

# GARDENS OLD & NEW

THE COUNTRY HOUSE  
& ITS GARDEN  
ENVIRONMENT.

FOURTH EDITION.

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## GARDENS OLD & NEW

KING'S WESTON,  
GLOUCESTER,  
THE SEAT OF . . .  
MR. R. NAPIER MILES.

THIS volume depicts and describes several gardens in the vicinity of Bath and Bristol, that favoured land where many people have been attracted to dwell, rich in great houses and beautiful examples of gardenage, where there is a pictorial character in the landscape and a generous richness in the soil that are the chief elements in the beauty of a chosen part of England. King's Weston is a remarkable house, in a fine situation and amid very lovely surroundings, in the neighbourhood of Shirehampton, commanding superb views of the diversified, romantic, and gloriously wooded country. The mansion dates from the year 1711, and has the solid classic qualities of the reign of Queen Anne. The pleasant colour of the old Bath stone, weathered and mossy, lends a charm to the Corinthian pilasters, the pediment, the cornice, and the crowning urns of the structure.

An uncommon feature is found in the design of the house, for the chimneys above are quite unusual in character, and take an architectural form and grouping rare and effective. We do not wonder at the classic proportions and harmonious features of the structure when we learn that it is a work of Vanbrugh. We do not know whether he designed it wholly, but it bears the mark of his hand. The tough fighting man who became an architect and then a dramatist, laid many a heavy load on earth, as his punning epitaph says, but there is some uncertainty as to his actual share in the design of certain buildings. Castle Howard in Yorkshire, Blenheim, and Greenwich Hospital were wholly or partly designed by him. We therefore look at King's Weston with a good deal of interest.

But what will most impress the visitor to the house, and the reader who sees our pictures, will be the extremely peculiar manner in which Nature is tempted and encouraged to invade



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the realm of Art. Here is a union of the two such as will be seen in very few places. The "flower in the crannied wall" is familiar. There is a charm in the weathered brick giving hospitality to a crowd of beautiful things, and crowned with white and red valerian, or snapdragon, or wallflowers, or with some other radiant thing that finds good roorage where soil and moisture and sun are to its liking. Such things we may find at King's Weston, as in many West Country gardens; but what we note as individual here is that flowers are invited to root themselves in the crevices in the steps that lead down from the mansion. Alpine flowers are flourishing in the stairway with many gay companions, and giving floral beauty where it is quite uncommon. There is something fresh and

original in the pleasure of finding flowers garnishing thus the way by which we descend; something, we may say, especially appropriate to the gentler sex, where Flora attends their coming. On the other hand, there may be those to whom this plan of cultivating flowers in the hollows of substantial masonry may not seem right. We are accustomed, perhaps, to regard the vesting of stonework with thick moss and flowers as the proper accompaniment of decay or roughness of construction. What is suitable, some may say, to the old garden wall, to the broken rockery, or to the clefts of the rugged stone support that holds up the higher bank flanking the garden path, and over which we look to the fair denizens of the woodland shade, may not be suitable to the regular masonry of the house and its immediate approaches. But

King's Weston is a standing witness that this manner of gardening is, or may be, good. There is harmony in the result where some might expect incongruity, and the investing approach of Nature to the house gives many a clinging plant to clothe the cool stonework. Yet shall we invite her not only to clothe our house, but, as it were, to enter intimately into the structure? *Quot homines, tot sententia.* It is a legitimate matter of opinion, but we may, at least, gather one lesson—that there are many forms of beauty in gardening, each appealing to a particular taste, and that it ill befits a gardener to be a doctrinaire, pinning his faith wholly to this school or that, adopting one manner to set his ban upon another, and rejecting, in his rigid view of his art, a good many beauties that otherwise he



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might have used and made others enjoy. The gardener, in short, must be a cosmopolitan. His work is to accept and select, and to invest his garden with character and adornments appropriate to soil and situation, so that it expresses an individuality. So shall the garden, as Schiller says, be Nature invested with a soul and exalted by Art. It shall be the place where the man expresses himself in his own conception of Nature adapted to his needs or his inward likings. Whether it be a walled enclosure, with openings like the gates of a Roman camp, or a great pleasure upon a terraced slope, or merely a homely garden, there shall be individuality in it. It may be a place where the strawberry-bed neighbours the roses, and where he wanders among apples, cherries, plums, medlars, and filberts, with a multitude of flowers, small and great, in their company. This would be an individual garden. And so, at this beautiful West Country seat, we find personal character in the floral adornment of the solid masonry.

And we see at King's Weston that this idea of welcoming the garden in the very approaches to the house is not confined to one flight of steps, or to one side of the house, but is borne out in a free and delightful use of plants and flowers in pots and boxes. The care which is devoted everywhere to wall and water gardening is excellent testimony to the love of flowers which has beautified this old place. The rectangular pond garden is gloriously festooned upon its walls, and, in combination with borders of hardy flowers, there is an abundance of moisture-loving plants, of the beautiful things that will grow and flourish in the crannies of walls bordering water, while the water itself is made rich in a plentiful growth of lovely water-lilies. This garden, in fact, is a perfect study in this special class of gardening. Especially charming is the view of the old garden-house, with the ivy-wreathed wall, and the brilliant broom, and the lilies, irises, poppies, and ornamental garden thisles, to name no others, reflected in the glassy sheet. There is a world of beauty in gardening like this, giving radiance and sweetness combined. And such gardening at King's Weston



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is wholly in keeping with the character adopted nearer the dwelling.

The garden dates from the same period as the house,



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having been formed about the year 1711. The "view garden," we are told, is supposed to occupy the site of an ancient market-place, and the ivy-covered column there is said to be the original market cross. The square walled garden is quite characteristic, and has one wall covered by an old Turkey fig tree, celebrated for its age and for the extraordinary size of its fruit. Two or three trees cover entirely one long wall, and are remarkable for their prolific growth and rich fruitage. Extremely attractive is this quaint and quiet retreat, with the rockery, the curiously cut spindle-shaped yews, the yuccas, and the sequestered character of the place. The walled garden was dear to our ancestors, being but another form of the well-hedged parterre—a place with ample sun, not shadowed by trees, and sheltered well from all the winds that blow.

Then how attractive is the Echo Walk at King's Weston, with the lovely greensward flanking the path, the standard roses adorning it, the glorious masses of flowers on either side, the fine plants in tubs, and the noble elms, pines, and other



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THE GARDEN TEMPLE.

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ornamental trees. The happiest spirit directed the formation of this wholly beautiful place, and the same spirit maintains it in the perfection which our picture discloses. It affords a contrast of charm and character which is delightful, and opposes a measure of stately formality to the picturesqueness which reigns elsewhere, thus adding a very pleasing and attractive variety to the gardens. The terrace, too, is very beautiful, looking out over the Avonmouth, with the fine balustraded wall, a notable example of good garden architecture, comparable with many we have described, the green grass within, and the adorning yuccas and the noble view without, and those grand trees which rise majestically from the park below. It is not necessary to describe King's Weston much further. We have suggested the special character, and our pictures will do the rest.

There are charms both in the classic architecture of the mansion and the garden-houses and in the rare beauty of the garden, and we find special interest in the manner in which the qualities of the two are combined.



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