"FLORICULTURE; ITS INFLUENCE IN THE HOME."

By Mrs. Dr. Ayres, of Green Bay.

What is the use of flowers? Probably there is no one who is accustomed to the cultivation of plants, watching them as they leave, and bud, and bloom, with as deep an interest as if we not only watched, but made them grow. Who has not been asked this question, and that, too, in a variety of tones, with great diversity of expression. The answer is not always given with decision. It seems to us so strange that every one does not know, that we hesitate, say they are equally useful with other beautiful things, and urged to particularize, at last, perhaps give no reason but that of, why we like them.

Now, I wish to assert most uncompromisingly, that flowers have a value; and that not only to look pretty. We thoroughly enjoy a beautiful sunset, but it fades away, and save for the momentary raising of our thoughts in adoration of Him to whom "the clouds are as dust under his feet," the sky might still wear its winter gray and our lives would suffer no loss.

Flowers are an essential part of nature's economy. From the tiny flowerets joining the red snow of the Alps, feeding the still tinier insect life which waited for their coming, to the brilliant, gorgeous bloom of tropical plants, each has its own individual duty to perform. Clothed in robes of delicacy, fragrance and beauty, they do the work for which they were created, eagerly drinking up from the soil the moisture received there, through the roots; they throw it off again by the leaves, thus giving freshness and dewiness to the air, gathering up the carbonic acid necessary to their own life, and giving out the oxygen needed by ours, while the close proximity of trees to our dwellings is carefully to be avoided, by reason of their throwing more dampness into the atmosphere than is needed. The more flowers around our houses the better, both indoors and out, always provided that they are in a thoroughly healthy state; and for this reason any one passing at least an hour a day in the open air, in suitable weather, etc., among the house-plants in the cold season, may have a reasonable hope of enjoying better health than those who have no such resource. It has been suggested as one means of securing pure air in city homes, that a small conservatory should have pipes leading to each room, thus
carrying oxygen where needed. I am afraid the inventor is in the plumbing interest, as a few plants, where light and heat could reach them, would answer the purpose. The very crying out of nature for her own life-laden treasures proves her dependence on them; the eager delight of the sick, aged and children, deprived, to some extent, of flowers, on receiving them as gifts, prove them to be not only pleasing to the eye, but an actual physical want. Surely they are needed for the perfect health of our bodies.

True refinement is generally accompanied by a love of the beautiful; in fact it is one of its proofs and vouchers. It is not necessary to be rich or idle to be refined; neither can it proceed from cultivation of mind or manner alone. It is certain that a degree of civilization has reached the paganism of Japan, and the love and cultivation of plant life is one of its surest evidences. Who that visited the Japanese gardens at the Centennial, but will remember the primness of the little trees, the extreme neatness of the edgings, and the retiring gentleness, if I may so speak, of the flowers, as if apologizing for being on foreign soil.

Our German population bring with them flower seeds and bulbs. They are a lifelong love to them. Twin-born with their devotion to music, they have helped to make the national character. Whether in their homes, their grounds or in "God's acre," they cultivate and hold dear the bright flowers of their fatherland.

Bonnie England, too, speaks through her own peculiar plants to the hearts of her absent children — violets, daisies, primroses, honeysuckles, roses — an innumerable throng, gather themselves to heart and memory. England's greatest poet puts into words the sad, mournful notes which a flower can sing: "There's a daisy; I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died."

France has her lilies and her magnificent provinces of roses, while Scotia and Erin point to heath and shamrock, and show each with pride.

Our home flowers are as fair as those of any clime. From the beautiful woods of the north to the orange groves and magnolias of the south, the trailing arbutus (sweet herald of spring) and the green lily of California, rare specimens, and common winsome buttercups, an endless variety, meeting the wants of the most enthusiastic lover of floriculture and the simple taste which revels in the
"love of the woods." They come to us, the God-given messengers of cheerfulness, in our homes, setting us the bright example of doing the very best we can, under the most adverse circumstances. They teach of him who bade us "consider the lilies, how they grow," and are an ever-varying source of interest and enjoyment.

On some fair spring morning, just after a rain, carefully draw within your little girl's flower bed the letters of her name, plant them with candy tuft, mignonette, or any other sure-growing seed; wait until some day she sees it come up, green and fresh. You will give her a lesson on the improbability of chance which will never be forgotten.

It is often said that the time needed for the care of house plants might be used to better purpose; that the daily watchfulness required by them, if given to some other object, might be productive of nobler results. Perhaps it is so in some cases, but as every person requires some recreation, some interest, apart from and superior to the petty cares and trials of every day life, the cultivation of what adds cheerfulness and brightness to our homes fills this need to many; and floriculture should not tend to selfishness. There are always those to whom a bouquet, a plant or cutting given, will bring pleasure. Our floral treasures will be doubly precious to us if shared with others. A wreath of lovely but home cultivated flowers, laid on the coffin of a poor, neglected child, called forth from the mother a cry, "I will never forget those." Her mind, roused to action, saw as in a vision when she too loved flowers. She felt her present state of degradation, and resolved to be once more a respected woman. She influenced her husband to change their mode of life, and when I last heard of her she was respectable. I trust these societies will continue their educational and refining work, until every farmer will see the need of a flower garden; will have a few pennies for seeds to brighten his home, and cheer the tired eyes of those that dwell therein, when the floweret shall open the door for music, and all innocent pleasures which shall tend to refine his family and himself. I would fain believe that those who have been favored with the means to obtain all which shall gratify their taste in floriculture will gladly share and give of their abundance to those who have not, so that no home shall be without the ornaments of nature's own producing, which have been given to our keeping. Interest once raised on the subject, magazines on
flower culture, newspaper columns devoted to the theme, the florist catalogues which come to us so freely, will become sources of information. Some seed of a flower hitherto unknown to us will bring a degree of excited watching for the bloom, positively amusing to a disinterested looker on. Let these things win for themselves a place in the home, and they will gradually weed out the trashy reading which is doing so much to educate for the reform school and the penitentiary, and make our girls silly, discontented and idle, instead of the noble, disinterested, useful women which our homes and our country need.

May each one of us, giving influence and interest according to our opportunities, be enabled to do something towards bringing into every home the sweet lessons and enjoyment of flower life.

For He who made the violet, and every floweret fair,
Thinks not unworthy His great power to give His holy care;
Protect the life from year to year which blooms and blossoms there.

Mr. Field said he had been very much interested in the papers just read by the ladies, and wished they could be heard by a much larger number of our farmers, for he was confident they would be benefited by them. He very much regretted that we had so small an attendance of ladies at our meetings, except at the session set apart for their papers. At our meetings below, the number present was very small, from one to five at the most, and often none at all. Can we not, in some way, induce them to come? The Grange is the only organization where the ladies are in the habit of attending regularly. They may not be excluded from others, but they do not seem inclined to attend. Every Grange in the state should be represented at these meetings by delegates of husbands and their wives. Other industrial organizations make special efforts, and are at a good deal of expense to secure a representation of their local societies, at conventions held to advance the interests of their special business, and there is no reason why farmers and all who are engaged in tilling the soil should not meet in the same way, and consult for their own interests. The Agricultural Societies and Granges should see that this was done, even if they had to pay the expenses of the delegates.
Mr. Philips had been very much pleased with the papers; he thought they grew better from year to year. They were not only interesting and instructive, but were of great value, and we would all do well to carry home the truths here expressed, and practice them; it would tend not only to make ourselves and families more happy, but would add to our usefulness and prosperity in many ways. He had of late years attended similar conventions held in other states, but had not heard a paper read by a lady, or seen a lady present at any meeting except our own. He could heartily indorse all that has been said in commendation of the papers, and was sure that all would join in thanking the ladies for the kind interest they had taken in our work, and for the aid they had given us. He for one would like to have these papers distributed through the session so as to secure the attendance of the ladies at all of our meetings, but was very glad to have them even here.

Senator Arnold moved that the thanks of the convention be given to the ladies for the interesting papers they had presented to us. Carried.

On motion of Mr. Kellogg, they were also made honorary annual members of the State Horticultural Society.

THE IDEAL AND THE REAL IN HORTICULTURE.

By B. F. Adams, Madison.

A garden is supposed to be a beautiful place where grow the choicest flowers, vegetables and fruits, laid out with regularity and cultivated with the greatest care and skill. Poets, when they view such a spot, feel inspired; the lovers of the beautiful in nature and art go into ecstasies over the scene, and express a desire to possess such a charming place. The more studious and thoughtful man of business or professional expert, speculates on such sordid matters as cost, and makes an estimate of the extent to which clean cultivation may be profitably carried. He is the man who, though susceptible to the poetry of a garden, is also imbued with that of practical matters, and when he visits an acquaintance who has cultivated a garden for ten years or more,