

# OUR GARDEN

BY MRS. WILLIAM LOWELL PUTNAM

If anyone picking up this essay hopes to glean from it information of value about gardening he will find himself in the position of the young and enthusiastic collector of moths who sought in the library for a book which would be helpful to him in his specialty. His mother found him some time later curled up in a chair with knitted brows, poring over the book he had selected. On peeping over his shoulder, she found it was entitled *Advice to Young Moth-ers*; but, strange to say, in spite of the title his expression indicated that he had not found the information he sought!

Our garden is what it is from necessity. That it should exist at all is because of our need of the charm of flowers. That it exists in the form it takes is due to other necessities—some intrinsic and some in part extrinsic to us.

Our place is one where it was necessary to follow the teachings of the Scriptures and found our house upon a rock, partly because we should otherwise have lost our view, and partly because it would have been well nigh impossible to find a place large enough to build a house which was without rock throughout a large part of its area. This persistence of rock is what I mean by the extrinsic reason for the garden being what it is. With the exception of the flower border, which has found a place for itself between the rock and the grassy field, and the seedling garden and nursery, in the low land near the cold frames, almost every bit of garden has been won from the rock by terracing—or occasionally by blasting it away.

In rare spots a few flowers have found a foothold by boring among tree roots, for there are grand old trees on the place where the rocks are not. Oaks, black and red and white, the latter our favorites, have grown here since long before white men settled on the land, and they are flourishing today, and are

carefully guarded from harm. Under them in early spring crocuses and golden daffodils have blossomed yearly since we put them there, some twenty years and more ago. They live happily, and multiply. I never feel that flowers or other things are quite happy unless they do that, and these bulbs do, but the white *Narcissus poeticus* with us dies out, and so the pleasure it gives is not so great to me, for it does not fulfill my criterion of satisfaction. Another joy-giving harbinger of spring is the blue squill. Like crocuses, these spread till they make patches of the sky wherever a bulb was set—no exposure is too cold for them and a glimpse of their bouquets of sapphire blue fill the heart with the buoyancy of spring.

As there is so little place for a proper garden, odd things are to be found anywhere, peeping out at unexpected places because they have nowhere else to grow. A clump of English bluebells, like a delicate wood hyacinth, grows beside the beach path through the woods, and they surprise me just as much every year as if we had not put them there ourselves, for they always seem as if in their own birthplace. The almost lilac color of the pink kind is if possible even more lovely than the blue. Both bloom when all other bulbs are only memories and are doubly precious on that account. The native red lilies thrive all through the woods, but we have not succeeded in making other kinds happy. The Japanese lilies will bloom one year but after that their place knows them no more. With the Canada lily and the more common kinds I cannot be so sure, for people walking through one's woods have a strange feeling that wild flowers are everyone's to pick, no matter where found. Of course in planting in wild places one tries to do it as nearly as possible as nature does, so that many most carefully planted things seem to the casual stroller to be wild. If they but knew it, we had so much rather have them pick the flowers from the cultivated flower garden than from the wild one. I wonder what the effect of a sign would be reading thus—"If you feel that you must pick flowers, please pick them from the flower garden near the house!"

We have done good team work with our garden, for one had ideas and the other generally carried them out. For instance, he wanted some rosebeds which could only be had by extensive

terracing, so it fell to my lot to supervise the building of these terraces, as he had not just then the time to do it. It meant a four-foot wall at the bottom of the bed to get depth enough at the top, and the bottom of this wall in the upper terrace was on a level with the top of the lower bed. A sort of homemade pergola with climbing roses in the lower bed and Penzance sweet briars hanging over from the upper brings the two beds into one whole. By building the wall on a slight slant, with loam between the stones, and sowing it with seed, we have in one place a wonderfully fragrant snowdrift of arabis, which though not very long lived is self-perpetuating, which is almost as good. Another of the high walls is a glory of golden alyssum whose stems are as big as your finger with age. This is a joyous plant, for its color is equalled by nothing but the sunshine and it thrives on our hardest winters. Another lively occupant for terrace walls is the aubretia, which is of many lovely shades, from violet and lavender to a deep red purple. We have made English wall-flowers winter in sheltered walls, and they are far lovelier grown in this way than in a garden bed, for they look and are at home. But they are shy of our winters, and so usually, though I hate to do it, for I do not like to practise deception on plants or people, we start them early in the frames and then set them out as soon as the weather grows mild. If they are started early enough they can be tricked into blooming the same spring, although they are by nature biennials, and even though made to blossom the same year they are not bumptious like precocious children, but very lovely.

The one real flower garden was blasted out in building part of the house, and is the joy of my life, for it is directly under the windows of the living room and dining room, and of our bedrooms as well. There is nothing regular about it, it could not be both regular and mine, and it is unquestionably the latter. Somewhere near what might be the middle—if it had one—is the bird bath, which is almost as much a joy to us as to the birds. It is low and flat, for we find that birds like to hop in on a level; I suppose it is better hopping that way. The bath is in the shade of a Japanese cherry tree given me by one of our boys when he and it were small. This tree is the glory of the garden in the

spring, when it is filled with pink and white loveliness. The birds love it, too, and its shade, and, oddly enough, they seem especially to enjoy spattering the water about when it is raining. They seem to feel a desire to help on the shower. The robins nest each year in a fly honeysuckle bush on the edge of the garden, and others raise their broods in the wistaria which grows up the house wall. Another wall is lovely with a yellow climbing Chinese rose, hardy and an early bloomer and what the catalogues call very floriferous, which is much better than it sounds. I have found a place in this garden where the tree peonies thrive, which were brought to me from Japan by one of our children. I had tried them nearby first without success. It is odd how particular some plants are! They seem as unreasonable about their habitat as do asthmatics to those who haven't the malady. I have had the same experience with Japanese anemones, but it is not peculiar to plants from the other side of the world, for the blue salvia does likewise. Now I come to think of it, I do not know where the blue salvia comes from; perhaps it has an Oriental ancestry as well. There is a good deal of sentiment in this flower garden, for beside the cherry tree there are two laburnums, the gift of another son, growing on either side of the rough steps leading to the greenhouse, and there is a syringa, a special cross made by the great-great-grandfather of us both. It is a cross between the large flowering and the fragrant kind, a lucky cross with the good qualities of both parents.

Primroses have made themselves at home in nooks round the wild garden, where there is enough soil and shelter; pink ones thrive and do not lose their color as do the sky blue ones, alas! after the first year! And clumps of the lovely clustered Mumstead strain are very happy, and gay with their yellows and crimsons.

There is a little brook through the swamp, which his judicious deepening of the brook has turned into a lovely wood. This brook is crossed by three stone bridges, which he amused himself by building in a way to carry out different kinds of construction. One is an arch, another built on the principle of a cantilever, and at the third the stream is narrow enough to be spanned by one stone supported on the sides. Down between the second and

third bridges are dogtooth violets in such profusion that in the springtime one cannot walk along the path without being constantly reminded of Wordsworth's "Daffodils"—they nod so gaily, but they have one only fault; they refuse to be gay except when the sun shines, and it must be the morning sun! Anemones, the small cornel, so bright in autumn with its bunches of red berries, and the little Solomon's seals and gold thread carpet the woods by nature, and we have brought in the Clintonia and made it happy, though the birds will not let us be happy in the enjoyment of its beautiful blue berries. Ladies' slippers die out, and I sometimes suspect that this is because of the marauding visits of one's friends, but mayflowers, which we have tried more than once, and Linnæa, are, alas! not quite happy enough to stay. They are two of the loveliest things in the world, but we have had to do without them.

It has been a never ending problem of great charm to keep all the beauties with which nature has blessed this lovely place, and to add others which may not injure but only enhance its delight. It deserves to have said of it what a great aunt of mine once said of a country place where she was making a visit as a child. She wept at leaving because, she said, "It was so regiony". This place is regiony. There is the dry woodland with the great oaks, the lowland with swamp maples and white pines, the rocky upland, with cedars and other loveliness, the fields and meadowland filled with fringed gentians, ladies' tresses and pyrola, the brook and the pond, so lovely in summer, and where the gold fish live and swim so gaily and gaudily all the winter long. There is not one inch without its peculiar charm. Is it any wonder that we love it?

MRS. WILLIAM LOWELL PUTNAM.

## WILLIAM SHORT, JEFFERSON'S ONLY "SON"

BY MARIE GOEBEL KIMBALL

A COACH bearing the crest of one of the famous dukes of France lurched along the muddy roads of Normandy one November night in the year 1791. It finally reached the entrance to the estate of La Roche-Guyon and drew up before the door of the château. A slim young man in fashionable dress stepped from the carriage. It was William Short, a gentleman from Virginia, to whom Jefferson frequently referred as his adopted son, and to whom the great American statesman was "my second father". He had lately, as *Chargé d'Affaires*, succeeded Jefferson at the Court of Louis XVI, and had at once engaged the interest of fashionable Paris.

At the time of this visit to the country seat of the Duke and Duchess de la Rochefoucauld, Short was the hero of the most romantic love affair in which an American had ever been engaged, and one which has remained unknown to this day. Conspicuous in that time of gallantry for his sincerity and ingenuous charm, he had by these very qualities won the love of one of the greatest peeresses of France. She was none other than his hostess of the moment, Alexandrine Charlotte de Rohan-Chabot, familiarly known as Rosalie, the young Duchess de la Rochefoucauld.

Not long ago there came to light a packet of several hundred letters which had been treasured unread for nearly a century by Short's collateral descendants. Written in French of rare elegance and distinction, they tell a story more extravagantly unreal than that of Peter Ibbetson and the Duchess of Towers, yet strangely similar to it. Unlike those of Du Maurier's romance, however, the walls that separate the lovers through forty years of varying fortunes are not of stone and mortar, but the intangible barriers of duty and devotion.

Interest in the letters is not exhausted by their romantic appeal, however. Among poignant avowals of love and intimate