BERMUDA: THE LAND OF TWO SPRING-TIMES: BY HANNA RION

After the dry heat of September comes a cooling of the morning and evening air and almost every day there drift across the little Islands strange trailing rains—blown curtains of mist. The browning, weed-filled, resting fields are hurriedly cleared by the heavy Bermudian hoe to the song of mating birds and while the calendar says “autumn,” the sky, the rain, the air, the flowers and the birds know it to be spring. Everywhere is heard the steady click of hoe; for the clearing of fields must all be done by hand, followed by the shallow plow. The Islands now grow ruddy, as red fields are turned and made ready for the first crop of potatoes, lettuce and parsley.

Each flower garden wakes from its summer lethargy and celebrates the “spring.” During the intense heat of summer the flower gardens have been forgotten; only new-comers torture their gardens and themselves during a Bermudian summer. Besides the Island dwellers do not need flowers in their private gardens during the months of June, July, August and September—hillsides and roadsides have become vast gardens of splendor—the oleanders are in bloom! To a voyager approaching the Islands on a ship, Bermuda then appears a great fragrant bouquet of blossoms and foliage flung out over a turquoise sea.

The colors of the oleanders have a wide range. I have counted seven varieties of pink and three of red on our own farm land. The pure white variety is the rarest and perhaps the most beautiful. Near the sea all fields are hedged by oleanders fifteen to twenty feet high; serving as wind-breaks to protect crops from the biting brine of blown sea-spray.

On looking down from the top of the hills the scene is breath-taking in its unbelievable beauty; a beauty that becomes poignant when the eye shifts to the summer sea framed by millions of oleander blossoms.

In Bermuda there are three great flower festivals, the oleander, the narcissus, and the Easter lily. The narcissi begin to flower in December and continue during January. Every garden is filled to overflowing with these exquisite “paper” narcissi, which have spilled over the edges of gardens blooming outside the walls and gateways, spreading to the banks of roads and neglected fence corners. This asphodel-like flower is the prelude to another spring—the springtime of January. As it grows and ripens, this January springtime, the violets awake in the wild untraveled country and freesias in pure, fragrant colonies claim the moist depressions of many fields as their sporting ground.
AN OLD BERMUDA ROAD WITH GARDEN WALLS EACH SIDE, OVERHUNG WITH BRILLIANT TROPICAL FOLIAGE.
A PRACTICAL GARDEN OF CULTIVATED BERMUDA LILIES.

FRAGRANT NICOTIANA IN ONE CORNER OF A BERMUDA GARDEN.

SHIRLEY POPPIES BROUGHT FROM A NEW YORK STATE GARDEN.
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IN January the potato crop of the October “spring” is harvested and the fields made ready for the planting of the Bermuda onion. The days are again drenched in mingled sunshine and drifting rain—the atmosphere of midday is that of a greenhouse, a humid heat odorous with the lush growth of tropical haste. On the hillsides appear millions of little green lanterns tipped with red—the elfin blossoms of the life plant; the cliffs along the south shore are white with sweet alyssum, called by the Bermudians “Traveler’s Joy”; under the larger growths of bush and tree on the hillsides shines the blue eye of the little Bermudiana—a tiny star-flowered plant with iris-like leaf.

The January spring is the time of the great bird carnival—every bird is in love, and shares its love with the world. The air is filled with the ecstasy of the redbird; gorgeous in scarlet, with top-knot touched with black, he selects the topmost branch of the tallest juniper from which to woo his modest wife, who, in prayer-meeting gown of brown and greenish copper hides in the branches of a nearby oleander. Demure, gray, ground doves, anomalously wearing pink silk stockings, walk about lovingly in pairs. At any breathless moment a quail may appear from some mysterious shadow of a tangle, while sometimes a little brood of fifteen or more babies follow the mother. The bluebird flashes across the sky going a-courting; the catbird and the sparrow are on every side, and the beautiful little chick-o’-the-village brags about his beauty every hour of the day.

It is the supreme season of the rose. Roses bloom throughout the year in Bermuda, but in the January spring they reach their greatest perfection. The Duchess de Brabant grows almost wild. It is called the “shell rose” and is regarded by the Bermudian as an exclusive and native rose. In this blest land there are no rose diseases and the rose seems not to have any insect enemies whatever.

In January strawberries begin to ripen both for the benefit of birds and tourists—the birds get the berries for a song, the tourists get them for two shillings a quart.

In February every field is sprinkled with the wild salmon-colored poppy. Several years ago a Frenchman sent to France for poppy seed. It was a windy day when it arrived and the Frenchman took a long walk, casually tossing a pinch of seeds to the wind now and then. This fact he relates only to poppy lovers, for if the Portuguese and Bermudian farmers knew him to be the culprit he would have to go back home to France. Since that windy day when the Frenchman took the long walk, there have been many other windy days and the poppy seeds have been aeroplaned to every corner of the Islands, so now when February comes, there is each early morning, a salmon glow over the fields of vegetables. Bermuda is the natural home of poppies;
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but, as yet, in no garden but my own are the shirley poppies planted to any extent. I have them by the thousand and some windy day I, too, shall take a long walk.

When I began my garden in this alien land a feeling of homesickness made me desire to reproduce a certain garden at home. I wanted familiar flower-faces to cheer me—flowers that had helped me dream in childhood, and flowers that had later on helped to make some of these dreams come true. But after experimenting valiantly with American perennials for two seasons I began to realize that I must adapt my garden and dreams to new conditions. With the exception of shirley poppies and *Nicotiana affinis* my planting ground is now a typical Bermudian garden inclosed in a high bignonia hedge—a garden of Sago palm, guava, curacoa willow, crêpe myrtle, loquat, lemon, poinsettia, hibiscus, larkspur, periwinkle, candytuft, violets and daisies.

The chaotic conditions of the climate must be strangely puzzling to many flowers and trees. The Australian fiddlewood in the spring month of May, feeling the echo of its native autumn, proceeds with a curious and rather pathetic loyalty to paint its leaves yellow and crimson, and then to drop them one by one. In October the fiddlewood thrills with the memory of the Australian spring and bursts into fragrant blossoms and tender new leaves.

Many plants here give themselves no vacation during all the year; the hibiscus, geraniums and periwinkles flower three hundred and sixty-five days without taking a breath. A foreigner might think that this unbroken feast of twelve months of flowers would eventually surfeit the senses. It does not, however, for there are distinct seasons for many of the flowers and one grows to know them and look forward to them with renewed joy. In midsummer the pampas grass throws up great plumes of silky white, the hillsides shimmer with the candelabras of Spanish daggers, while great tangles of night-blooming cereus, snaking through tree boughs and over old walls, break into myriads of giant blossoms, making night too beautiful to seem true.

The summer is also the period of the flowering royal poinciana, the most gorgeous of all trees. At Christmas each Bermuda garden has its own Christmas tree, the glowing poinsettia. Many years ago the poinsettia was brought from the Andes by Mr. Poinsett, a South Carolinian, and from his garden in Greenville it has spread far and wide—even to little Bermuda.

In January the century-plant-like aloe celebrates the spring by sending up an asparagus-shaped sprout which grows over night to gigan-
tic proportions. In two weeks' time an aloe can overtop a tree of ten years' plodding growth. The aloe has a bell blossom which forms a large seed-pod, changing in time into a little aloe. It grows where the blossom appeared on the stalk, and continues to thrive contentedly swaying high in the air with the parent stalk, until some psychological moment when a breeze loosens its hold on the mother and it falls, its little rootlets all ready to thrust themselves into the soil.

The calla lilies bloom in profusion during the January spring and lead up through February to the great festivals of the Easter lilies. A field of Easter lilies is a field of snow. Its beauty, however, is tragically short-lived, for the farmer walks through his lily field denuding the stalks of their flowers, throwing them between the rows and shamelessly trampling them with his muddy feet.

The native takes the beauty of his land for granted, scarcely realizing the paradise of flowers in which he is living; but a foreigner to whom these little islands have now become home, finds Bermuda a fairy tale that grows each year in beauty, with the re-telling.

ANTIDOTES: MARGUERITE O. B. WILKINSON

HAVE you come close to a cynic and been in danger of shipwreck because of his doubts?
Seek you the young and struggling idealists who live around the corner.
Has a hypocrite infected your soul with nausea and weariness?
Go at once to the honest persons who live nearest you and visit with them.
Does Nero reign violently and cruelly in the world of your labor?
Go outside of that world, for once, seeking those who are of the kingdom of Christ.
Do you frequently meet the Devil at the corner of the street on which you live?
Turn into another avenue and walk fast, hoping, and also expecting that there you will meet God.
For when the body sinks into deep waters we reach out toward something that floats, something to which we may cling.
When flames take hold upon our clothing we seek water, or earth wherewith to quench them.
When we have swallowed poison we hunt for an antidote while there is yet time.
We do what we can to save the body, and we do it quickly.
When the soul is drowning, burning, poisoned, in danger of life, shall we not do what we can to save the soul?