

PLANTING A GARDEN.

There seems to be no subject about which a man may fool himself so completely as concerning his ability to plant seeds and make them grow. It may be perfectly clear in his mind that he is not a poet. Very likely he is not cherishing expectations of being President of the United States. He may frankly confess that he could not lead an orchestra, or swallow swords in a dime museum, or become a great showman like Barnum, or a great preacher like Talmage, or a great exhaustless fountain of speeches like Chauncey Depew. He would not attempt to run a locomotive or a bank. He might even consider the presidency of a university beyond his powers. But neither rock nor red-hot pincers nor thumb-screws would even make him admit that he could not plant a garden, and in good time bring it to bearing. No matter if he doesn't know the exact difference between a plow and a lawn-mower, and never saw vegetables nearer to their native haunts than in a market store, he feels such confidence in Mother Nature that he is ready to go out and offer her all the treasures of his ignorance and incapacity in order that she may reward him with bountiful crops of such things as will make the gladness of his heart appear in the shining of his face. This is why it happens that "in the spring the foolish fancy lightly turns to thoughts of making a garden," if we may be allowed to quote a slightly amended passage from Tennyson. This is why men, usually rational, perform such antics with rakes and hoes and other instruments they know nothing about, when the spring madness is upon them. April showers forsooth! They are rather the tears of angels who look down and weep to see what folly men commit and call it farming.

Once upon a time spring allured an agriculturalist of this stamp from the frozen North down into the neighborhood of Pinehurst. By the time he reached there the planting fever was raging in all his veins. Nature was all astir in answer to the summons of the sun. She was making vast preparation for her annual forth-putting of bud and leaf and flower, and he—poor, foolish man—thought he was going to be admitted into her secrets, and become one of her chief assistants. To be sure he had no land, no seeds, no tools, no hands except his own unpracticed ones, and no more knowledge of farming than the founder of the Concord school of philosophy. But he cared for none of these things. There was plenty of land. He could buy or hire or borrow enough to disport himself upon. Seeds? Any honest citizen can get seeds, provided he is a voter. For what purpose do we support an Agricultural Department at Washington, if not to supply seeds to amateur gardeners? The plowing could be done by a colored man and a mule, and as for the rest—his own heaven-born genius would be equal to all other demands.

And then he tried to recall past triumphs of his art as a gardener. He went back to the days of his boyhood and attempted to picture his toils and successes among the loved vegetables "that his infancy knew." But to save his life he could remember only two experiences. One was when he planted shiny black watermelon seeds with great care, watched over the

growing plants all summer with yearning unspeakable and was rewarded in the fall with a crop of stoney-hearted citrons. The other was when the old farmer for whom he was at work left him to weed the onion bed, while he went to a distant field. What a glorious morning that was, and how vigorously he worked! With what fierce energy he tore the weeds out of the earth! In two hours time, when the farmer came back, the onion bed showed not a vestige of anything green or living. The boy straightened up his aching back and looked at his employer with conscious virtue beaming from his eyes and was amazed to see a dark cloud upon the farmer's brow, and to hear him gasp and sputter with rage because his onions had all been pulled up with the weeds.

But even such chilling recollections as these could not cool his fervor. He made haste to secure a piece of land, a generous supply of seeds, a few tools, and a very stingy provision of fertilizer, just enough to make the soil realize how hungry it was. Then he went to the nearest village to hire a man and a mule. "Yes," the owner of the mule said, "I can send you a mule and a good plow-hand. But I reckon I'd better not send till evening. This mule is a right smart kicker, and the boy can't do anything with her at plowing unless he works her hard all the morning so as to get her tired enough to be quiet and reasonable. About three o'clock this evening she'll be fit for plowing, I reckon, and I'll send her round."

It was not that afternoon—or "evening" according to the Southern usage—but the next, when a very serious colored brother accompanied by a sad, tired, but unconquered mule appeared on the scene. The proprietor of the garden spent the next two hours sitting on the fence (with slight interruptions caused by falling off) and says he never enjoyed anything better in his life than the simple little pastoral which Julia (the mule) and George (her serious-minded friend) proceeded to enact.

All the time she was being shifted from the light wagon to the light plow Julia kicked and squealed.

"She may be tired," said the man on the fence, "but evidently she isn't exhausted." George didn't say anything. He was busy trying to pull the plow down out of the air so that he could stick the point of it into the soil. By and by he succeeded, and Julia, realizing that he had gained his point, started off at a lively pace toward the lower end of the garden. The man on the fence applauded. One furrow had been made and he thought the battle was ended. But he was mistaken. Julia was one of the old guard. In the bright lexicon of her mulehood there was no such word as surrender. The plow was no sooner out of the soil at the end of the furrow than up it went into the air, on a level with Julia's heels. George managed to keep hold of the handles and gravity on his face deepened, but even then he did not say anything. His dignity was in marked contrast to the deportment of the man on the fence who had just fallen off apparently in a fit. Once more George conquered and another furrow was accomplished. At the next turn there was the usual performance, Julia insisting upon plowing the circumambient air, and George manfully endeavoring to bring

her and the plow down to their proper earthly level, and then a little variety was introduced by the breaking of one of the rope reins. As a result George was flung violently to one side and did not stop until he was nearly half way across the garden spot. He scooped up considerable sand as he went, but did not appear to be injured except in his feelings. These were so stirred that at last the fountain of his speech came bursting up: "Whoa, dar Julia, whoa dar," he yelled, "didn't I done and tole yer befo' we begun on dis piece dat I'd gib yo' de bigges' frallin' yo' ebber had in yo' life, if yo' acted out any mo' ob yore foolishness. An' now I'se gwine gib yo' jes' what I tole yo' I wud. Yas, I'se kwine to wear yo' out wid this stick, if its de las' act."

And he did. With the solemnity of judge and executioner combined, he unhitched Julia from the plow, took her out into the middle of the lot where there was plenty of room and gave her a good sound thrashing.

It would probably be too much to claim that Julia enjoyed it. But she knew that she deserved it and that it was good for her, and she liked George none the less for having given it to her. For a while afterward she kicked only at every other furrow and then with considerably less than her former fury. But her goodness did not last her quite through. When the work was about three-fourths done, she had a relapse, and once more George had to come to an understanding with her by the agency of a stout stick. Even at the last, when the plowing was all done and George was once more hitching her into the light wagon, she could not resist the temptation to aim a playful kick at him which missed his head by about half an inch.

"Yes, I got it planted," said the man who had been telling how he had his garden plowed.

"Well, how did things grow?" He shook his head mysteriously. "That's something I never could make out," said he. "There was something strange and uncanny about that garden. It didn't seem like any of the gardens 'round it. The seeds were all right, but the things that came up didn't look as if they grew from those seeds—or from any other, for that matter. They had a sort of languishing, unearthly look that almost made my flesh creep."

"Do you know," he added, thoughtfully, "I have sometimes wondered if it was a real garden after all. Perhaps it was just a garden in the air. At any rate Julia and George did the most of their plowing in the atmosphere."

Sympathetic Policeman.

The man came out of an office building on the run and started down the street.

"Here! Here!" cried the policeman on the corner. "What's your hurry?"

"There's a man back there trying to sell me a book on twenty-eight weekly instalments of \$2.33 each!" cried the victim.

The policeman instantly released his hold.

"Run!" he cried. "Run like a white-head! Maybe you can get away from him yet."—*Chicago Post.*

A woman with a headache always believes that if any other woman had it she would be sick in bed.—*Exchange.*

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