"The Garden That I Love"

By Alfred Austin. Macmillan & Co.

MR. AUSTIN has added a pleasing and instructive volume to the literature of the garden. In its pages a few shadowy presences—Veronica, who is tidy, and in love more with her tea-urn than with the garden, and Lamia, who is splendid and aggressive, and a Poet, who is nameless—flit about among the flowers, and with their small-talk and mild love-making furnish occasional interludes, not unlike those of the "Academios del Jardin" of Don Salvador Jacinto Polo de Medina, "natural de la Ciudad de Murcia." The Poet's effusions about love and poetry are nearly as artificial as the old Spanish writer's romances, madrigals, sonnets and dezimas; but they are less in number, and we have correspondingly more about planting and clearing, wild and garden flowers, hedges, arbors, lawns and orchards. Mr. Austin's garden belongs to a small English country-place. It surrounds a gabled and ivy-grown old house, far from crowing cocks, barking dogs and music-murdering pianos; soothed, instead, by cooing wood-pigeons and noise of neighboring rooks. "I do not know how people consent, save under dire compulsion, to build a house for themselves, or to live in one newly built for them by others," says our author. He likes to think that a long line of ancestors, either in blood or sentiment, have been before him. The swallows were building under his eaves in Shakespeare's time. Here, then, he takes us through the round of the seasons—spring with its wild anemones, primroses, violets and bluebells; summer with its foxgloves, eglantine and honeysuckle; autumn with its fruits, and winter with its preparations for the coming spring.

But if the seasons be left to themselves, spring is the only one, he thinks, that knows how to garden. It is not so with us, for both summer and autumn do better; but in England, it appears, they require the aid of man. Even spring, he finds, will accept a little aid in the way of dibbled-out crocuses, snowdrops and narcissus. He seems to doubt whether tulips and narcissus will do well in grass. Both are naturally meadow flowers, and take to it as a matter of course. There is a good deal about roses of old and new varieties; pinks and irises find a place, and a great many delightful things with terrific names grow in a corner, in made soil with an under-layer of tin cans and empty blacking-bottles. Mr. Austin believes in a judicious mingling of the formal with the natural. His lawn has crescent-shaped beds of rhododendrons and other formal beds of geraniums, tea-roses and calceolarias. They are an invaluable foil to the more irregular spaces where larkspur, evening primroses, ribbon grass, phloxes, fuchsias, lupines, dahlias, sweet-williams and mignonette fight it out among themselves. Exclusiveness in a garden is as great a mistake as it is in society, he says; he believes, in short, that it takes all sorts of plants to make a pleasure-ground. But he finds no beauty, apparently, in kitchen-garden stuff. Yet, surely, lettuce, rhubarb and maize are as beautiful as most so-called foliage plants; if potatoes were not cultivated for their roots, they might be for their flowers; and onions, parsnips and other things of the sort are a delight to the eye as well as to the palate.