because goldfinches love to pick at the numerous seeds; though really both these names may be mere mispronunciations of the title Bur Thistle. Children in the west of England often call the plant Prickly-coats, and a very suitable name it is too.

In Ireland the people use the name Bull Thistle, while in other parts they term the plant Horse Thistle. This does not mean that those animals make any use of the herb. I think it would prove too prickly even for them. It is just a way of saying that the plant is big and strong and coarse, just as bulls and horses are big and strong and, in some ways, coarse.





The Tansy.  
15 A

W. F. 2

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The Spear Plume Thistle.





As for the common name Thistle, I cannot tell you what it means, though it must have had a meaning when it was first used. That, however, was many hundreds of years ago, and everyone has forgotten all about it. You can find the flower in all manner of fields, hedges, and waste places from July until September.



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