THE WILD SEASHORE GARDENS OF THE PACIFIC: BY MRS. A. S. HARDY

CALIFORNIA'S ocean beaches are either rocky buttresses or shifting sand dunes or stretches of sand beaten by the waves to hard and glittering floors. And these have their gardens, wide, abundant and brilliant; some of them fringing, others strewing the sandy floors or catching and binding down the sand dunes, or trailing over the rocks to the edge of the sea. The more we study the sea-beach gardens, the more our wonder grows, and our admiration for the plants which cling and beautify the wave-swept, wind-swept sandy reaches where to mortal eyes only discouragement and death await any attempts at gardens.

Incessantly, and from out beyond our vision, roll in the heavy surges that seem most like racing steeds white with foam of angry haste; leaping upon the beaches, stamping, pounding and pawing with silver hoofs. Then comes the tides creeping slowly but surely, reaching out their shining fingers for whatever spoils they may gather from the land.

And if this were not enough to discourage the most optimistic of plants, the sea water is salt,—and too much salt, we know, is fatal to plant life in general.

These sea-beach gardens only widen and brighten with the years, and are covered with blossoms whose petals are as silken and stamens as fine and flossy as if they grew where no troubles ever come, and no tragedies threaten.

THE FIG MARIGOLD THAT GROWS IN PROFUSION ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST.

From above dear old Monterey and running down beyond the boundary line into Lower California grow great garden beds of beach primrose (Anthera cheiranthifolia) lifting cups so golden as to tempt one to the fancy that like the clay which once holding a rose forever kept its fragrance, so these uplifted cups have held the sunshine until their chalices are golden. The flowers are thick-set among stemless leaves silvered like the sea they love.

Old primrose myths come to us of the German "Key Flower," a name applied in Germany and England alike, to the yellow primrose and its fair cowslip cousin. The German myth tells us how a fairy maiden enticed through a lane of primroses to an enchanted castle, a "Key Flower" in the hand touches the castle door and it swings open on golden hinges. The favored mortal passes into a mystical room where tall as primrose stalks stand urn and cup and amphora, carved with primrose patterns, and filled with jewels and gold. The favored mortal who holds the Primrose Key and enters the charmed portal may have the jewels and gold, but he must leave, forsooth, the more precious Primrose Key, or henceforth he will be followed by a shadow,—a black dog old and ugly, the legend calls the shadow.

This beach primrose is my "Key Flower." It opens to me charmed doors into enchanted moods, and palace thoughts, and jeweled memories.

My yellow primrose suggests Leigh
Hunt, of whom it has been said by one who knew him,—"He is the only person, I believe, who if he saw something yellow in the distance and was told it was a flower, would be disappointed if he found it to be only a guinea."

Often a yellow butterfly—symbol of a soul—floats over my sea-beach garden, resting here and there in a primrose heart.

From far northern coasts down to the low warm lands of the southern peninsula, wherever the sea roars and gives its salt spray to the air, there we find and love the seaside daisy with purple rays and yellow disc. Science has named this dweller on surf-tormented shores erigeron glaucus, but its lovers call it simply seaside daisy or beach aster, resembling as it does its cultivated cousin—the China aster, both of whom are charming little Compositae.

Stop to think how much it owes to the Compositae family of plants? What lovers of gold they are, bunching it in shining discs large and small and scattering their little suns over the earth. They are a brave folk, too, making their settlement often on deserts and on sands and are as radiantly happy when beautifying waste places as when planted in kings'gardens.

Most conspicuous upon the beaches are the mesembryanthemums, growing in thick mats over the sand. Fig marigold is their common name. Very showy plants they are, covering large tracts of sand with their mats of green. Their long stems, heavy with succulent leaves and bright flowers, reach like long arms over the arid ground and trail down the façade of rocks as if longing for closer contact with the sea. The landscape owes much to these dwellers on the ocean beaches, and so wide and stalwart
are their colonies we would take them to be real aborigines—California-born; but the wise ones tell us that these plants with a long name are Africans who have made their way to this coast in remote ages, no one knows how. Their stems, thick and succulent, often take on a kind of fleshlike hue, and reaching out over desert wastes they shine in bronzy substance like a Cleopatra’s arm banded with green and gold.

**M. crystallinum** decks herself with crystals of mimic ice and is familiarly known as ice plant. We wonder how this African with leaves like outspread palms and tufts of pink and white bloom came to be so diamond decked. Did some ancient ancestor round Cape Horn on an iceberg and in commemoration of the voyage leave to its descendants this dower of icy ornaments as a kind of family coat of arms?

The sand verbena which grows a little back from the sea, over dunes and beach meadows.

They were made to beautify stretches of desolation; to sit down in dry sands and work the miracle of drinking where no water is, and there to fill their cells and fruits with juices, to lean over the rocks for the chrism of ocean spray, and to dream sea dreams.

Not quite so close to the thundering waves, but creeping out to sandy dunes and to white stretches of sea sand, we find and love the pretty abronia or sand verbena. They are of prostrate, creeping habit, bearing delicate, fragrant flowers of lavender or pink. They belong to the four o’clock family, but long ago abandoned their ancestral habit of not opening their dainty trumpets until four o’clock. Instead, they carry armfuls of verdure and bloom out over the dreary sands and all day keep their trumpets open to the tuneful winds.

A Seashore Parable.

“Pity for the bare sea sands so fills my heart that half my blossoms blight,” said one Primrose to another as they stood among the lilies under the pines. “When the sea grows restless and his heart is stormy with anger, how he beats the little sea sands, and run as they will, they have not so much as a leaf to hide under.”

“I have seen it myself,” answered the
other Primrose, "and I am glad that we can go to the very border of the sandy beaches and show them what beauty is."

"But I have been thinking that it may be possible to do more than that," said the first yellow blossom, "and I am resolved to try. I hear the raging of the sea all day, and even at night when my blossoms close for sleep. I can bear it no longer. I am going out myself to live in the sands by the sea. I will give them all the grace and the help that I can."

"Dear little sister Primrose, you shall not go alone. I will go with you," said the other.

So the two brave little pioneers sent out their roots further and further through the sea sand, and as they stepped on and on, at every place they rested they left a colony. So enriched were they in giving themselves, and so glad grew their hearts, that blossoms unfolded on their stems as no primrose blossoms had ever done before.

But that was not all.

When they were fairly out upon the sandy stretches and could see far up and down the coast, the bare beach was so wide and so long that even hearts as brave as theirs were affrighted. "Alas!" they cried.

"The task is greater than we knew. We can never clothe all these sands with beauty, though we work a thousand years. Our hearts fail us. But we must still toil on. We will do the best we can."

Then it was that stormy winds raced over the ocean and billows mountain high came rolling in from afar; and in riding upon the crest of one, a strange plant leaped upon the sand close to the little primrose town. "Oh!" exclaimed the voyager, "most glad am I to touch land once more. For aoons, it seems, I have been sailing stormy seas, tossed and shipwrecked, bewildered and bruised; but never lost out of my heart the voice that thrilled me to leaving my native shore. Something told me, speaking clear and plain, that other sands were needing me somewhere, that I must go and clothe them with my beauty. Long and hard has been the voyage, but something told me in my heart that one my pilot was who would bring me into harbor just when and where I was needed most."

So came the mesembryanthemum to the California ocean beaches.

How joy blooms leaped along the silvery primrose stems! Faster now the blessed work went on.

The winds that blew over the ocean played their sea songs on reeds that grew just beyond the sand dunes. Blue asters heard afar the syrinx-blown story of brave deeds, and started southward to join the hero band who were giving gardens to the ocean beaches.

One day a trailing Verbena, who lay with her ear close to the reed stems, heard the wind-played hero song. Nothing so thrills as love and the hero-spirit, and as soon as the Verbena heard, she blew clarions on her tiny horns till all her clans listened, then she sang over to them the hero songs she had heard about plants that were toiling and stretching to clothe the barren sea sands with their beauty. Then all her clans, wearing their white and their purple and pink, started toward the ocean. "We will go, too! We will carry our grace to the barren sands!" they said. Then the winds added another stave to the hero song they played upon the reeds.

So it came to pass that the sea beach has its gardens; and where once stretched but wastes of storm-beaten sands, trailing plants weave now their borders and mats of green and gold and rose! and when the sea rages in wild unrest, the little sands run up under the spreading leaves and hide until the tempest is over.

Never had blossomed before primrose and mesembryanthemum and aster and verbena so gloriously as those that for love and pity went out to live on the barren sea sand.

THE WHITE PINE TREE

The designation "white pine" is applied to any one of several species of Pinus, having a white or whitish wood and leaves in clusters of five. There are three chief varieties in this country: first, the common white pine (Pinus strobus) of the northern United States and Canada, which has been perhaps the most valuable lumber-tree in the United States. Being light, soft, straight-grained and easily worked, it is adapted and used for all kinds of carpentry and construction. Then there is the mountain pine (P. monticola) of the western United States, and the Western white pine (P. flexilis) of the mountain ranges from Montana to Arizona at high elevations. (In Oregon the white pine grows at an altitude of 4,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level.) There is also a species of white pine found in Australia and New Zealand, a large tree (Podocarpus dacrydioides).