

A GARDEN OF PLEASURE

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A Garden of Pleasure by E. V. B.

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OF PLEASURE**

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Boyle, Hon. Mrs. Eleanor (London)

A GARDEN OF PLEASURE

BY

E. V. B.

*Author of 'Days and Hours in a Garden,'
'Ros Rostrum,' etc.*

'Who loves a garden, still his Eden keeps.'

A. ALCOCK. 1799

LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1895

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DEDICATED

TO MY ELDEST GRANDCHILD, CECIL
ALBINIA ARBUTHNOT, WHOSE DELIGHT
IS IN THE GARDEN, AND WHO MADE
IT THE EDEN OF HER CHILDHOOD.

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Reclaw. M. P. 10-19-36

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PREFACE

Since a preface is said to be a necessary evil, it may perhaps be utilised as a means for the embodying of a few notes on subjects not contained in the book itself. Among these, it should be explained that those flowers—wild or cultivated—whose outlines face first pages of the months, are not supposed to follow in any order of succession as to their proper flowering seasons. They were drawn solely for pure love of them, and were arranged wheresoever they seemed to suit the best.

On finally looking through the proof sheets, the writer has to confess to a disappointing sense of inadequacy; a pervading, uneasy impression of how poor a thing after all these slight garden records are. The flowers named in them so few—so scanty the attempted portrayal of

them! Most emphatically so, when I see the sun-bright garden in all the joy and glory of this royal month of May—now, with Nature at full flood and flow of Spring! with the great elms in the background, half-drest in a fairy garment of budding green. The severity and fatal length of the long winter endured in the garden—though many a tender shrub and plant has died of it—is forgotten in a moment; and indeed it seems on the whole almost to have inspired fresh life and vigour of growth in those delicious things which we call Spring flowers. The rich abundance of our early favourites this year is undiminished. Though long in coming, now that they are here at last they seem more brilliantly beautiful than ever. If any long-loved habitual pleasure of the garden fails to-day, it is that birds are fewer. There are fewer thrushes, and we miss the rapture of their music. Blackbirds must know the secret of some less precarious means of living, for they are as numerous as ever. Yet somehow Merula's magic note is, or so it seems to me, less wholly dear than is the singing of the thrush. The air he sings is so brief, the burden of it so sad! He only sings over

and over, ' *Di Memoria nudrirsi, piu che di speme !* ' ' *I live on Memory more than hope.* ' Of course he does not mean it in the least ! but so the tune wears on in sad, sweet, iteration. In the winter, after Christmas, the holly trees in the garden shone scarlet, loaded as they were with berries. We had planned to cut away several branches of them, but until the birds had stripped the fruit, the gardener's knife was not to be lifted for the pruning. Yet scarcely had ' the wise thrush ' begun to feast, when down there swooped upon the hollies such flocks of field-fares from the open country that, in a day the trees were bare. So the poor thrushes—to whom of right the garden fruits belong—starved and were found dead in numbers. The motto of wild Nature is always necessarily, ' *Live, and let die who may.* ' And thus there is many a small tragedy enacted often, in the garden. One of the most pathetic perhaps, when a tiny mother-bird was found dead in a thorny brier, pierced to the heart by thorns in the Rose-Home of her choice.

At this very time, as I write, through the open window comes fitfully the complaint of a solitary dove