

MY ROSES AND HOW I GREW THEM

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My Roses and how I Grew Them by Helen Milman

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HELEN MILMAN

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MY ROSES



HOW I GREW THEM

BY

HELEN MILMAN
(MRS. CALDWELL CROFTON)

AUTHOR OF

"IN THE GARDEN OF FRACE"

&c. &c.

JOHN LANE

THE BODLEY HEAD

LONDON AND NEW YORK

1899

PREFACE

THIS is only a book for amateurs. Gardeners might scoff at it, experts would doubtless jeer.

But every word in it is the result of experience, and, after all, experience is a first-rate teacher.

When I began gardening I knew nothing absolutely nothing. And I gloried in my ignorance, because then I could ask advice from every one; and I received it . . . gratis . . . with the result that nothing would grow, because every one's advice differed!

"Plant in the autumn."

"No, plant in the spring."

"Roses require an open space."

"Remember, above all, that roses must have shelter."

"Prune the tea-roses as you prune the hybrids."

"Tea-roses do not stand pruning at all."

Then I sighed, and turned my attention

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to books. Some I bought, and some were given me by my friends. They were all very long and difficult to understand, and so technical! I wanted to know exactly what to do and when to do it; it mattered little to me what I was not to do; and the marvellous effect of different chemicals on the ground only bored me.

"Is there no little book, written in plain words?" I asked in a tone of mingled hope and weariness.

But answer there was none.

So now, to my great amusement, after seven years' experience, friends, ay, and strangers too, turn to me and lay the request at *my* feet, if you please! to write a short booklet (how I hate the word!) on *Rose-growing*.

The request may make some smile, but if all my readers had seen my roses this summer they would pardon my presumption in writing.

Baskets upon baskets I filled; it seemed to me as if I could never stop cutting. My roses carried summer to many hearts, and they seemed to bloom just to return some of the love bestowed upon them.

"We may have to do without many things, but let us at least have perfect roses," I said, and I certainly have got them at last.

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Here is another proof of their perfection.

Since we grew them we have always taken prizes at the local rose show for tea-roses. We have taken the prize for the best tea-rose bloom in the whole show. And, mind you, we compete with gardens which have five, ten, fifteen gardeners! So this is no vain boast.

We ourselves have one gardener. He has very little experience, and he does the pony too, and all the other hundred-and-one odd jobs about the place, so he gets but a short time for flowers.

He hoes the rose beds, certainly, but I myself do the entire pruning, and caterpillar-squashing, and syringing. Then the owner of the garden does the watering, and so nothing is left for the bushes but to bloom.

I do not want to boast, but you never saw such roses as mine! Or perhaps I ought to be more humble and say you never saw better roses than mine! Such a wealth of bloom, such a glory of colour, and such a long time in blossom!

I think one reason I get so many is that I pick them so freely, and the flowers are glad to carry joy outside the garden, and to show their gladness they form fresh buds for me.

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Tea-roses are my favourites, because they bloom all the summer long. Even to-day, in the middle of November, I can pick you a bonnie bunch. They are so beautiful in bud, and their green is graceful and fine; and, again, they do not suffer in the same way from all the unkind diseases common to rose life.

Yes, you must grow tea-roses, they will repay all your trouble a thousand-fold.

The first year we planted our rosary I thought myself wondrous wise. I sent for a hundred roses (I am not at all sure it was not two hundred) and paid about two or three pounds for the whole lot! I thought the nurseryman would know so much better than I did what I wanted, and that his choice would be far superior to mine. He knew everything, and of course I knew nothing!

Vain delusion! The roses were poor and nameless, and where we thought to gather hundreds, one poor little ill-formed bloom struggled into existence.

Take my advice: if you can only have one bed of roses, at least have them perfect. It is far better and wiser to buy half-a-dozen well-grown, well-known plants, than to buy a big cheap lot for the same money. I have tried both, and so I ought to know.

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I have won many hearts with my roses, but then they grow in the Garden of Peace, and so it is not to be wondered at that they grow well.

Birds sing to them in the rosary, and as they build their nests they rest now and again on the sundial to watch the buds unfolding.

Squirrels look in and wonder why pruning is necessary.

Sometimes a pheasant peeps in at the garden gate to see what all the fuss is about.

In July the Queen of the Roses holds her court. I would bid you come and worship at her shrine.

It is impossible to leave the rosary empty handed. The bushes are covered with bloom, and it is difficult to choose the best, for all are perfect.

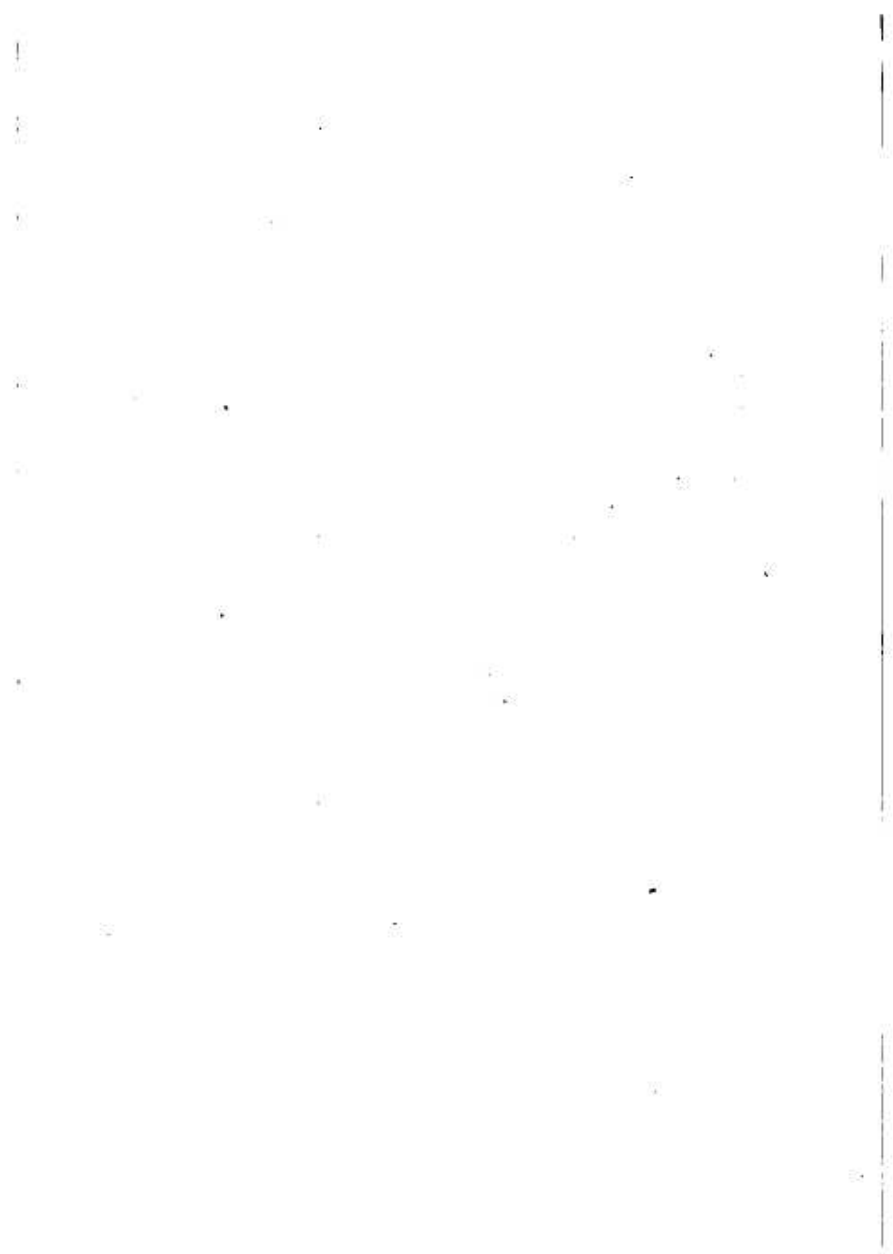


Figure 1. Relationship between the number of species and the number of individuals in a community.