she will always stand forth as an evergreen through all the endless ages of eternity.

Beauty anywhere is a gift of God, and not to be despised. Why did our Father cause flowers to bloom over so large a portion of the earth? They are not food; they give no shelter; they furnish no clothing. Why, then, did the earth bring forth flowers? To beautify it! to enliven it! to fling a gladness and brightness over the world! What flowers are to the earth acts of kindness, a gentle tone, a kind look is to the care worn soul, filling it with joy and gladness.

The paper on “The Thistle,” prepared by Mrs. Kerr, was next read by Mrs. Trelease.

A TALK ABOUT THE THISTLE.

By Mrs. A. Kerr, Madison.

The classic Scotch Thistle, which stands upon the pages of history, poetry and romance, with the “rose” and the “shamrock,” has too often been confounded with that common, ignoble weed, the Canada Thistle. To the unthinking and careless, a thistle is a thistle — nothing more. The individual is not distinguished from the species. This is a great humiliation no less to a plant than to a human being.

In one of the novels of Alphonse Karr, there is mentioned a young man who, reduced by poverty, is compelled to give music lessons. In a letter to his sister he confesses the great mortification he experiences to hear people say at his entrance, here comes the music-teacher — instead of saying, here comes Mr. Blank. He was no individual, he was a species.

Some feeling akin to this was aroused in the heart of a loyal Scott, when, during the session of the State Horticultural Society, in February last, at the capitol, his national flower was disrespectfully referred to as the thistle which all good and loyal citizens were bound by law to exterminate under penalty of a heavy fine. The Scotchman protested, but he had neither time nor opportunity to prove that
his "warlike" flower was not the one condemned to wholesale destruction.

It is a great misfortune to labor under a bad reputation. Even when a good man comes from a neighborhood which has acquired an evil name, it is often necessary that some words be spoken in his vindication. Ever since the penalty for man's disobedience was pronounced, cursed is the ground for thy sake, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, this plant has been "under the ban." However, centuries ago, exception was made in favor of a genus called by Linnaens the *enicus benedictus*, or the "blessed thistle," so named from its valuable medicinal qualities.

The thistle belongs to that most extensive of all the orders of the vegetable kingdom, the compositae, which comprehends about one ninth of all the species of flowering plants, yet which furnishes comparatively few useful products. A bitter principle pervades the whole, and we find that the herbalist, or herb-doctor, makes large collections from these plants, of which we may mention the chamomile colt's foot, thoroughwort, tansy and wormwood. Almost the only species used for food are the artichoke, the vegetable oyster, the dandelion, lettuce and a few others. But this order abounds in ornamental plants which are highly prized by the florist. Among these are Dahlias and Chinese Chrysanthema together with the numerous varieties of Aster, Helianthus and Coreopsis.

Botanists tell us that there are found in the United States about thirty species of thistles; two of this number are not native, but having been introduced, are more widely disseminated and have attracted more attention than the indigenous varieties. These two we shall describe.

The *enicus arvensis*, known in Europe as the creeping thistle, is the one which we call the "Canada thistle." The English call it "cussed thistle." This plant which has followed civilization to nearly all parts of the world is said to have received the name by which it is known in this country from its having been introduced in the fleeces of sheep brought from Canada. It is justly regarded by our farmers as "the greatest pest of our fields." Its root is per-
ennial, spreading rapidly and extensively by its creeping root stalks, which send to the surface numerous stems eighteen inches to three feet high. Its deep roots lie beneath the reach of the plough and even when the creeping root-stalk is broken it is exceedingly tenacious of life, every fragment being capable of forming a new plant. Besides, its abundant seeds are feathery and are easily blown anywhere and everywhere by the wind.

The Ohio Experimental Station, which is devoting much time and labor to the question of weeds, and their dissemination, gives as an item of last season's work, the counting of the seeds developed by plants of different species. On a single thistle plant of average size there were found 65,366 seeds.

The leaves of the Canada thistle are smooth above, somewhat woolly below, thickly beset with slender spines upon the margins. The heads are rather small, of a pale lilac color, on short peduncles. This is the weed for the extermination of which the legislature of the state of Wisconsin has created a new office—that of Commissioner of Canada Thistles, whose duty it shall be to serve notice in writing on the occupant of lands on which he shall find growing “weeds known as Canada thistles, burdock, teasel, white daisy and snap-dragon. If after six days' notice the occupant shall fail to destroy such weeds in such manner as shall effectually prevent them bearing seed, said Commissioner shall spend as many days as the supervisor or city council may deem necessary in destroying such weeds, and for each day so spent he shall receive one dollar and a half per day and one-half of all fines collected; said fines being five dollars for the first offense, and ten dollars for each offense thereafter.” This act was approved April 3, 1885.

It would seem that in many localities the Commissioner might receive a lucrative salary and the state be greatly benefited.

The Scotch thistle, also called the spear-thistle (cnicus lanceolátus) is the most common of all the species. This is a large, strong plant; its stems in rich soil are from three to
four feet high, and its spreading leaves give it a formidable appearance.

But it is very easily destroyed because, as its root is biennial there is no danger that it will retain possession of the soil. It is easily distinguished by its leaves, whose bases are prolonged downward upon the stem, described in botany as "decurrent." Unlike those of the Canada thistle they are prickly on the upper surface. The flowers are large and of a purple color, the most striking and showy of any thistle blossom known to us. These plants instead of being a curse to the soil in which they grow may even add to its fertility. A correspondent of the "Country Gentleman" says: Those who plow under large growths of daisy, sorrel, mayweed, and rag-weed hoping to make the soil rich, will be disappointed. "Out of nothing, nothing comes." Those weeds which take only from the surface soil can add nothing to its fertility. Thistles and other deep-rooted plants get something from the sub-soil and bring it to the surface. When thistles are kept down so thoroughly that their roots rot, they always leave the ground light and mellow. But it is as the national emblem of Scotland that the Spear-thistle has a peculiar interest. We, of the United States have no national flower. In common with other nations, we once adorned our brides with the orange wreath, and let the funeral cypress wave above our dead, but fashion is changing even these customs for there is a fashion in flowers as in everything else. We have no flower which is peculiarly our own. England has the rose; Germany, the blue cornflower (bachelor's button); Italy, the daisy; Switzerland, the elderweiss; France, the lily; Ireland, the shamrock (either wood-sorrel or white clover), and Scotland the thistle. In New England, however, the "trailing arbutus," there called the "May flower," is tenderly cherished.

Emerson writes: "Often from beneath the edge of a snow bank are seen rising the fragrant, pearly white or rose-colored crowded flowers of this earliest harbinger of spring. It abounds in the edges of woods about Plymouth, as elsewhere, and must have been the first flower to salute the
storm-beaten crew of the May-flower on the conclusion of their first terrible winter. Their descendants have thence proudly derived its name." A more striking contrast to the thistle can hardly be found; yet each speaks to the heart its own peculiar language.

The legend of the Scotch Thistle has often been told. It varies in some particulars, but the following as given by a writer in an old Edinburgh journal, seems substantially correct:

In the reign of Malcolm I, about the year 1010, Scotland was invaded by the Danes, who made a descent on Aberdeenshire, and landed at Buchan-ness, intending to storm Slains Castle, a fortress of importance, situated close to the most eastern point of Scotland, and therefore convenient for the Danes at any time they might feel inclined to pay a hostile visit to their warlike neighbors.

The still and silent hour was selected as the most suitable time for commencing the attack, and as their presence was as little expected as desired, they flattered themselves they should without much trouble succeed in taking possession of the castle. Wisely determined, however, to leave nothing to chance, they took every precaution to make the necessary preparations complete. When all was ready and the night sufficiently far advanced to inspire them with a reasonable hope that the inmates of the castle were asleep, the word of command was given, and they commenced their march. Slowly and cautiously they advanced, taking off their shoes to prevent the possibility of their foot steps being heard. No voice broke the death-like silence—not a gleam of light illumined their onward path, save that one or two "sentinel stars kept their watch in the sky," as if to guide them to the castle. They now approached within a short distance of its lofty towers, and their hearts beat quick inj oyous anticipation of a speedy victory. No sound was heard from within, not a light appeared in the windows—the inhabitants were evidently fast asleep.

Their labors are now well nigh over. They can scarcely refrain from exclamations of delight, for they have but to swim across the moat, and place the scaling ladders, and
the castle is theirs. But in another moment, a cry from the
davers themselves, rouses the inmates to a sense of their
danger; the guards fly to their post—the soldiers mount
arms, and, quick as thought, pursue the now trembling
Danes, who fly unresistingly before them. Whence arose
this sudden change of affairs? From a very simple cause.
It appears that the moat, instead of being filled with water
as the Danes had expected, was, in reality, dried up, and
overgrown with thistles, which pierced the unprotected feet
of the assailants, who, tortured with pain, forgot their cau-
tious silence, and uttered the cry, which of course had
alarmed the sleeping inmates of the castle. Thus, then, we
find that the unconscious thistle, somewhat like the geese
at the Capitol (of Rome) was the means of preserving Scot-
land from falling into the hands of her enemies. In token
of gratitude it was henceforth adopted as the national em-
blem and has ever since been held in the highest veneration
by her hardy sons.

The poet Burns was too tender-hearted a man to make a
good farmer. He wrote one of his sweetest poems in mem-
ory of a mountain daisy, the “wee, modest, crimson-tippet
flour’r,” which he inadvertently turned down with the plough
and he confesses to sparing a stout thistle, on account of his
regard for his country’s flower.

In the language of flowers the thistle is the emblem of
self-defense. The motto used by the Knights of the Thistle
or the Order of St. Andrew, whose floral badge is the thistle,
is peculiarly appropriate, “Nemo me impune laccisit”—No
one shall touch me with impunity; or in plain Scotch: Tak’
tent how ye meddle wi’ me.

Thus we see that the Scotch Thistle—“the warlike flower,
too rough to bloom in lady’s bower,” deserves to be held in
honor, as the emblem of a brave and noble race whose stern
adherence to duty has made Scotland “loved at home, re-
vered abroad.”

This paper was pleasantly discussed by Messrs. Wake-
field, Rhodes and Smith.

It was said that the Canada thistle is an increasing evil
in the state of Wisconsin, and we should spare no pains or trouble to check its progress. Mr. Toole thought that farmers would do well to see that those officers appointed by the state to see to the extermination of Canada thistles faithfully execute their duty. He thought the greatest danger would be from the thistles growing in out of the way places where no one would attend to them.

The Glee Club furnished more music, after which the following dispatch from the Minnesota State Horticultural Society was read by the secretary.

MINNEAPOLIS, June 25, 1885.

Wisconsin Horticultural Society, Weyauwega.
The Minnesota Horticultural Society sends fraternal greeting. Fine show of fruit. Successful meeting. Members enthusiastic.

S. D. HILLMAN, Secretary.

Messrs. Trelease and Hoxie were instructed by the president to reply to the telegram.
The paper by Mrs. Balch, on "Flowers from the Yard," was then read by Miss Balch.

FLOWERS IN THE YARD.

Mrs. L. Bertha Balch, Weyauwega.

The practical man, so-called, is apt to regard as of value only those things which contribute to the support of the animal needs. Such a man is wont to regard flower culture as a waste both of time and money. In a company of men and women who have met to discuss the proper modes of fruit-culture it is not unfitting to ask this question: Of what practical value are flowers in the home?

Nothing that God has made is to be wholly condemned. Those things which God has given his special sanction are at least entitled to our consideration. How is it with the flowers? In our own state the snow is scarcely melted before the white and pink blossoms of the arbutus appear among the masses of brown and green. A little later the children come laden with hepaticas, buttercups and spring