

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1970.

Living April 1970

# From my Garden by H.E. Bates

I once began an after-luncheon speech, at which a distinguished bishop was the chief guest, by saying 'I don't know, my Lord, how you were brought up'—a remark of pure innocence which had the immediate effect of bringing the house down. It is therefore with some hesitation that I now begin the article by saying 'I don't know, of course, what your house looks like on Christmas morning.'

Let me at once say here that I am not proposing to write of Christmas, but Easter, even though our house does look an utter shambles on Christmas morning. The breakfast room is knee-deep in wrapping paper. Countless bottles of after-shave lotion, hair sprays, bath salts, perfumes and heaven knows what else in the world of beauty preparations litter tables, sideboard, chairs and even floor. Small grandchildren are weeping in their search for a lost pound note sent by Aunt Susan and Uncle Ernest. Grown-ups are searching, though not weeping, for mislaid book tokens, record tokens, garden tokens or some other tokens they didn't really want in the first place, and the very smallest member of the family is painting its face, fingers and feeder with an astounding amount of the yolk of a boiled egg. Others of the family are wondering who was mad enough to give them a book on collecting Greek bronzes or are equally dismayed by a vast cookery book which they well know they will never read, let alone cook from.

It was with these thoughts in mind that I decided, therefore, not to recommend to readers of this page a gardening book as a present for Christmas. The world is not only full of gardening books; it has been filled with gardening books of infinite variety ever since the fifteenth century. There is, I suppose, no aspect of horticulture, whether it be cacti or plant-hunting in the Himalayas, orchids or cabbages, alpines or artichokes, that hasn't been dealt with, expertly or otherwise, countless times over. Many of these books are technically excellent but abysmally dull; many repeat the mistakes of their predecessors; many ignore the fact that gardening is not an exact science and therefore has no rules; some are pretty, some sloppy, some pompous, some academic, some useless.

What I have long thought the ever-growing gardening public needed was not just another gardening book but one gardening book: expert, accurate, comprehensive, practical, pictorial, free of chat and jargon, that appealed at once to the mind and eye, the initiated and the uninitiated, the experienced and the ignorant, the old hand and the beginner. This is why I now recommend, as an Easter present and not a Christmas one, a large, fat, handsome tome called *The Dictionary of Garden Plants* by Roy Hay and Patrick M. Syngé, published by Michael Joseph Ltd, in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society. At sixty shillings—the price of a hundred tulip bulbs—this is not only astonishingly reasonable; it is almost like picking up a Picasso drawing for a fiver.

Consider what you get for your money. First you have more

the well-known novelist writes about how his garden grows



## for DICTIONARY read BIBLE

be much more grown here. Again, pictorially and otherwise *Garden Plants* tells you all about it.

Are you thinking of growing orchids and don't know the categories, shapes, colours and sizes they come in? This book will enlighten you, dazzling and feeding the eye at the same time with innumerable and marvellously good illustrations. You are thinking of trying a few tulip species? Crocus species? A few cacti? A new range of greenhouse bulbs, indoor plants, climbers? They are all here, lavishly but sensibly illustrated and identifiable in the easiest possible way.

Perhaps, like thousands of other gardeners, you confess to a certain degree of ignorance in naming plants or in remembering, after summer has gone, what your plants and your garden looked like in the high days of June and July. You therefore attempt to preserve some record of it all in the mind's eye but through the camera. Alas! Your photographs come out looking a sort of sea-sick green or pink, your yellows are puce, your purples are washy magenta.

Don't, from now on, worry any more on that score. This book contains a brief but excellent chapter on photographing flowers, telling you among other things why the human eye is insensitive to reds but highly sensitive to blues, and why what appears to be purest blue to the eye all too often comes out dirty pink or mauve on the film. And it tells you, moreover, what to do about it.

Briefly, therefore, this is exactly the book I have been longing for all gardeners to have. And Easter, I think, is the best time to acquire it, somehow: by cash, by gift, by bartering or what you will.

It is called a dictionary: but for dictionary, as I have said, bible: and if it doesn't convert you utterly to the religion of horticulture I shall be immensely surprised.

Mak  
A read  
like to  
an inte  
Some time  
Fisher on  
by the bea  
of material  
Here at  
pieces of r  
old picture  
I decide  
probably h  
fabric. I le  
sketch of c  
shape in t  
with braid  
picture wa  
to make m  
Mine is  
for besides  
braid, ribb  
screen glas  
pictures ta  
a certain a  
a skilled en  
it really cr  
built up, of