THE USE OF GARDENS

he desires by climatic conditions which suit him well enough. Of course he must have the sense not to attempt impossibilities, not to try and make tropical plants grow in the English open air; that way lies inevitable failure and certain disappointment. But there is no need for him to go outside the range of plant life which is naturally available, for the exotic, even if it can be coaxed into some semblance of vitality, is almost always a jarring note in an otherwise characteristic garden—it is strange and incongruous and seems out of the picture.

Unquestionably, the success of gardening in this country can be taken as a proof of the skill and discretion with which so many of the men who have occupied themselves with this form of art have done what was required of them. They have made the most of the particular advantages which they have enjoyed in our insular climate, and they have considered well the adaptability of the material with which nature has provided them, so that they have evolved a style which is as agreeably effective as it is artistically sound. That they have learned something from abroad cannot be denied, both the Dutch and the French gardeners have appreciably influenced our native designers; but these foreign influences have not seriously modified what is really a national tradition based securely upon an honest love of nature. At most, they have taught us certain executive devices and certain methods of treatment which could be conveniently grafted on to our own system of design, and have somewhat enlarged the scope of our practice in garden-making without introducing into it any discordant mannerism.

No doubt the preservation of this distinct individuality of style is to a very large extent due to that love of gardens for their own sake which is eminently a British characteristic. Any tendency that there might have been among the designers themselves to adopt strange methods has been kept in check by the unwillingness of their clients to accept too obvious departures from a tradition sanctioned by long usage. Changes in fashion have come from time to time, changes that have not always been well-advised—like that one, for example, which led to the conflict between formal and landscape gardening and caused the destruction of much interesting work that was quite worth saving—but even in these new fashions the idea that nature's principles should be respected was very rarely forgotten.

It is not difficult to understand the British attitude towards the gardener's art. In a country where nature is so willing to respond to the advances of her admirers, and where the variety of her charms...