

# **BOTANICAL RAMBLES**

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Botanical Rambles by . A. Johns

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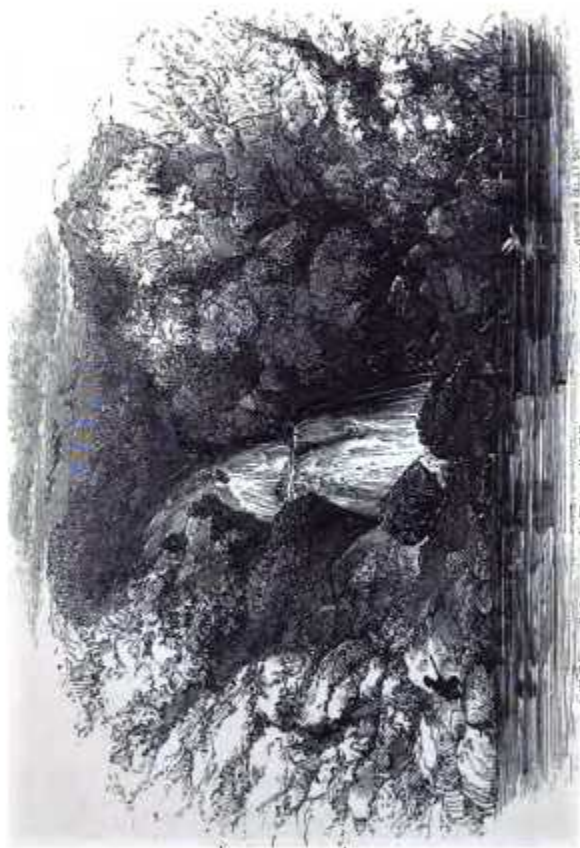
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**. A. JOHNS**

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RAMBLES**



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P. 136.

INVERONAID WATERFALL.

# BOTANICAL RAMBLES.

BY THE

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MEADOW.

“ What though I trace each herb and flower  
That sips the morning dew ;  
Did I not own Jehovah's power,  
How vain were all I knew !”

You asked me a few days ago, of what use were all the dried plants which I was so carefully fastening to paper ; and you will recollect, perhaps, that I then evaded the question, suffering you for the time to think that I was committing great waste in spolling so much good paper. When I told you, on another occasion, that, amongst my numerous collection of stones, stained with spots of yellow, and grey, and black, there were none which contained any useful mineral, you seemed yet more surprised. “ Had they been specimens of ore,” you said, “ you could conceive it possible that they might be worth collecting and examining ;” and I saw at the same time (although you expressed no opinion on the subject) that you thought me a sad trifler, devoting, to a very unprofitable subject, time which might advantageously be employed in reading some instructive or even merely entertaining book.



When, on another occasion, I returned from my ramble on the sea-shore, and, instead of resting after my fatiguing walk, set busily to work with my dishes of water, blotting-paper, and calico, floating out the specimens of sea-weed which I had collected, you were yet more puzzled. I did not attempt, however, to satisfy your curiosity, but promised that you should accompany me in my next excursion into the country, when you would probably discover, that I had some motive for my incomprehensible conduct beyond the simple desire of making a collection of all the plants that I met with, and arranging them in packages. That promise I am now about to redeem, premising, that I do not meditate making you *a botanist* during the few rambles which I shall have an opportunity of taking with you; but that my object will be, to bring before your notice some of the many interesting facts which Botany, *if ever you should study that science*, will enable you to discover for yourself.

If you should be tempted to become a naturalist, you will have to study books containing a considerable number of "hard names," which you have never before seen,—of which it will cost you some trouble to find the meaning,—and which you will at first have some difficulty in recollecting. I do not say this to discourage you, but to caution you against falling into an error, now unfortunately very common, *that it is possible to acquire a fair knowledge of any science without industry and pains*. It is true enough, that many of the most important discoveries have been made almost accidentally; that trifling occurrences have led to the most important events; but you will find it a

difficult task to name to me *one* invention in the arts, or *one* discovery in the sciences, which has not been arrived at by pains-taking and thoughtful men, men who were well acquainted with the value of all that had been done before in their respective subjects of investigation, and who had learnt, by dint of hard study and intense application, to turn accident to account. The study of Botany, should you ever be induced to take it up, will be an amusement for your leisure hours; but, unless you set out fully prepared to encounter serious difficulties, and resolved to overcome them, it will be a wearisome amusement, and defeat its own ends. It may happen, that your only gratification during the earlier stages of your progress will be derived from looking back upon the rugged path which you have traversed, when the reflection that you have mastered difficulties which at the outset appeared almost insurmountable, will give you encouragement to proceed against those which yet seem to be obstacles in your way. If, in the course of our rambles, I present you with some of the flowers and fruits of botanical research, you must not forget that they were not attained until many difficulties had been surmounted; and, if you would wish to gather any such for yourself, you can only reach them by undergoing a similar process.

Our first excursion shall be through a Meadow, the produce of which is reserved for making hay. Here you will discover at first, perhaps, nothing very well deserving your notice, for, with the exception of Ox-eye Daisies, and a sprinkling of Red Poppies, there is nothing to be seen but grass. By the term *grass*, farmers mean all plants which serve

as pasture to cattle, or may be converted into hay, or, more accurately, all plants with comparatively small leaves growing in pasture land. Botanists, however, comprehend under the term those plants only which bear long and narrow leaves, jointed stems, and seeds more or less resembling grains of barley or wheat.

Of all vegetable productions the various kinds of grass are, in temperate climates, at once the most generally diffused, and the most important. The different kinds of grass to which the common name of corn is given furnish man and several domestic animals with their principal food; other sorts, which abound in our pasture-lands, afford, in their green state during the spring and summer months, and in the form of hay during winter, an inexhaustible supply of sustenance to cattle; while the stems or straw of the larger kinds, namely, wheat, barley, and oats, are applied to a number of useful purposes, which I need not mention.

In order, therefore, that there may not be wanting a sufficient supply of so valuable a production, the Providence of God has so constituted their nature that they are less liable than any plants with which we are acquainted to become extinct, and less affected by any excess of heat or cold, drought or moisture. Their leaves are, as I have said, long and narrow, and of the same width from the base upwards to nearly the extreme point. Hence it happens, that whenever rain or dew settles on them, it does not drop off, but is conducted as through a channel to the roots. The leaves too, when they have executed their office of supplying the plant with moisture, perform another equally useful by sheltering the immediate neighbourhood