

A Floral Fantasy In An Old English Garden

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THE OLD ENGLISH GARDEN

A FLORAL PHANTASY

In an old world garden dreaming,
Where the flowers had human names,
Methought, in fantastic seeming,
They disported as squires and dames.

Of old in Rosamond's Bower,
With it's peacock hedges of yew,
One could never find the flower
Unless one was given the clue;
So take the key of the wicket,
Who would follow my fancy free,
By formal knot and clipt thicket,
And smooth greensward so fair to see

And while Time his scythe is whetting,
Ere the dew from the grass has gone,

The Four Seasons' flight forgetting,
As they dance round the dial stone;

With a leaf from an old English book,
A Jonquil will serve for a pen.

Let us note from the green arbour's nook,
Flowers masking like women and men.

FIRST in VENUS'S LOOKING GLASS,
You may see where LOVE LIES BLEEDING,

While PRETTY MAIDS all of them pass
With careless hearts quite unheeding.

Next, a knight with his flaming targe
See the DENT-DE-LION so bold
With his feathery crest at large,
On a field of the cloth of gold.

Simple honesty shows in vain
A fashion few seek to robe in,
While the poor SHEPHERD'S-PURSE is ta'en
By rascally RAGGED-ROBIN.

COLTSFOOT

and

LARKSPUR

SPEEDWELL

In the race of the flowers that's run due,

As the HARTSTONGUE pants at the well

And the HOUNDSTONGUE laps the SUNDEW.

Here's VENUS'-COMBE for MAIDENHAIR:

While KING-CUPS drink BELLA-DONNA,

Glad in purple and gold so fair,

Though the DEADLY NIGHTSHADE'S upon her.

Behold LONDON PRIDE robed & crowned,

Ushered in by the GOLDEN ROD,

While a floral crowd press around,

Just to win from her crest a nod.

The FOXGLOVES are already on.

Not only in pairs but dozens;

They've come out to see all the fun,

With sisters and aunts and cousins.

The STITCHWORK looked up with a sigh

At BATCHELOR'S BUTTONS unsewn:

Single Daisies were not in her eye,
For the grass was just newly mown.

The HORSE-TAIL, 'scaped from WOLFE'S CLAW,
Rides off with a LADIES' LAGES.

The FRIAR'S-COWL hides a doctor of law,
And the BISHOP'S-WEED covers his grace's

The SNAPDRAGON opened his jaw,
But, at sight of Scotch THISTLE, turned pale:

He'd too many points of the law
For a dragon without a scale.

Little JENNY-CREEPER lay low,
Till happy thoughts made her gladder;
How to rise in the world she'd know,
So she climbed up JACOB'S LADDER

SWEET WILLIAM with MARYGOLD
Seek HEARTSEASE in the close box-border.
Where, starched in their ruff's stiff fold,
DUTCH DAHLIAS prim, keep order.

NARCISSUS bends over the brook,
Intent upon DAFFA-DOWN-DILLY:

While EYEBRIGHT observes from her nook,
And wonders he could be so silly.

A LANCE FOR A LAD 'gainst KING'S SPEAR.
When the BUGLE sounds for the play

A LADIES MANTLE flaunting there
Is the banner that leads the fray.

KNIGHT'S SPUR to the LADIES BOWER
To seek for the LADIES SLIPPER.

'Twas lost in the wood in a summer shower
When the CLOWN'S WORT tried to trip her.

TOAD-FLAX is spun for BUTTER-AND-EGGS

On a LADIES' CUSHION sits THRIFT
She never wastes, or steals, or begs,
But she can't give poor RAGWORT a lift.

QUEEN OF THE MEADS is MEADOWSWEET,
In the realm of grasses wide:

But not in all her court you meet
The turbaned TURK'S HEAD in his pride.

Fair BETHLEHEM' STAR shineth bright,
In a lowly place, as of old,

And through the green gloom glows the light
Of ST. JOHN'S-WORT--a nimbus of gold.

But the hours of the sun swift glide,
And the flowers with them are speeding.

Though LOVE-IN-A-MIST may hide.
When Time's in the garden weeding.

There's TRAVELLER'S JOY
To entwine,
At our journey's end for greeting,

We can talk over SOPS-IN-WINE,
And drink to our next merry meeting.