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of England and Ireland. It has provided St. Paul's with a successor to Colet, Donne and Church, and it has so modified its religious tests that it can now include Monsieur Denis Saurat, author of a sympathetic study of Continental anti-clericalism, among the members of its staff. It took London less than a century to become one of the greater Universities of the world, and now that it has provided the Church with a Dean, a suffragan Bishop, since translated to Grimsby, and a diocesan Bishop, even Anglican Oxford must admit that her supremacy has been put in peril.

Nevertheless, there is a lurking danger. Archdeacon Partridge has been primarily responsible for the centralisation of the Church's funds. He is thus *persona grata* at Church House, and Church House has done very much to undermine the once healthy provincialism of the Church of England. We have paid dearly for the division of those ancient dioceses which centred on a grand cathedral and episcopal palace. The telephone and the motor-car, so far from retarding the progress of the diocese-makers, actually accelerated it. Within the last twenty years a number of parish churches have unworthily acquired the dignity of cathedrals and even featureless suburbs have given their names to suffragan Bishoprics. The Bishops in turn leave their reduced dioceses for frequent excursions to London upon business at Church House. Nor are they alone in responding

to the attractions of London. Durham has for its Bishop and its Dean two former Fellows of All Souls. It is the seat of a University. But the intellectual life of the neighbourhood was scarcely less robust a century ago when the cultured and leisured classes had not begun their migration to the West End, Surrey and the Home Counties. Sydney Smith had a wholehearted love for the fashionable life of London, but even when he was condemned to live in the remote Yorkshire parish of Foston, he could enjoy the invigorating friendship of the Wilbrahams, the Leycesters, Archbishop Vernon Harcourt and Lord Grey. One wonders whether any gifted North Country clergyman is now so favoured. The centralisation of leisured life makes the depressed areas far more depressing than they need be.

English visitors respond eagerly to the intellectual *milieu* of Paris, but they forget that it has been achieved only through the severe impoverishment of the provincial life of France. The merits of London University deserve the fullest recognition, and it is only fair that its theological graduates should compete for the Bishoprics and Deaneries. But those who admire the intellectual *milieu* of London should ask themselves whether the metropolis is in danger of getting a stranglehold upon the intellectual and spiritual life of the country. Just as new towns are better than enlarged suburbs, so a vigorous regionalism is more productive than a taut centralisation.

SPRING GARDENS

By H. E. BATES

JUST before the end of February the garden looks desolate. The aconites have almost gone, the snowdrops with them. The crocuses have hardly come. There is a feeling that, for the first time, spring itself will not come either. The aconites and snowdrops seem to have nothing to do with spring. They are simply emblems of a between period, of an interlude between one season and another. The yellow, almost transparent, aconite petals are like scraps of washed-out sunlight. They belong merely to some process of unfolding.

I have never had very much use for the conventional idylls of spring: skipping lambs, young men in love, April laughing its girlish laughter and weeping its girlish tears. There is an equal idyll in the sowing of onions, and a far more wonderful one in the blossoming of the first crocuses. They are like fierce but delicate fires as they push upward to the light, so many slender flames of orange and mauve and white and purple that become fire-tongued at the first feeling of sunlight. Beside them the snowdrops are mere unlit lanterns of paper. It is not until the crocuses flame up that there is any surety about the spring. They mark a definite change in things. They are a kind of flower equinox in themselves. After them flowers seem to come more easily, as though the crocuses had been an exhilaration. Violets begin to thread visibly among their dark leaves, the buds of the wild white like milky cyclamen. Daffodils raise canary heads, the little iris reticulata flowers and its almost black buds crowd each other out, even darker and more passionately purple than the darkest of the crocuses. The polyanthus are no longer nipped and wintry. They come up thick and suddenly, giant cowslips of crimson and orange and white. Altogether, in fact, a great many common things begin to seem uncommonly beautiful.

It is the common things, in fact, which never fail. They perform a perennial miracle of transcendence, the un-failing trick of making heaven on or out of earth. By April the aubretia lies everywhere in still pools of purple, the daffodils blow in full glory, the almonds wave and float like pink balloons. The wallflowers become magni-

ficent, having a splendour entirely their own, a full-blooded, almost autumnal splendour, with autumnal colours. Only June, to my mind, exceeds the time of wallflowers, which is also the time of tulips, the moment of the overlapping of spring and summer, the beginning of the spate of colour.

In March there is really not much colour. It is the green of things to come which begins to count: the change in the grass itself, the almost bluish shoots of oriental poppies, the fresh olive sabres of day-lilies, the staunch and shining pagodas of the madonnas, the lavender sprigs of catmint, the delphiniums. As they force upward and rise clear of the ground all the uncertainty, the feeling that spring will never come, vanishes completely. A feeling of cocksure joyousness take its place, a feeling of having your cake and eating it too, a sense of triumph, almost of survival, of 'look! we have come through.' This is when spring gardens begin to be idyllic.

It is bitterly cold as I write. The days of spring, to date, may be numbered on one finger. Everything is late. The little irises come slowly, standing tight in black-purple bud for days on end. The primroses are out, but it is all that one can say for them. The first crocuses bend limply over exactly like spent candles. The wind roars a little in the late buds, and the very sound of it is cold. But the green of things is unmistakable and the light, even through clouds, is wonderfully powerful. By merely looking up one can tell the moment of the year.

But for some reason there is no scent of spring yet. The sound and the feeling and the colour of it are all there, but there is no smell of it, the sudden indefinable breath of damp earth slightly warmed, of muck and grass, dust and violets. The smell of winter and rain hangs about like the smell of a church. The wind smells of snow. Even the grass, newly cut, has no sweetness.

There is far more sweetness in sound. Birds begin very early in the morning and go on tirelessly beyond the twilights. The rooks are in a fever. The thrushes, at it all winter, have broken now into real passion. Blackbirds keep up the silly squawking of mating all

day long, a crowd of love-eager cocks trailing a single hen across the grass and in the hedge-bottoms and over the brightening saxifrages and phloxes of the rock-garden. On warm days an odd lark will go up, a little uncertain, a little weak in flight, but unmistakable in ecstasy.

In spite of it, spring seems to stand still, almost to go back. Another day of sun and the daffodils would break; two more and the water-lily tulips would be out.

Only half a day and the little orchid-shaped grape-hyacinths would be in full glory, bright as cornflowers. An hour and the crocuses spread and open their hearts and sun themselves. There will be days, later, when spring will move too fast. In May it slips through the hands like sand. Today it is so immobile that one almost hates it. One's only comfort is that, in a damnably uncertain world, it is really the only certain thing.