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Patience and Her Garden

Let's leave the history of California, Monterey County and Monterey for one issue of the Peninsula Diary and think about gardens and gardening.

I have discovered a tiny booklet published by Paul Elder and Company in 1913. A bit of philosophy called "Patience and Her Garden," written by Ida Smith Decker.

There is just so much good meat in the story that I think during this time of stress and worry, it might give a few readers a bit of cheer, to repeat some of the paragraphs written by this gardener.

"The love of earth is among the earliest of passions, as it is the latest. Mud pies gratify one of our first and best instincts ... Fondness of the ground comes back to man after he has run the round of pleasure and business, eaten dirt, and sown wild oats, drifted about the world, and taken the winds of all its moods. The love of digging in the ground is sure to come back to him ... To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds, and watch their renewal of life, this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfying thing a man can do."

The above lines were written by Charles Dudley Warner, who wrote "My Summer in the Garden." Below is his story of Patience. He introduces Patience thusly: "They named her Patience because they foresaw that she would be able to stand a lot and she did."

"And behold, Patience was possessed of a beautiful garden. In the fall when she buried the brown bulbs in the earth, her heart had rejoiced in the time when the tulips and the hyacinths would bear their spikes and put up their golden crowns; and in the spring she had digged in her garden and planted it and watered it and it daily waxes more promising.

"And Patience heartened her children by garden paths and the sundial, and the robin that was in the bridal wreath, and when the days of fumigation were passed, Patience said within herself: "When my dwelling is cleansed and the outside of my adobe garnished I shall enjoy myself in the garden."

But what gardener ever heard of such relaxation. The story continues: "And behold, she cleaned mightily and

made cleanly her dwelling both within and without. And after two weeks of this mighty effort she waxed weary. She said, "Next week I shall enjoy my garden."

After a day of patching and mending, Patience again said: "Tomorrow I shall enjoy my garden but peradventure today I have been too busy. But now that rents are mended and the sleeves in my daughter's garments are all made long and tight again, I now have leisure to enjoy the delights of my garden.

"It went on so, for behold, the next day as she was preparing to go forth she heard a great voice, and it was the voice of the telephone, and it said: 'Patience gird thyself and come forth and meet at the church. Prepare a pressed fowl and a basin of pink ice-cream and the food that is called Angels, for we are going to spread a feast for the Missionary Society and the color of it shall be pink and the price of it fifteen pieces of copper' ... And Patience made haste and did as she was told, for she feared the voice of the present and always did as she was solicited.

"And it came to pass that the season waned and there were many doings, and Patience was always bidden for she was a useful woman and always did her part. And her heart was in her garden, but not her foot.

"And it came to pass that the summer was past and the autumn ended when Patience went forth into her garden to enjoy herself, and behold, the frost had been there and the vines were ruined and the grass was sodden and the voice of all but the jay-bird was hushed.

"Then Patience bethought herself and she became angry within herself ... and she went within her dwelling and called with a loud and shrill voice within the telephone, and she said unto the young woman called Central. "Give me her who is named president in the circle and the club and the aid."

"She did. And Patience said, "I command you to strike off my name from the record that is called membership for now I am determined to enjoy my garden. For, behold, I had a beautiful garden, but while I have been solicited, and wasted my time and substance and nerve many times for fifteen pieces of copper, the beauty of my garden has departed and there is no pleasure in it."

"And it was so, and she said, Behold, call me no more Patience but Sensible.

The above has no relation to any garden club or any living person. All characters are fictitious, and any

resemblance to actual clubs or any organization, living or dead, is purely coincidental. All our clubs are grand and it goes without saying that no one on the Monterey Peninsula would be “Sensible” even if they could.