

A WALK IN JUNE.

“And after her came iolly June, arrayd
All in greene leaves, as he a player were;
Yet in his time he wrought as well as playd,
That by his plough-yrons mote right well appeare:
Upon a Crab he rode, that him did beare
With crooked crawling steps an uncouth pase,
And backward yode,¹ as bargemen wont to fare
Bending their force contrary to their face;
Like that ungracious crew which faines demurest grace.”
—*Spenser*.

June, the very name reminds us of long days under a clear blue sky, of leafy woods and hedgerows, of scented blossoms and new-mown hay, when

*“Hush, ah hush, the Scythes are saying.
Hush, and heed not, and fall asleep;
Hush, they say to the grasses swaying,
Hush, they sing to the clover deep!”*

only now-a-days it is no longer the soft rhythmic hush-sh of “scythemmen all swinging together” that strikes our ear, but the cheery whirr of the unromantic mowing machine. But agriculture, if it has lost in picturesqueness, has gained in other ways by the practical application of modern science, since Verstegan could hardly write of our fields to-day, “Unto June our Saxon ancestors gave the name of Weyd Monat, because their beasts did then weyd in the meddowes, that is to say, go to feed there, and hereof a meddow is also in the Teutoneche called a weyd, and of weyd we yet retain our word wade, which we understand of going through watery places, such as meddowes are wont to be.”

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Nevertheless, “A good leak in June sets all things in tune,” and the French say, “Juin larmoyeuse, rend le laboureur joyeuse,” for

*“La pluie pendant le mois de Juin,
Donne belle avoine et chétif foin.”*

though according to Tusser,

“Fine weather in June sets corn in tune.”

The Germans have a proverb, “Sommerregen glücklich die Felder die ihn bekommen;” but “Midsummer rain spoils hay and grain,” and the *Calendrier des bons laboureurs* tells us that

“Du jour St. Jean le [sic] pluie

Fait la noisette pourrie,”

for “Eau de St. Jean ôte le vin, et ne donne point de pain.”

Now the curious “churr” of the Nightjar is heard. It has been described as “the continuous repetition of a single burring note, as of a thin lath fixed at one end and in a state of vibration at the other,” and has earned for the bird its names of Churn Owl or Night Churr. The Nightjar or Goatsucker (*Caprimulgus europæus*) [sic] is a nocturnal, insect-eating bird, allied to the Swifts, with soft mottled brown and grey plumage spotted with white; short bill, the upper part curved at the point, a particularly wide gape, and a fringe of strong bristles along the margin of the beak. From its choice of unfrequented fern-covered ground, where it lays its creamy mottled eggs, without any nest, it is known as the Fern Owl, and another name is the Night Hawk. According to Aristotle and Pliny, the bird has a habit of sucking the milk of goats, but Waterton, in his *Wanderings in South America*, explains how the error arose, the Goatsucker visiting the herd for the purpose of catching the flies that annoy the animals, who indeed appear “sensible of his good offices.” The Whip-poor-will and Chuck-Will’s widow of America belong to the same genus.

As the month wanes, the Nightingale, busy with domestic cares, changes his glorious melody to a few harsh notes, and the Cuckoo is on the eve of departure, for

“Cuckoo comes in April,
Stays the month of May,
Gives us a tune in the middle of June
And then he flies away.”

or, as another version has it,

“In April he opens his bill;
In May he sings all day;
In June he alters his tune;
In July away he must fly;
Come August, go he must.”

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The Germans say

“Wenn der kukuk nach Johanni singt
Einen nassen Herbsten er uns bringt.”

(When the cuckoo sings after John the Baptist’s Day, he brings a wet autumn), while there is a common belief that he departs when he sees the first hay-cock; he must also eat three good meals of cherries before he goes. The young Cuckoos follow their parents in September.

The list of June Butterflies and Moths is a long one, and includes the Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly, the Brown Argus, the Common Blue (*Lycæna icarus*) and the Clifden or Adonis Blue (*L. bellargus*), the Marsh Ringlet, and the little Green Hairstreak (*Thecla rubi*) and among the

Moths are the White Ermine, most of the Hawkmoths, the pretty little Green Forester, the Pale Tussock, the Currant Clearwing, the Oak Eggar, with deep brown wings bordered with a broad band of yellow, and brown again at the edge, and a small spot on each of the upper wings; the Brimstone Moth, the Ground Lackey, and Green Carpet Moth (*Larentia viridaria*). The Buff Tip (*Phalera bucephala*) may be known by the buff-coloured patch at the tip of the upper wings; the Hook Tip (*Drepana lacertinaria*) and Pebble Hook Tip (*D. falcataria*) by the hooked upper wings. The dark-brown Lappet Moth is difficult to distinguish among the dead leaves on which it rests; the Yellow Underwing (*Triphaena* [sic] *pronuba*) describes itself, the lower wings being yellow with a band of black; this moth is greatly attracted by light, and flies into our rooms in the evening, as will the White Ermine also. The little Yellow Shell is also a June moth, and so are the handsome Tigers, the Scarlet (*Callimorpha dominula*), the Wood (*Nemeophila plantaginus*) and the Buff Tiger (*N. russula*) though the Garden Tiger (*Arctia caia*) whose larva is the well-known Woolly Bear, appears in July. Now

“Dragon-flies hover and shiver over the gnat-haunted pool.”

Like the May-fly and the Caddis Fly, better known in its larval state as a Caddis-worm, the Dragon-fly spends the greater part of its life as a grub; after ten or twelve months, during which it moults several times, it leaves the water and, climbing on dry land, its skin dries and splits down the back, and the perfect insect emerges. Traces of fossil Dragon-flies have been found, of which one specimen had a body of 13 inches in length and wings a foot long.

Now the Grasshopper chirps by the wayside, the Stag Beetle

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and bright green Rose Beetle or Rose Chafer (*Cetonia aurata*) are seen, the Daddy-long-legs is in evidence. Wasps invite themselves to our picnics, Midges worry us in wood and garden, and we know that

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.

The curious white froth so common on blades of grass and other plants is the work of the larva of the Frog-hopper or Froth-fly. The family is a large one and related to the Cicadas; it is supposed that the froth produced by the larva serves to protect it from the heat of the sun. One species (*Aphrophora spumaria*) is particularly common on willows, another in meadows.

June's list of flowers is longer even than May's, and wherever we choose to walk we find some floral favourite; in the woods the stately Foxglove and tall Mullein; on pool or lake the beautiful White or Yellow Water-lily, and Flowering Rush upstanding; on the margin the Purple Loosestrifes and rosy Willowherbs, Great Water Plantain, and Hemp Agrimony; in the fields scarlet Poppies

“Proclaim the summer solstice, and mark again
The full meridian of the floral year.”

Here, too, are the Corn-Cockle, Marigold, and Ox-eye or Moon Daisy, and the Yellow Rattle, or Cock’s-comb, for “The floure called the yellow cock’s-combe, which floureth now in the fields, is a sign of St. Peter’s Day.” Now the Elder spreads her creamy blossoms, the Bramble or Blackberry is in flower, Roses and Honeysuckle glorify our hedgerows, and the road-side and uncultivated ground are gay with Thistles, Mallows, Meadow Crane’s-bill, Common Agrimony, Rest-harrow, Wild Carrot, the handsome Goat’s-beard or Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon, various Bedstraws, Wild Thyme, Sow-thistle, the Greater Celandine, Ragwort, the pretty little Cistus or Rock-rose, Sheep’s-bit, and a host of blossoms of every size and hue, besides grasses, of which there are over 130 British species.

Some of the most familiar of these are the Quaking, Tottering or Doddering Grass, beloved of children; the various Foxtail and Cat’s-tail Grasses, especially the Meadow Cats-tail or Timothy Grass, the Cock’s-foot, Smooth Meadow, and Sweet Vernal Grass, the last causes the peculiar sweet scent of new-

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mown hay. The Marram, Mat-grass, or Sea-Mat, is invaluable for binding sand together on windy shores; the pretty Wood Melie Grass grows in shady places, the curious Cotton Grass on marshy ground, and the Rye-grass, Couch grass, and various Brome and False Brome Grasses on waste land.

The Brake or Bracken is now a most satisfactory height for all who hold to the old saying

“When the fern’s as high as a spoon
You may sleep an hour at noon,
When the fern’s as high as a ladle
You may sleep as long as you’re able.”

By the sea-shore we find the Yellow-Horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) easily recognised by its long “horns,”—the green seed pods, and by the glaucous look of the leaves, from which it takes its name, Greek $\lambda\gamma\alpha\upsilon\kappa\delta\varsigma$, silvery. The Sea Bindweed (*Volvulus* or *Convolvulus soldanella*) opens its rose-coloured bells, almost as large as the white blossoms of the Great Bindweed or Withybind (*V. sepium*) in our hedges; the little Field Bindweed or Field Convolvulus (*Convolvulus arvensis*) is also a climbing plant, whereas the stems of the Sea Bindweed are prostrate, usually more or less buried beneath the sand. The name is from the Latin *convolvere*, I entwine.

But the glory of June is the wild Rose, of which there are at least thirteen native species, the Dog Rose, Sweetbriar, and Burnet or Scotch Rose are the most distinctive. The Rose is universally acknowledged as the queen of flowers; the Persians say “When the rose enters the garden even the violet prostrates herself before her to the ground;” poets of every age and all climes have sung its praises, for the rose grows in every quarter of the globe with the exception of Australia and South America, and the legends connected with it are too numerous to mention. To the Greeks and Roumanians it was a beauteous maiden transformed into a flower; the Arabs assert that the first rose sprang from a drop of perspiration from the brow of Mohammed; it was prized by the Romans above all other flowers; roses formed the chaplet of

Hymen and crowned the brows of bride and bridegroom, it was also used at funerals. According to Persian legends the flower is the beloved of the Nightingale, who presses his bosom against the thorns as he sings, and the Hindoos believe that Pagoda Seri, one of the wives of Vishnu, was found in the heart of a rose. Cultivated by the Egyptians, and dedicated to Horus, [p 53]

or Harpocrates, god of Silence, the white rose became the symbol of secrecy, while as the emblem of Love the rose figures in various legends of saints and martyrs and in religious art.

“Thou hast the lily and the rose
The virgin’s and the martyr’s love.”

Syria is said to have taken its name from its celebrated rose *suri*, and Gulistan of Persian story from the roses “that grew there in such rich profusion that it took a five days’ camel-ride to thread the glowing maze.”

Roses were borne by the Roman soldier on his shield, and wrought on the banner of the ancient Saxons. The flower was adopted by Edward I., and first appears on our coinage in the rose-noble of Henry VI., and on the Great Seal of Edward IV. It was John of Gaunt, son of Edward III., who, on his marriage with Blanche of Lancaster, assumed the Red Rose; the White, on the accession of James II., became the distinctive emblem of the House of Stewart, “Prince Charlie’s own flower.” It is said that after the battle of Towton a new Rose was noticed in the hedges there, and that this rose will grow nowhere else. The Rose, according to Norse tradition, is under the protection of Lauren, King of the elves, while the legends of most countries agree that the flower was originally both white and thornless. Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, speaks of “Flowers of all hue and without thorn the rose,” and this agrees with the Zoroastrian tradition that the rose was thornless till the entrance of Ahriman, the spirit of Evil, into the world. A curious legend emanating from Schleswig informs us that after his fall, Satan attempted to ascend to Heaven by the thorns of the Rose briar, but God ordered the shrub to grow no more in height but in breadth, and Satan, enraged, turned the points of the spines towards earth. The red colour of the flower is variously ascribed to a kiss given by Eve to a white bud in Paradise, the wounding of Venus’s foot with a briar, etc., while the Moss Rose has its own special legend, of which there are various versions.

Of British wild roses the best known is the Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) with flowers varying in colour from white to deep red. The old name, Canker Rose, was given from the fact that the petals are the favourite food of a grub or “canker,” from this, too, it takes its French name of rouillé, blighted. The Trailing Rose (*Rosa arvensis*) has white flowers with purple sepals; a [p 54]

cultivated variety of this species is thought to have been the original Rose of York. The Burnet-leaved or Scotch Rose (*R. pimpinellifolia* or *spinosissima*) with many prickles, creamy flowers sometimes tinged with red, and dark-purple fruit, is the original of the yellow Scotch Rose of our gardens. The Sweet Briar (*R. rubiginosa*), with fragrant leaves, is the eglantine of the poets, except Milton, whose “twisted eglantine” refers to the Honeysuckle. Its dark hue gives it its scientific name and the German title *Wein-Rose*. It is a tradition in Germany that Judas hanged himself on a Wild Rosebush, hence the hips are sometimes called *Judas-beeren*; it is said, too, that the Crown of Thorns was made from this plant. In the churchwardens’ accounts of the

Church of St. Mary-at-Hill, London, in the time of Edward IV., we read, "For Rose garlands, and Woodrowe (*woodruff*) garlandis, on St. Barnebes day, x j d." An old name for the Woodruff is Herb Barnaby; while the Yellow Star Thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) is also St. Barnaby's Thistle, and the Ragged Robin is connected with his Festival, for

"When St. Barnaby bright smiles night and day
Poor Ragged-robin blooms in the hay;
But the scarlet Lychnis, the garden's pride,
Flames at St. John the Baptist's tyde."

St. John's flower is the St. John's Wort, though owing to the alteration of the Calendar it has become a July flower, even as Barnaby Bright, owing to the same cause, no longer holds the distinction of "the longest day and the shortest night." The St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) was also known as the Balm of Warrior's Wounds, and the Herb of War," partly [sic] because the juice of this plant was supposed to be of great efficacy in curing wounds, and partly on account of the numerous little dots on the leaves, which make them look as though they were pierced through in a thousand places."

"Hypericum was there, that herb of war,
Pierced through with wounds and marked with many a scar."

These wounds it was said, were made by the Devil with a needle, and certainly the *Fuga dæmonum* [sic] and was held of sovereign value against the powers of darkness, for

"Vervain, trefoil, John's wort, dill
Hinder witches of their will."

and in the days of chivalry contending knights were required to take an oath that they carried no St. John's Wort or other

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herb of power about them. In an old ballad the Devil, disguised as a lover, unconsciously reveals his identity by requesting the lady

"Gin ye wish to be love of mine,
Doff the St. John's wort and the vervain," [sic]

These flowers were invariably thrown into the bonfires on St. John's Eve,

"When young men round about with maides do dance in every streete,
With garlands wrought with St. John wort or else with vervain sweete,
And many other flowers faire with violets in their handes,
Whereas they all do fondly think that whosoever standes,
And thorow the flowres beholds the flame, his eyes shall feel no pain.
When thus till night they daunced have, they through the fire amaine

With striving minds doe runne, and all their hearbes do caste therein.
And then with words devout and prayers they solemnly begin,
Desiring God that all their ills may there consumed bee,
Wherebye they thinke through all that yeare from agues to be free.”

The Rev. C. A. Johns tells us that “great virtues were in ancient times attributed to ... the common Vervain, insomuch that it was accounted a holy plant, and is said to have been used to sweep the tables and altars of the gods.” Pliny tells us that not only was the festival table of Jupiter swept and cleansed in this way, but the floors of houses were rubbed with the herb to keep off evil spirits, and halls and dining-rooms sprinkled with water in which Vervain was steeped, to render the assembled company more jocund; it was also used in sacrifice, and carried by the Roman ambassadors. Among the Druids it was employed in divination, and gathered with special rites at the rising of the Dog-star, at the same time an offering of honeycomb was made to the Earth to recompense her for the loss of so valuable a herb.

The little Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*) is also a semi-sacred plant, being much used in Rogation processions, hence its name of Rogation flower and Gangweed, Rogation week being known as Gangweek (in reference to the beating of the parish bounds at that time) from the Saxon *gang*, to go. The Milkwort is also known as Hedge Hyssop, and is said to be a nutritious food for cattle.

It is uncertain which species of Thistle may claim to be the national emblem of Scotland, the honour is usually accorded to the Scotch or Cotton-thistle (*Onopordon acanthium*), though as a matter of fact this particular species is not native in Scotland. The plant is said to have been adopted as a badge by the Picts,

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who were saved from a night surprise by the Danes by one of the enemy stepping upon a thistle with naked foot, his sudden cry awoke the sleeping camp and the enemy was repulsed. The first mention of the Thistle as the national badge is in Dunbar's poem *The Thrissell and the Rois*, written on the marriage of James IV. of Scotland with Margaret Tudor, 1503. The flower appears on the coinage of this monarch, but the motto not till the reign of James VI. The Order of the Thistle was instituted by James VII. of Scotland, II. of England, and the collar, of thistles and sprigs of rue interlaced, represents the union of Picts and Scots. The tallest of British thistles is the Marsh Plume Thistle (*Cnicus palustris*), growing from three to ten feet high, with florets of deep crimson, sometimes white. All the Plume Thistles have a feathery pappus; the Spear Plume Thistle (*Cnicus lanceolatus*), each leaf terminating in a strong spine, is a common and handsome plant. The Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*) has solitary drooping flowers, with a musky odour; the Ground Thistle (*Cnicus acaulis*) is almost stemless; the Common Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*) may be recognised by the inner row of long-straw-covered bracts round its flower-head; in fine dry weather these spread out like petals, on wet days when the flower is closed they form a roof over the florets. Of a texture resembling the petals of Everlasting Flowers these bracts often remain on the plant through the winter. The name is from Charlemagne, who is said to have used a species of this thistle (*C. acaulis*) as a remedy when his army was attacked by plague. This species is used on the Continent as a rustic weather-glass, as is our own Carline Thistle in Britain. The Milk Thistle (*Mariana lactea*) has rose-coloured flowers and white veined leaves; it is connected by legend with the Blessed

Virgin Mary, and is known as Our Lady's Thistle.

The Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), too, was originally known as Our Lady's Bedstraw, from the legend that on the chilly night on which our Lord was born the plants were asked which of them would offer themselves to make a bed for the Virgin Mother. The Bedstraw volunteered, and was rewarded by henceforth bearing golden blossoms instead of the white flowers common to its genus. Other well-known species are the Crosswort (*Galium cruciata*), with three-veined leaves, the Hedge (*G. mollugo*), the Heath (*G. saxatile*), the Water (*G. palustre*) and the Rough Marsh Bedstraw (*G. uliginosum*). The roots of the Lady's Bedstraw are used as a dye, and the flowers for curdling milk, hence the name of the genus, from the Greek γάλα, milk.

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Other plants formerly in repute among dyers were the Dyer's Rocket or Yellow-weed (*Reseda luteola*) and Dyer's Green-weed or Woad-waxen (*Genista tinctoria*), the latter, which belongs to the Broom family, is supposed to have been the original *Planta Genista*, from which the family of Plantagenet took its name. The Bird's Foot Trefoil is so called from the shape of its seed-vessels; the Meadow-sweet or Queen of the Meadows (*Spiræa* [sic] *ulmaria*) was originally known as Mead-wort, the flowers being mixed with mead to impart a wine-like flavour; in the same way Borage is still one of the ingredients of Claret cup, though cucumber is generally employed in its stead. The Bistort, Snake-weed, or Snake-root (*Polygonum bistorta*) is so called from its twisted root; the young shoots are boiled and eaten in the North of England as Easter-ledges or Easter Man Giants; the Rev. C. A. Johns suggests that the latter name may be a corruption of the French *mangeant*. The Bistort belongs to the Persicaria family; as do the various species of Sorrel and Dock now in flower; of these the Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) is still used as food, and the Monk's Rhubarb (*R. alpinus*) was formerly cultivated. The handsome Globe Flower or Witch's Gowan, with curving pale yellow sepals (*Trollius europæus*) [sic] takes its scientific name from the Scandinavian *troll*. The Cow-Parsnip or Hog-weed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) is one of the largest of our umbelliferous plants, and may be distinguished from the Hemlock, with which it is sometimes confused, by the absence of the reddish-purple spots on the stem which mark the latter; the leaves, too, are altogether different, and the stem of the Cow-Parsnip is hairy, whereas that of the Hemlock is smooth. The Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) may always be known by the patch of red in the middle of the flower-cluster. The Wood Sanicle (*Sanicula europæa*) [sic] is also a member of the Parsley Family, and so is the little Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*). The Common Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) with stem spotted like a snake, was formerly considered an antidote for snake-bite, the scientific name from the Greek ἔχις, a viper, while bugloss is also from the Greek, and means ox-tongue, from the shape and roughness of the leaves. But the real Ox-tongue (*Picris echioides* or *hieracioides*) is a composite plant with yellow flowers, and leaves covered with raised white spots, from each of which springs a sharp prickle. Other yellow composite flowers more puzzling to identify are the various species of Hawkweed, Hawk's-beard,

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Hawkbit, and Cat's-ear, just opening. Puzzling, too, are the various Feverfews and Chamomiles, the first named a corruption of febrifuge, from their use in medicine. Common Chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*) may be known by its aromatic odour as of fresh apples, and Stinking

Chamomile (*A. cotula*) by its strong smell. The Corn Feverfew or Scentsless Mayweed (*Matricaria inodora*) and the Wild Chamomile (*M. chamomilla*) bloom from June to October, their much-divided leaves distinguish them at once from the Ox-eye Daisy, which the flowers at first sight resemble.

Another valuable medicinal plant is the Common Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), thought by some to be Fox's-glove, but more usually supposed to be a corruption of Folk's-glove, the glove of the Fairy Folk, who inhabit its drooping bells and paint the purple spots within. The French call it Doigts de la Vierge and Gants de Notre Dame, the Germans Fingerhut, and the Dutch Vingerhood, while the scientific name is from the Latin *digitus*, finger. The Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) is also known as High Taper, while its woolly leaves have earned it the name of Adam's Flannel. The Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*) is still employed in the concoction of eye-lotion; it was the Euphrasy used by the archangel Michael when, before unfolding to Adam the vision of the future, he

“purged with euphrasy and rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see.”
Paradise Lost, Book XI.

Now

“slowly swells the pod
And rounds the peach, and in the night
The mushroom bursts the sod.”

The Common Mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*) may be known by its *gills*, which are free and not attached to the stem, pink when young, turning dark purple when mature, *cap* of whitish silky texture which readily peels, a *ring* round the stem, the remains of the skin which originally enclosed the gills; and a pleasant “*mushroomy*” *smell*. The stem is short and thick. The gills of the Horse or Meadow Mushroom (*A. arvensis*) are dirty white when young, turning almost black, the cap is much larger than that of the Common Mushroom, and quite smooth; the scent, too, is stronger and the flavour less delicate. The St. George's Mushroom (*A. gambosus*) appears about St. George's Day, and according to Hungarian legend it was a gift from our

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patron saint. The French call it *Mouceron* or *Mousseron* from its habit of growing among moss, and it is thought that our word Mushroom is a corruption of this. The various Wood Mushrooms and the little Fairy Ring Champignon appear in July. The Common Morel (*Morchela esculenta*) is uncommon in England but is occasionally met with, sometimes springing up on ground on which brushwood has been burnt. It may be recognized by its spherical top, light brown or tawny grey in colour, and pitted like a honeycomb. The stalk is white and the whole fungus hollow, with a pleasant mushroomy scent. All the above are edible.

As we turn homeward in the warm twilight the “harsh iteration, note untuneable” of the hidden Corncrake falls on our ears, and we stop for a last look at the tall meadow grass and glimmering Moon Daisies all unconscious of to-morrow's doom, with the same feeling that

impelled the little girl in *The Last Day of Flowers* to bid farewell to her favourites, for

*“Hush,—’tis the lullaby Time is singing—
Hush, and heed not, for all things pass,
Hush, ah hush! and the Scythes are swinging
Over the clover, over the grass! [sic]*

¹ *Went*, obsolete past tense of “to go.” Comp.

“In other place than forth he yode
Return’d Lord Marmion.”

—*Marmion, Canto III.*, 31.