

cactus is just a thick, juicy mass of green cells, storing sufficient water to enable it to flower and perpetuate its kind. But in a region where water is a luxury, its possession constitutes a real danger. The cacti have, as it were, "cornered" water, and have thus become objects of envy to thousands of thirsty creatures who would like to gnaw and suck and bite at their juicy stems. Such treatment would, of course, mean death to the cacti; and in order to protect themselves and their water from assault, they have acquired the formidable array of spines, and are thus able to flourish under conditions which would speedily annihilate almost all other kinds of vegetation.

Flowers are often protected by prickles, as in the case of the familiar thistle, or the teasel; while fruit capsules, such as those of the horse-chestnut and many exotic kinds, are also spiny. Did space permit, dozens of other instances of protective prickliness might be cited. The above examples, however, are sufficient to show how widely Nature has employed this particularly means of defence.

Red as a Danger Signal.

That important point, the question of new wall papers and fresh colour schemes for rooms that are to be renovated during the spring cleaning season, is one that is exercising many feminine minds at present.

In the solution of so critical a question as this, for mistakes once made cannot easily be rectified when the considerable expense of papering and painting a room is entailed, not only the beauty of the pattern of the wall hanging should be taken into consideration, but the influence the colour chosen is likely to have upon the health and temperament of the occupants of the room.

No person disposed towards nerve diseases, even if only of a minor form of aggravation, should chose a red room, since it is a well-established scientific fact that red acts deleteriously upon the nervous system.

No hospitals have red ward walls; green is usually the tint chosen, on account of its soothing properties to the eyes and mind. In addition to being a bad colour for the nerves, irritating them, as it does, and maintaining them at a pitch of unnatural excitement, red is also excessively bad for the eyes, and so should most specially be avoided in studies where much writing and reading are to be done, in offices, and in drawing-rooms intended for rest and relaxation.

It has been noticed by observant persons that quarrels ensue among otherwise well-tempered beings if they systematically inhabit a red room, and an oculist of renown has been known seriously to recommend his patients who are obliged to inhabit red rooms to keep before them on their writing tables a pad of orange-coloured blotting paper, or to see that there is an orange-coloured screen in the room to counteract the evil influence of the pervading red.

If there must be red paper and paint in the house, let it be used as a hanging for the dining-room or one for the hall and passages, because in these places long sojourn is not usual.

The fashion for monastic cell-like rooms that has been noticeable of late years is a distinct outcome of this desire for peace in the home. But all white rooms are not economical in London or in any other great town, and that is why green is so prevalent.

Shades of lavender and prune are delightful for the drawing-room or boudoir, since they are restful colours, breathing an element of quiet industry. Pink is a becoming choice, especially in the palest cyclamen shades, for a drawing-room or a boudoir, and is a more decided shade for a morning-room, where needlework and dressmaking are to occupy nimble fingers.

It should be added that red is excellent in splashes, because it induces cheerfulness. As a mass it is bad, for the reasons already stated.

THE GUINEA POEM.

A CHEQUE for £1 1/2 has been sent to the writer of this verse, Mrs N. L. Malrou, Tu Ewhiti.

"That martlet-like she clain once more," Said mother—"put the drop on." And maid, should it get smokin' again, 'Twill all come up with S'APON."

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Verse Old and New

The Lazy Day.

This shall be my lazy day;
I'll sit beside the river's brink
And watch the water-insects play.
Not even shall I deign to think,
But Lethian waters shall I drink
Till carking cares shall fade away.

The busy city's rush and roar
Comes not to this sequestered spot;
The din of bartering shop and store,
Exchange and bank, disturbs it not;
Apart and peaceful and forget,
An unfrequented river shore.

I'll be as idle as the trees
That trail their branches to the stream;
I'll feel a friend to passing bees,
And butterflies that flit and gleam;
And in the rustling grass I'll dream
That all my days are sweet as these.

The birds with undulating flight
That, with unerring pinions, dip
And skim the river's surface bright—
Kingfisher, robin, wren, and whip—
With me are one in fellowship
And irresponsible delight.

Within the grass, a forest maze,
I see the lesser living things;
A burnished beetle goes his ways
And spreads his armoured opal wings;
And on the blades to which he clings
A clumsy, long-legged mantis prays.

And you, you gaudy dragon-fly,
So straight of body, slim, and still,
Quadrate-winged and large of eye,
Of sunshine drinking in your fill—
I'll drink the self-same nectar till
I feel a part of earth and sky.

I will not even cast a line,
Lest I betray some henny friend,
And break this halcyon peace of mine
By watching his untimely end;
Such clemency do I extend
To all, as idly I recline.

For this shall be my lazy day!
In rustling grasses shall I dream,
And watch the water-insects play,
And bright kingfishers flash and gleam;
Till, in the gliding, peaceful stream,
My worldly cares are washed away.

C. G. A. COLLES (in the "Bulletin").

A Penny in the Slot.

When automatic indication lies in wait
for agitation,
To weigh you and record it on the spot,
'Tis no use to ledge or higgie, for the
pointer will not wobble,
Unless you drop a penny in the slot.

If you want from hotel waiter tender
steak and good potato,
And all the nicest dishes that he's got,
He will surely entertain you with the
best that's on the menu,
If you only drop a penny in the slot.

If you want a politician to secure you
a position,
And he'd like to, but he knows that he
cannot!
Your surest way to win him, is not to
urge or chin him,
But just to drop a penny in the slot.

If you love some pretty daughter, and
she lets you know you've caught
her,
But her loving father thinks he'd
rather not,
Don't you argue with the "ninnon," just
show up a handsome income,
That's the way to drop a penny in the
slot.

You will find the same variety in all
grades of good society,
For money is the basis of the plot;
You can rake in invitations, with the
entry to most stations,
If you only drop a penny in the slot.

So through life in all your gettings, fortune,
fun, and all abottings,
That go to keep a boiling in the pot,
It's the coin that has the charm to start
up the mechanism,
You must always drop a penny in the
slot.

The Prodigal Son (new version).

The prodigal made moan and sigh.
(Husks are unappetising cheer.)
He even lacked wherewith to buy
The humble counter-lunch and beer.

"They'll surely kill the fatted calf
"If I return," at length he said.
"In any case cold beef and half
A loaf were better than no bread."

Homeward he took him then apace,
Urged on by dreams of sumptuous
fare.
He looked into his father's face;
No hint of fatted calf was there.

"Father, I've sinned!" He wiped an eye.
Swift came his father's utterance.
"You made the bed whereon you lie;
You called the tune and you must
dance.

"Long since your hand forsook the
plough;
You took your share, you went your
way.
Think you no shame of it to bow,
A suppliant, at my door to-day."

"Eat now, and go, but take this word,
The world is yours to lose or win."
The son his faltering manhood spurred,
And turned his back on friend and kin.

Long wrought he in the wilderness,
His sinews and his manhood grew.
His worldly fortunes waxed no less;
And still one debt remained, he knew;

One which his credit far outran,
Since all his wealth could not requite
The debt which made of him a man
Who else had lived a parasite.
—"Bulletin."

A Ballade of Green Fields.

Beyond the compass of our sight
A land there is of pleasant guise,
Whose pastures, rich in sun and light,
Hold and allure our aching eyes:
No mists obscure its cloudless skies,
And no dream unfulfilled is seen,
And all things bloom and nothing dies;
For distant fields are always green.

There all things range themselves aright,
The shameless sink, the virtuous rise,
The well-deserving gain their fight,
The hero wins in gallant wise,
The liar has to eat his lies,
The lover woos and weds his queen,
And who deserves shall have the prize:
For distant fields are always green.

We, even we—who know that might
Is right, and how that Fate denies
What Hope holds out, in Hope's despite,
And how the elusive guerdon flies
Before us ever, and defies
Our weary grasp—have we not been
The first, the last, to send our sighs?—
For distant fields are always green.

Envoy.

Princess, the world is grey, and night
Comes on us quickly, yet the sheen
Of old illusion glimmers bright—
For distant fields are always green.
Austin Phillips.

Friendship.

"For I have always loved you for
many reasons and in many ways."—P.B.
The daily tribute of the sun
Lives on, in tree, and fruit, and flower,
Lives on, with subtle change of power,
When the last hour of day is done.

And what the kindly sun has given,
Reborn in many a varied form,
Is in the wind, the sea, the storm,
And when the lightnings flame through
heaven,

And is itself again; and so
Through many ways of diverse change
Its low equality of range,
And back again as love may flow;
For deathless, as God's sunlight still,
Its tender ministry renewed
In each divine beatitude,
Shall love its purposes fulfil.
—S. WEIR MITCHELL.

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