

large, of a rich vermilion shade, the tube being extremely long. The plant requires stove treatment, and succeeds with the culture accorded to other *Ixoras*.

PENTSTEMONS AND THE LATE MR. GAVIN GREENSHIELDS.

WHAT a pity it is that we never know when a genius is born. Could we tell that how much could the poorest parent do, by guidance and education, to pave the way for the march of the coming man, so that he might commence his work at once, while all his powers would reach their highest development, and not be stunted and degraded by unsuitable upbringing. Alas! too often our great men live out their days fighting an uphill battle, and all they can do is by a snatch effort at odd times, just sufficient to show what might have been done had circumstances been better ordered. Then in addition to a bad start, how vexatious it is to think of a good man fighting his way in the worst conceivable country for the display of whatever peculiar greatness was possible to him.

Gavin Greenshields was a perfect illustration of the truth of these remarks, for in his case all the aids to advancement were absent. He was late in commencing the growth of flowers, and the situation of his garden was one of the worst I ever saw from which to expect the best results. To come to the front as he did at Glasgow flower shows was a proud feat indeed had he lived in Rothesay or in the Vale of Leven, places admirably adapted to the highest floricultural excellence; but to a dweller in a cold moorland district, between the uplands of Clyde and Tweed, it was actually a marvellous thing for him to wrest the prizes from his more suitably located competitors. Indomitable spirit, combined with burning enthusiasm, untiring labour, and a true genius for floriculture, to direct work and to overcome difficulties of climate and soil, were the causes which led to his remarkable success.

He was born in 1822, and had an ordinary Scotch lad's education at the parish school, but the best thing he learned was the desire for learning. This went with him through life, and few ever conversed with him without being astonished at his breadth and depth of reading, and the keen use he could make of it in controversy. As a blacksmith in the parish of Newlands, Peeblesshire, he was not content with mere routine work, but would undertake anything however difficult, and soon became the best horse-shoer in the neighbourhood, while he would repair a gun as if to the manner born. An intricate lock was a mechanical tit-bit to him, and no matter what was wanted to be done his mechanical skill would master it in due time. Then he became so expert in curing the diseases of cattle that he was greatly in request as a local veterinary surgeon. The Stevenstone blacksmith became renowned as a handy man, who could do almost anything at his trade, while his favourite recreation for a while was fishing, and as an angler he was as keen as an otter over a good pool; while as a fisher he threw "a beautiful fly." If the trout were shy he could sit down on a mossy dell and admire the wild flowers by the river; and eventually the flowers reached his heart, so that mere fishing was not all in all to him.

Looking around his home he could see no site fit for a garden, but undeterred by obstacles, he set to work and rooted out old scrub trees from a stone quarry and began to plant green Kale, &c., to clean the place of weeds. Soon his neighbour gardeners delighted to help "the smith," and bits of flowers were set in crannies and obscure corners until he felt the inward stirrings of the "old Adam," the great original gardener, and went into his new hobby with all his powers and in the very spite of his surroundings. His *début* as a competitor took place at Peebles Flower Show, and as he drove home in triumph through the "auld toon" he was greeted by cheers, as if all Peebles rejoiced with him. The cause of the uproar was that a wag of a friend had tied his six prize tickets on a string, and here behind him, fluttering in the air, were the proofs of his skill.

When about thirty years of age he removed to his native village of Broughton in Peeblesshire. Here, pleasantly situated on a tributary of the Tweed, called Biggar Water, he had more companions of a like spirit to his own, and had a fairly good garden. While hard at business he yet, in his odd hours, found time to increase his stock of flowers, and, with others, founded the Broughton Horticultural Society, which soon became well known as a keen local show, and has been held every year for the last thirty years.

About the year 1867 Mr. Greenshield's health became impaired, and he found it necessary to give up his business as a blacksmith. The strength of his character, self-reliant, and conscious of being able to succeed at what he took in hand, was shown by the move he made. Near the railway station he built a house (Thornbank) and commenced life anew as a grocer. All his flowers were placed in a

new garden, which unfortunately was not of the best quality in any respect. Soil was stony, with a sharp slope, and of course subject to drought. To counterbalance these drawbacks he had more leisure, and could work or leave it alone, as weather or health allowed. He was too active minded to be idle, and his devotion to flowers was so keen as to overcome by one resource or another the drawbacks of situation. At Thornbank he really earned his fame. Here he became famous, and many a friend found him out in his retreat, and his house became an upland shrine, to which florists anglers, poets, and literary men from Glasgow and other towns loved to visit, for however fine the garden, however good the trouting, the genial kindly laird was more himself than other interests together.

At this time he turned his attention to herbaceous plants, and soon acquired a most varied and interesting stock of them. His ungenial soil grew them better than *Pansies* or *Sweet Williams*, as these invariably died every winter with him, whereas the herbaceous kinds succeeded. *Delphiniums* were to him specially pleasing, and came to high perfection. Early *Phloxes* would not grow, but his late ones did splendidly, and for years he took the first prize for these at Glasgow shows. Then he took to a good strain of *Pentstemons* raised from French varieties, and which had been improved by our Edinburgh and Rothesay seedsmen.

For the last fifteen years of his life *Pentstemons* were his great hobby. Saving the seed of the best spikes he raised scores of seedlings, and exercised an amount of discrimination in his selection of these which is hard to put in practice. No slight variation from a named variety was allowed to pass. His taste was well defined, and chose dark, well-marked throated forms, with long spikes, closely set bells, each flower large, open, and symmetrical. An indistinct colour he could not tolerate. Over a good bloom, on a well-built spike, and fine dark colours he would pause and become enraptured. He had not a straggly grower in his collection, nor a seedling that was not superior to its parents. Because he had raised it was not an argument sufficient to retain a middle-class variety. He strove for perfection, and would be satisfied with no less, while his unerring judgment was decisive. Nurserymen like Mr. Dobbie of Rothesay were glad to have his verdict as to the quality of their stock, so that his powers as a judge were universally acknowledged. To all he saw he brought a "clean eye." No bias turned a defective flower into a perfect one, whether it was his own or another's. He spoke sharp out like a true man, and if contradicted gave reasons for his judgment of a kind that carried conviction home.

For some years he had no equal competing against him for the *Pentstemon* prize at Glasgow. Always around his stand the keen florists were grouped, as they knew whatever was worth seeing would be there exhibited. His seedlings were sought after by nurserymen, and glad were they to be able to insert in their catalogues such varieties as *Annie*, *Mrs. Cameron*, *The Provost*, *The Giant*, and others. There is a beautiful little dwarf variety (raiser unknown) which was named in his honour—Gavin Greenshields. To many friends this little gem will be an "in memoriam" of a much respected and valued friend, whose ever kindly welcome and hearty grasp of the hand will never more greet them at Thornbank.

A few years before he died he took up the *Auricula*. Obtaining good plants, saving the seed, he raised many seedlings of merit, but never named them. He had the rare knack of having his plants in their very best condition on the show day, and was of course wonderfully successful as a prizewinner.

In 1889 that fell disease cancer attacked him, and though he had consented to act as judge that year at several shows he was unable to officiate, to the general regret "of troops of friends." For a year he lingered, suffering severely, but bearing his burden like the strong souled man he was. He passed away on 28th March, 1890. His wife had predeceased him, but he left eight of a family to mourn his loss. The spring was opening; but not for him the *Primrose* prophesied the coming summer, or the carol of the birds he so enjoyed foretold the pleasant days to be when the trout leaped in the pools, and the friends he held dear would be wending their ways to the banks of Biggar Water. His work was done, manfully done too, through many disadvantages, and now we realise his loss, the floral world seems bereft of a bright ornament, and progress a helper we feel could be ill-spared.

It is so far cheering to know that others have taken up his enthusiasm, especially for *Pentstemon* culture, and that Mr. Tom Robertson at Thornliebank, and Mr. Robert McIntosh, Hutchesontown Gardens, Glasgow, are in full possession of the best varieties he left behind him, while Mr. Dippie at Caldwell has struck in with a power and skill coupled with garden advantages of the very highest kind for the raising of seedling *Pentstemons*, which all go to assure us that the future of the flower is not to be yet measured by what has been done.