

THE ROSE, THE SHAMROCK, AND THE HEATHER

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IF the poppy be "Our Lady of Sleep", surely the rose is "Our Lady of Content." Look into the unsullied heart of the "Fair Queen of the Garden", and you will behold there, over the gently closed petals, virgin white or blushing pink, and softly folded as the eyelids of a slumbering babe, the calm of innocence and content. Like velvety wings they lie closely, one upon another, until the odorous centre of the flower deepens into densest pink shadow as you gaze into it, the rich shades and dark recesses resembling more the folds and shadows of angels' wings than of anything earthly. The rose is, verily, the revelation of the perfect quietude of pure joy—of unalloyed content. When the mind is racked with fretful cares and worrying troubles, or the anxious eyes are wearied with garish visions, look into the silent heart of a rose, inhale its dreamy scented breath, and your aching sight will be soothed, your mental trouble will be composed and sink away, the heart of the rose will fill you with content.

Scented roses were in the mind of Samuel Rogers, the banker poet, we cannot doubt, when he pictured his ideal home not his spacious and luxurious mansion in London, but a little cottage "beside the hill", as told in the lines of his poem which might have been entitled *Contentment*, although he called it *A Wish*:

Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew.

As you ramble in the sunshine round your garden, you will see the proud tiger-lily—in imperial splendour of satin and jewelled glory—pompously display her silken beauty to the sun, or behold the dazzling scarlets and magentas of the gaudy geranium-blooms flaunting their bright banners before the gaze of every passer-by. These you may not escape, in your wandering, nor can you avoid the pansies' beckoning eyes, for they will stare at you unabashed, their open countenances looking full upon you with the confidence of trustful mischievous school-children.

None of these flowers, or their blithe sisters decking the glowing garden beds, suggest aught of the quiet, the calm, and the perfect

content, of the opening rose. Pansies! Velvety pansies! Their whimsical faces have in them no suggestion of restfulness or peace. Did not fair Ophelia say "Pansies, that's for thoughts, for unrest, fretfulness, and anxiety"? "Pansies! Rather for me, dear Ophelia", (wrote William Ernest Henley), "rather for me the white poppy of forgetfulness,"—the white-veiled nun of the cloistered sisterhood of flowers. When Tom Hood recalled to memory his childhood days, roses came first into his mental vision:

I remember, I remember
The roses red and white,
The violets and the lady-cups
Those flowers made of light.

Roses have an irresistible fascination for every one. What a mystic spell the rosebud, the unopened rose, weaves upon us all! Lovely tints, exquisite odours, perfection of form, purity, sanctity—above all, content—are enwrapped in each folded rosebud. But the bud, alas, may never open: it may wither, it may succumb to the secret gnawing of the canker-worm. It may even partially open, and then fade and fall before its full beauty can be displayed. Was it not this tragic possibility which prompted the poet's bidding:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.

Even the opening rose has still the hazards of fate before it. Every flower must fade, and, like all transient beauty, be wasted away:

Though the roses in your golden hair be bright,
Your golden hair shall be wasted and white,

So runs the melancholy warning couplet. But the thought of the closed-up rosebud, tightly folded, need not hold us, nor yet the uncertain charms of the partly opened flower.

It is not that the rose has rarity. We do not value it, as we do the diamond, for that reason, as well as for beauty. Roses are not rare. They are common flowers, among the commonest; they are to be seen in every cottage garden, they hang like a scented curtain of loveliness over the porch of many a humble cot. The Greeks had a proverbial saying, thirty centuries ago, respecting small gifts and minor treasures. They said "Trifles—but roses." Yes, trifles, but all the same, roses, precious roses. No other flower has commanded the praise of poets, in all ages, like the rose. It was England's first Poet Laureate, in the seventeenth century, who wrote; "Drink to me only with thine eyes." As we all know, this sweetest of songs has roses for its theme. "I sent thee late

a rosy wreath"; but, "Thou thereon didst only breathe" and, thereafter, Ben Jonson declares in his closing couplet:

It grows and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee.

To Robert Burns, poet of human tenderness and passion, the rose was the supreme emblem of the object of his fondest affection:

O my Luve's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June.

But the lyrics of love and of roses are legion. Choice singers in every land, above all in England, have held up the rose as the very goddess of the Garden of Love. Nor has the dreamy Orient been lacking. Eastern luxury knew nothing more costly, nothing more esteemed, than the essence of roses. The roses were grown in the sacred gardens of Ghazipur, near Benares, the Holy City. The essential oil of the Damascene Rose (*Rosa Damascena*) was laboriously extracted for compounding the precious Attar of Roses. Not less than two hundred pounds weight of rose leaves were needed to make a single ounce of Attar. Attar of Roses has ever held first place among perfumes.

It is appropriate that, amongst most valued woods, it should be "Rosewood" which holds a supreme place. It is one of the most lovely and most eagerly sought woods. It is called "Rosewood"; but, tell it not in Gath, it is really the wood of a Brazilian species of leguminous tree; a giant amongst the bean and pea order of plants! The name is a gross misnomer. Not less so, however, is the *bois de rose* of the French. This latter wood is really the timber of the tulip tree. But the exquisite rose colour, and the lovely grain, perhaps fully justify the misnomer.

The rose was the chosen badge of the Rosicrucians, an order somewhat mysterious, and little understood generally, but after three centuries still surviving to-day. "The Brothers of the Rosy Cross", with their strange rituals and mystic speculations, have from a time early in the seventeenth century been wrapped up in obscurity, in spite of the fact that over five thousand books and treatises have been published by the Rosicrucian fraternity, or written by others about them. One Scottish poet, Henry Adamson, nephew of Archbishop Adamson, of St. Andrews, links them with Freemasons, and in his curious poem *The Muse's Threnodie*, issued in Edinburgh in 1638, declares:

We are brethren of the Rosie Crosse,
We have the Mason Word and Second Sight,
Things for to come we can foretell aright.

Knighthood claimed, in mediaeval times, the rose as well as the lily for its emblem. Down to the present time the most ancient order of British knighthood, the Garter Knights, wear along with golden knots and buckled garters a resplendent collar of white roses set on red roses, these emblems dating back to Tudor times. To the appreciative mind there is unspeakable pathos in this English custom of wearing red and white roses as badges. In that dread conflict known as the "Wars of the Roses", the opposing forces wore these flowers. Brother Englishmen they were, but by these badges they were divided into two camps. Yorkists, under the White Rose of York, and Lancastrians, under the Red Rose of Lancaster, fought against each other for three reigns, Henry VI, Edward IV, and Richard III. It seemed unreasonable strife; but, as one old historian says, "What could the people do when two kings reigned in one kingdom?" "The white rose (he continues) was dyed red with the blood of the nobles, and the red rose turned pale with horror to view the calamities occasioned by this dreadful dissension!"

A terrible series of battles it was, beginning with St. Albans in 1455, and ending with the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, or rather Bosworth Field in 1485, when Richard Crookback was slain in the conflict. England during these years of strife was in the throes of civil war from north to south. The fiercest fight of all was the Battle of Towton, fought on Palm Sunday, 1461, in a heavy snowstorm. 60,000 Englishmen, under the Red Rose, savagely fought 50,000 Englishmen, under the White Rose; and when the battle ceased at sunset, 30,000 dead lay mingled on the cold turf, the bloodiest battle ever fought on the soil of England. To-day, if you ramble over the moorland waste of Towton Field, you will find red and white roses intertwined in profusion, sweet-scented wild roses, as if kind Nature would make amends for that fratricidal slaughter four centuries ago. Omar Khayyám it is who tells:

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled.

Unlike the red poppies which suggest bloodshed and slaughter, ("bubbles of blood" on the battlefield, they have been called), roses tell of life not death, and by their fragrance and beauty ever breathe an air of sanctity, and gentleness, and peace. Early and late, in the round of the year, the rosebushes bloom. John Oxenham speaks of this persistent blooming, late each season:

Still breaks and blows,
Still gleams and glows,
Mid icy blasts and wintry snows.

Roses tell of continued life, not mortality, and they will not die, but linger long in the garden after most flowers have wholly gone. Even when they gleam white upon the dark grave, they continually speak of deathlessness. They toss and riot in cold December gales, they defy the bitter winds, and they blithely blossom as though it were the month of May. I know well some thatched cottages of the fisher folk, on a high cliff in Scotland overlooking the grey North Sea, and often in December and January have I passed along the stormy coast road when, as the Scottish ballad has it:

The heavens lowr'd
The rain down poured,
And gurly grew the sea.

But the rose-bushes were still gay with scented blooms, as if defiant of the cruel gales from the East. Very fitly the rose decks the last resting place of the departed. As Victor Murray sings, in his choice and tender lines:

He prayed for roses o'er his grave—the rose
Rains bud and blossom and branch around his head,
He loved the music of the sea—the sea
Throws thunder o'er his bed.

There is in the ancient walled city of York a Chapter House, close by the great cathedral church, which enraptures the beholder by the perfection of its architectural design, its flowered pinnacles, buttresses, and its exquisite stone sculpturings, inside and outside. How could the beauty of this thirteenth century building be better likened to any beautiful object than to a beautiful rose? The inscription is most fitting, inscribed in Saxon lettering, on the wall, near the main entrance:

*Ut Rosa Flos Florum,
Sic est Domus ista Domorum.*

Truly, as the rose is the loveliest among all flowers, so is that building among all buildings.

Every lover of the Scriptures lingers upon that prophetic utterance of Isaiah, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Isaiah rightly uses the rose as the symbol of restored life and national joy. Sennacherib, the Assyrian scourge, had invaded and wasted Judah; but there was the certainty that restoration and healing would follow; the beauty and gladness of the rose would appear in place of the fallen leaves of devastation and death.

Roses, in poetic vision, figure as emblematic of the immortal world. The lover of roses—and who does not love the rose?—will

finally be satisfied. What destiny could there be more to be desired, after this transient life is ended, than was of old conceived as the fate, the happy fate, of the lover of roses?

And they carried the Lover of Roses
To the Rose Garden of God.

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But if there is romance, like a halo, about the rose, who shall say that the Irish Shamrock "the dear little, sweet little shamrock of Ireland" to quote the well-known song, has not even a more exceeding glamour of romance about it? Yes, there is abundant history, mystery, and romance about the tender green trefoil which men and women call the shamrock. Alas! there is an initial difficulty. Botanists are not sure which is the original shamrock!

There are at least three hundred species of trefoil, or *Trifolium*, distinguished by them. It is surely strange that after all that has been preached and prayed and sung for a thousand years about this hallowed emblem, the national emblem of Ireland, it is still disputed whether the tender three-leaved Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) with the violet-veined white flowers, or the humble little wayside waif, the delicate pasture clover (*Trifolium minus*) with the small fragrant yellow flowers, is the plant that was chosen by St. Patrick, early in the fifth century, to illustrate his doctrinal sermon on the Holy Trinity. Whatever native Irishmen may think, the English and Scottish authorities are in total disagreement,—"Trifolium minus, common in pastures and by road sides" an English authority categorically declares, "is the true shamrock"; but a Scottish botanist, no less famous, asserts the opposite, with a touch of characteristic caution. "The wood sorrel is believed by many to be the original shamrock!" The wood sorrel is a shy plant, hiding in the woods, and therefore true to the coy shrinking, bashful Hibernian nature. Moreover it, unlike the clovers, remains green all the year, fresh verdant leaves being found in the middle of winter. Thus it may well be the authentic national flower of the Green Isle. But there is much to be said for the clover. It is a wee delicate herb, very fragrant, fresh, and beautiful, providing delicious fodder for the dumb beast, succulent food when green, and choicest hay when dried, so nutritious indeed that Professor Needham, the best American authority, tells us, "the hay sets a standard for all other hay; hay so rich in proteins that it needs to be diluted with other forage for ordinary feeding." So enthusiastic about clover is this famous and venerable American naturalist that he thinks it must have grown in the Garden of

Eden! To farm animals it gives more complete and unalloyed satisfaction than any other field herb. "Nor does it mean", he goes on to tell us, "the pleasures of the palate merely, even for the beasts; they gaze on the clover, sniff at it, and take deep breaths, and lie down and roll in it." There, surely, must have been clover in Eden!

Apart from the religious and poetic aspects of the Irish trefoil, which we will regard as the shamrock in the meantime, there are invaluable practical qualities which we cannot ignore. For not the professional politician (as some think), but the farmer, is the backbone of Ireland, and the three-leaved plant holds an important place in the accepted code of crop rotation on the farm. The ancient four-course rotation, long known as the "old Norfolk plan", followed this order: roots, barley, clover, and wheat; but sometimes the land remained in clover for two years or more, and was known as "permanent pasture" when so left for the longer period. Now, recent science has demonstrated that clover is most beneficial because, unlike so many plants which exhaust the soil's nutriment, it can actually supply fertilizers, especially the invaluable nitrogenous fertilizers. It does this directly when ploughed under, and decomposed; and, indirectly, through the action of nitrogen-gathering bacteria that infest the knot-like swellings of the clover's roots. It is truly a marvellous power possessed by the shamrock (*Trifolium*) and by peas, beans, lucerne, and vetches, as well as the various clovers. Grain crops, root crops (turnips, potatoes, mangels, beets, etc.) have no such magic property. All this was unknown until about forty years ago, although some old writers on farming in Britain seemed to have had an inkling of it. Sir John Norden in 1617 wrote: "Clover grass or the grass honey-suckle should be sown with other seeds of hay." Walter Blith, forty years later, in his "Improver Improved", dated 1649, strongly favoured alternation of crops, saying that clover and turnip sowing should alternate with grain crops. It is the microscopic bacteria, about the swollen root-nodules, which enable the roots to assimilate free nitrogen from the air, and from the air permeating cultivated soil.

But enough of the practical and the prosy! What strange coy little ways these trefoil plants have, both sorrel and clover! The clover loves the sun and spreads its triple leaf, like an umbrella, to catch every ray of sunshine. As soon as the sun sets and no more sunlight is available, the three leaflets close and go to sleep. First, two leaflets close like a folded bit of paper, and then the third folds over above them and covers them like a tent, and only a single edge, the mid-rib of the centre leaflet is exposed to the cold night

sky. The clover's leaves open by day, but close by night, and scientists have found that if artificial darkness be caused at mid-day the clover will close up its leaves as though it were night. It is just the reverse with the three leaves of the sorrel. It is a more fragile tender plant and loves the damp shade, as on a green bank or the edge of a wood, and cannot bear strong sunlight. If the sun should shine full upon the three leaflets, they will close. Even rain, or a strong wind, or being roughly touched by some moving object, will cause the wood sorrel to close its leaves. But the method of closing is quite unlike that of the clover. In the clover, the under surface is folded inside, and thus protected besides being covered by the tent-like centre leaf; but the sorrel closes each leaflet like a butterfly's wing, the upper side being folded inside, each leaf hanging down when folded, and holding by one end the petiole of the base just as the butterfly holds by one end, viz, the feet at the head-end. Thus the sorrel leaves hang separately, held by one end, resembling three butterflies folded and hanging separately from the main leaf-stalk. The sorrel is related to the geranium tribe, and its leaves contain much oxalic acid, so that they have a very sour flavour; but the clover belongs to the great family of peas and beans, or the pod-bearing plants, which, so many of them, yield honey to the industrious bee, and permeate the atmosphere at midsummer with the fragrance of nectar, besides filling the country landscape with colour and fresh beauty. "What neatness and elegance are in their single sprays", exclaims an enthusiastic botanist, "what refinement of leaf form; what freshness of scented flower! And, in mass, how the red clover overspreads the flat meadows like a carpet of roses, while the white sprinkles the green hills as with flakes of shining snow, and the odorous yellow clover borders with pale gold the high road and the woodland trail."

But it is its greenness which makes the shamrock (sorrel or trefoil) the Green Isle's emblem. The traveller may have wandered the whole world over, and, as he recalls the dull tints of the fields of France or Germany, the sombre parched veldt of South Africa, the burnt sheep lands of Australia, and the forbidding ochreous pumice areas of New Zealand, or even the dull green wastes between Winnipeg and the Rockies in Western Canada, he will be transported with delight on beholding the fresh luscious green of the hills and meadows of Ireland. Nowhere else do fields so green rise directly from the seashore to the high mountain tops as in the Isle of Erin. Sorrel and clover alike, with their rich verdant triple leaves, add to the intensity of the prevailing tint. Verily Ireland is the Emerald

Isle, beyond all dispute. Any controversy, however, about the true shamrock must be settled not by English or German or American botanists, but in Ireland by patriotic Irishmen. The question is one upon which alone Irishmen, north and south, Free State and Ulstermen, can come to perfect agreement. The green herbage of Ireland knows no political or geographical separation, and everywhere the shamrock

Lightly o'er the living scene
Scatters its freshest, tenderest green.

From glorious Dublin Bay, Howth to Kingstown; by that basaltic miracle of stone, Giant's Causeway, from Rathlin Island to Malin Head, and on to Bloody Foreland, and then south across Donegal and Sligo Bays, past the wild cliffs of Achill and Slyne Heads, and deep fiord-like Clifden Harbour, to the magnificent Bay of Galway, this velvet mantle of green extends, broken only by dark cliffs of bare rock, here and there, and by colossal precipices. But it is not till the low lying Arran Isles, of surpassing historic and prehistoric interest, are left behind that the most imposing cliffs of all, the stupendous Cliffs of Moher come into view. Then, there soon opens up the wide entrance of the mighty Shannon, and the spacious Dingle Bay, with enchanting Kenmare River, twenty miles to the south. Only ten miles northeast of the Kenmare are the peerless Lakes of Killarney; but the world-travelled wanderer must complete his impressions, at any rate his first impressions, of the Emerald Isle from her wonderful coast. Hence, after noting the curious Blasquets, and the towering Skelligs, and the famous Bull and Cow Rocks, all the haunt only of great sea-fowl like the gannets, Mizen Head and Cape Clear, near the ancestral home of the O'Connells, are passed, and the grand panorama of the rocky south coast is surveyed from Clonakilty Bay, by Cork, Kinsale, Cork, Youghal, Waterford, and many other noble bays, a stretch of a hundred and fifty miles, to Wexford Bay, at the south-east corner of Ireland, and thence north, along the Wexford and Wicklow coast to Dublin, and still further north, by Dundalk Bay, Carlingford and Belfast Loughs to Fair Head, opposite the Mull of Galloway. At every point, the same refreshing greenness pervades heights and hollows alike.

Nor is the interior less verdant; for over the whole of the four provinces, Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught, excepting where dark bogs stretch, or lakes and rivers interrupt the uniform green verdure, this marvellous carpet of emerald extends. Of a truth

it must be admitted no flower of the field other than the green shamrock could appropriately be the emblem of Ireland and the Irish people. Yet there was a time, not very distant, when to wear the shamrock was a crime. It was forbidden by cruel laws in Ireland.

They're hanging men and women for the wearin' o' the green was the sad and tragic dirge on the lips of patriotic Irish folk for long years. But the tearful story of Irish oppression and persecution is a long and weary one. It dates far back as the time of Strongbow's invasion in 1170. The ancient Annals of Lough Ce add to their record "The Saxon foreigners have been in Erin ever since." Alien tyranny and oppression loom darkly over Irish history; and the tale of discontent and rebellion, of poverty and famine has continued to our own time. But with wise prescience the good Queen Victoria tried to remove one reproach by sanctioning with royal approbation the wearing of the shamrock. In 1900 a regiment of Irish Guards was founded, with headquarters at Buckingham Gate, close by the great palace in London, and the monarch herself on St. Patrick's Day distributed posies of green. A green shamrock to be worn by these Irish warriors! The trefoil appears as the central ornament in the gold badge of the regiment. But on British military badges the shamrock has long been prominent. In 1683 the Royal Irish Regiment of Foot was raised, and round its badge of the Crown and Irish Harp there is a wreath of shamrock, of which they are naturally very proud, as they also are, oddly enough, of their nickname, which is "Paddy's Blackguards." In the arms of the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, and of the Munster Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Rifles, originally Fitch's Grenadiers but better known as the "Irish Giants", as well as the "Faugh-a-Ballagh Boys", the Princess Victoria's Royal Irish Fusiliers, the leaves of the trefoiled shamrock appear. It is a badge of patriotic courage and bravery as well as of sadness and national injustice.

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If England claims the rose and Ireland the shamrock, the heather is the national flower of Scotland, beyond dispute. 'Tis a modest bloom, and a gallant withal. What a valiant show it makes on the melancholy windswept Scottish moorlands! With what overpowering beauty it decks in royal hue the sombre mountain wastes, where are the haunts of the stately antlered deer, and the remote lonely covers of the blackcock and the red grouse. It is a bloom of adventure and of liberty. For other flowers the trim confines of the garden-bed or the stiff conventionality of the well-

ordered shrubbery amply suffice; but the heather chafes under such restraints, and must bask in the sunshine bathing the high peaks, and breathe the free air of the lofty "Bens" and the fresh scents of the shadowy dells, or it sickens and dies. Watch it as it waves, with wild abandon, its pink plumes in the breeze; and even on the coldest winter days, when the stinging Nor'-Easter blows, see it gracefully bend its ruddy stem, so that it will swing and sway but will not break, however viciously Boreas may tug and tear. With unbreakable roots, and tough wiry leaves, it clings by sheer tenacity to the rocks and dry soil. How different with the tender trefoiled shamrock of Erin which pleads for shelter and for shade, like the delicate *Fleur de Lys* of France, and the fleshy verdant leek of Cambria. The Scottish heather braves defiantly, unharmed, harsh blasts that would lay low the flower of St. Denys, St. David, or St. Patrick.

Nova Scotians point proudly to banks of purple heather along the Halifax Haligonian shore. Yes! But some patriotic Scot must have brought it from over the sea. According to the theory of one writer it was none other than Sir William Alexander, as long ago as 1621, who introduced it when he planned a new "Land of Heather" in North America. He argued, as is on record, that "As there was a New France, a New Spain, and a New England, there might likewise be a New Scotland." Other authors have given the Black Watch regiment the credit, and have surmised that in the spring of 1757, when the famous "Forty Twa's" camped on Point Pleasant, Halifax, some men of the regiment planted the heather seed where it afterwards grew, being desirous of perpetuating the badge of so many of their clansmen. It is possible, another writer holds, that the palliasses or mattresses of the soldiers were emptied at the landing place, after the voyage, and the heather, with which they had been filled in Scotland, provided the seed from which it grew. Certainly the heather has flourished on the very spot where the Highland warriors first set foot on Canadian soil. Sir William Dawson, in a special botanical paper, many years ago, dealt fully with the question of the alleged introduction of the heather. But, wherever it grows, it is universally recognized as the badge of a proud, pioneering, indomitable race, who wear it like a coloured plume in their blue bonnets, as of old the Plantagenet wore *la plante de genet*—the badge of yellow broom. In a burst of patriotic enthusiasm, the Ettrick Shepherd once exclaimed "God bless our ain native snaw-white-headed, emerald-breisted native land o' storms!" He had just declared to Christopher North that "Folk in general are a' flat-souled as weel's flat-soled, in a

flat kintra." Certainly the Scottish character owes something to its rugged, mountainous, breezy environment. Yet the wiry, brave, patriotic nature of the Scot has in it much of gentleness, sensitiveness, and deep emotion. Does not the heather typify these national qualities? The demure pink satin blooms, the ruddy elastic stem, the unfading close-leaved twigs, and the springy resilient beds its clusters form, embody the qualities, the splendid qualities of the gallant kilted clans;

Surely the soul of the hero rejoices,
And rides on the wind o'er his own Highland Vale.

The heather survives, bravely, conditions of the utmost severity, enduring hardships valiantly, like the Scots who wear it so proudly in their bonnets. But there are many kinds of heather, Perhaps the ardent Scot, *Scotus perfervidus*, should not be told that over four hundred species of heather have been described by botanists! *Erica cinerea*, and its half-sister, the cross-leave heath, *Erica tetralix*, have the full bell-shaped flowers, rose-tinted, and preferring the lower waste lands rather than those high mountain habitats beloved of the true heather, *Calluna (Erica) vulgaris*, of pinkish purple hue, and often found scrambling over the most perilous craggy precipices. How does the sturdy plant contrive to live on such barren hills and moors? A strange story the botanist has to tell about it. Take a lens, and study the delicate twining roots, and you will discover delicate threads, the mycelium threads of *Mycorhiza*, a microscopic fungus, clinging to them. The fungus performs a service by feeding upon the poor materials of the sandy soil, and converting them into nutriment suitable for the heather, but which would otherwise be indigestible and useless to it. Without the fungus the heather would starve, and thus this vital partnership has come to be beneficial to both, for the fungus secures shelter in return. Modern science has proved that "Commensalism", of which this is an example, is widespread in the world of plants and animals.

Modest the heather is and fond of solitude, but it is a friendly flower too. "Brither Scot" is no empty phrase, in spite of the vulgar fiction about Scottish meanness, and the heather is a worthy token of the fraternal warmth, the fervour, the freedom, and the fortitude of Scotsmen and Scotswomen wherever you may find them. Oh, it is a flower of haunting memories. Let the wanton daffodil attract whom they may—let the resplendent American "Beauties", and the multicoloured Oriental "Mums" arrogantly assert themselves in the halls of wealth and fashion; but the heather, the simple

child of the glens and the mountain tops, is content with the solitudes of the melancholy wilds. Enough for it that they have been the sacred scene of romantic legends, of heroic deeds, of historic dramas, and of tearful tragedies, and, not rarely, of dread conflicts, when there sounded

The clang of swords, the crash of spears.

"There is the Sublime", declared a great philosopher, gazing across a limitless expanse of purple heather, after he had vainly striven to define it philosophically, and sought some concrete illustration of it. Truly, if from some high pinnacle, Ben Lomond, or Schiehallion, or Ben-y-Vrackie, or from one of fifty other historic Highland summits you will cast your vision over the far-reaching wastes, clothed everywhere with purple velvet, the mystery and magic of the Land of the Gael will unfailingly creep over you. You will secretly feel the awfulness and majesty of

These heath-covered mountains
And the wild rugged rocks by yon black birken den.

Brave men of old knew the heather well. Patriots, Covenanters, martyrs, unflinching witnesses to the Christian faith: outlawed, hunted, persecuted souls, fleeing clansmen, conflicting chiefs, princes, pretenders, nobles and peasants, men, women, and even little children, found safety and shelter on the heather-clad hills. A thousand times, and more, has the heather afforded such safe-hiding and security as it could. Prince Charlie, not rarely, found refuge among the heather. Religious fugitives, at many crises of Scottish history, performed their vows and observed sacred ordinances secretly on the heights. Even the lawless picturesque raiders, evading the grasp of their lynx-eyed pursuers, sought shelter in the heather: often, as we know, to be discovered and dragged forth to meet a fate bemoaned in many touching ballads, like the lament for young Gilderoy:

Ah! what sair cruelty is this,
To hang sik a handsome man?
To hang the flower of Scottish land,
Sae sweet and fair a boy!
Nae lady had sae white a hand
As thee, my Gilderoy!

Of what piteous experiences, and deadly fights, and dread dooms was the heather moor the scene! With what heroic courage a Douglas trod the springy heather, to win a sure victory with his

sword, though he knew also, too surely, that he would be wounded and would die:

Yea, I have dreamed a dreary dream
Beyond the Isle of Skye,
I saw a dead man win a field
And I wot that man was I.

Stricken dead as, according to tradition, he foreknew, he was laid to rest in the heather and amid the bracken bush, at Otterburn; but no mortal passing the spot, was to know

That e'er a kindly Scot lies there.

Washington Irving, after he visited Sir Walter Scott in 1816, wrote that "Scotland is eminently a land of song. It is these melodies chanted in our ears in the days of infancy . . . that clothe the Scottish landscape with such tender associations." Is it not as true, or even more true, to say that it is the Scottish landscape, and the purple blush of the heather pervading it everywhere, that has conferred its mystic charm on all Scottish minstrelsy?

There's not a rock that fronts the sea,
There's not an inland grove,
But has a tale to tell to me
Of friendship or of love,
And so I keep, and ever shall,
The best place in my heart for Scotland,
Scotland, Scotland,
The best place in my heart for Scotland!

So sang Robert Fuller Murray, the young poet born in the United States, but passing his last years in Scotland, his life too quickly ended, "keeping the bird in his bosom" as Andrew Lang tenderly said in the memoir he wrote about him. Like the god Apollo, who served as a menial at the royal table of King Alcestis, the heather with all its lofty romance, its moving poetry, and its aesthetic charm, has had many vulgar, servile uses. The "Shieling", or rude thatched hut on the mountain side, was anciently constructed of tough heather stems, twined with wisps of straw, and plastered with tenacious peat mud; while the soft springy couch inside, "ben the hoose" was of dry fragrant heather too. Even in the mansions of the great, guests were invited to repose on beds of heather. King James V (Fitz-James in Scott's "Lady of the Lake") was given a couch of heather by Rhoderick Dhu:

The hall was cleared—the stranger's bed
Was there of mountain heather spread.

Out of the pliant twisted stems, strong baskets were woven, while the more massive gnarled roots furnished faggots for the fire. But perhaps the most unexpected contribution of the heather to humble needs, is, surely, the utilization of the stout rootstock of the heather in France, the *Erica scoparia*, known as *bruyere*—the briar wood, so esteemed by lovers of the pipe. Briar wood is not briar at all, but heather wood! A beverage was in olden times made from the twigs of the heather. It was a substitute for hops. Its astringent qualities gave it value in the primitive tanning of leather, and it furnished our savage forefathers with yellow dye for staining wool. The delicate delicious flavour of Highland mutton is due, it is argued, to the succulent heather shoots eaten by the flocks on the hills, and the red grouse and ptarmigan must owe something of their excellence on the table to the ripe seeds and juicy tips of the heather. Above all, heather honey, in the opinion of many experts, is not to be surpassed, while the Picts, who may have been, and probably were, bibulous Teutons, sworn enemies of the Scottish clans, brewed heather flowers mingled with honey to produce their almost prehistoric wine. A good many of the oldest Celtic poems tell of traditional fights, but almost always record that "The warriors feasted, and drank mead, and set forth at early dawn."

Give me health, and a day among the heather, and I shall make the pomp of emperors ridiculous, to adapt Emerson's apothegm. But whatever we may do when treating of the heather, we must not forget the "good luck" inextricably bound up with the heather, in spite of the sombre melancholy and sadness of so many of its associations. Well may the bride rejoice in good fortune, all her days, if she wear a sprig of white heather on her wedding day—sunshine or no sunshine.

But a cloud of memories hangs ever about the heather. How the exile's eyes gleam when a bunch of heather comes to him, on St. Andrew's morn, from the far-off homeland! It was the heather, and the heather-scented breeze, we may be sure, which made the gypsy so regret leaving his hard life behind. The gypsy, George Borrow tells us, as he recalled the gentle breeze upon the open moor, whispered "Life is sweet, brother,—there's the wind upon the heath, brother." If there is no green quite like the emerald hue upon the hills and fields of Erin, there is assuredly no scenic glamour and purple glory like that of the Scottish heather. From Duncansby Head and Cape Wrath, in the north, to St. Abb's and the Mull of Galloway, in the south, not a "Ben" rears his head, not a "Muir" spreads afar, that is not draped in the folds of the heather's

imposing royal-hued robe. Everywhere it sheds its atmosphere of tradition and weird romance. Simple flower it may be, but it is twined for ever about the hearts of Scotsmen, and of all lovers of Scotland. The picturesque tongue, the "brogue" the Sassenach miscalls it; the multicoloured tartan; the clan fealty to the chief, the unalterable devotion to national legend and story; these are not more distinctive than the wearing of the wee guileless flower, treasured by all Scots to-day, as in times long past, when

Each valley and sequestered glen,
Mustered its little horde of men,
They met as torrents from the height,
In Highland dales their streams unite,
Still gathering as they pour along,
A voice more loud, a tide more strong.

To keep the heather in vigour and strength it is the custom to burn it each season. Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, asked Christopher North, "Was ye ever at the burnin' o' the heather, Mr. North?" "I was," replied the author of *Noctes Ambrosianae*, "and I remember that, within half an hour after the first spark, the hills glowed with fire. . . The crackle became a loud growl, as acre after acre joined in the flames. Here and there a rock stood in the way, and the burning waves broke against it, till a crowning birch tree took fire, and its tresses, like a shower of flaming diamonds, were in a minute consumed. . . The great pine forest on the mountain side, two miles off, frowned in ghastly light, as in a stormy sunset—and you could see the herds of red deer, a whirlwind of antlers—descending in their terror, into the black glen, whose entrance gleamed, once—twice—thrice, as if there had been lightning, and then, as the wind changed the direction of the flames, all the distance sunk in dark repose. But, ere long, after a few months, another season comes—what life, beauty and bliss, over the verdant wilderness! . . . Here and there are still seen traces of fire, but they are nearly hidden by new-grown flowers."

Purple heather provides a vision of beauty wherever one sees it. How it lifts the heart and gladdens the eyes! But, to behold it aright, you must view its vast purple stretches in Scotland. Seen there in full splendour, it is a vision which can never fade from the memory. There may be more sublime scenic glories; but if there are, I do not know them.