

Clement Joseph Haan

## May

A month that has a beauty and charm all its own, May has always been an inspiration to poets, painters and composers of music down the ages.

A time when the countryside is a mass of colour, when bush and tree are clothed in their fresh mantle of green, when the lovely blossoms on the Horsechestnuts, stand erect like so many decorated candles. Golden furze, sweet-scented Hawthorn, pink and white fruit blossoms, all add colour to the rich scene and are a joy for the eye to behold.

Down the laneway, where once a cottage stood and where many a garden flower still grows wild, butterflies of many varieties and colour, flutter in the gentle breeze. In the shelter of the hedge, where shy Violets peep from their mossy beds, Primroses grow in wild profusion. Over the fields, where the air is heavily laden with the aroma of many wild flowers, that harbinger of spring, the Cuckoo, calls from the edge of the wood, “sounding at once far-off and near.”

A month of birdsong, when the joyous notes of Blackbird and oft repeated songs of Thrush, are heard throughout the long, sunny days.

A time too of great activity, when birds may be observed in purposeful flight, carrying materials which will be carefully woven together to form the cosy home for the future nestlings.

May could be called the month of all young things: hens proudly leading forth their chicks from the farmyard to the fields, where young lambs gambol and frolic, sometimes running in ever-widening circles round

the patient ewes. Over in the warren, young rabbits lie close to their burrows, while the does keep constant vigil in case danger threatens. Yes, May is a month of happiness for all creatures of the wild and a time of the year to which they always eagerly look forward.

When at last, the shadows lengthen and the sun slowly sinks, like a great fiery ball below the western horizon, a Skylark makes its final descent from the blue vault of heaven and lands in the meadow some distance from the nest. Blackbird and Thrush sing their farewell songs to another glorious May day which came and has now gone forever. Soon the busy countryside is hushed into silence, as the creatures of the wild, take their rest and go to sleep. In a few hours, however, as the darkness of night gives way to the grey light of dawn, a great chorus of birdsong will greet the birth of a new May day, when the pattern of events of the preceding day will be repeated and so on to the end of the month.

With the passing of May, the countryside loses a great deal of its beauty and charm, for as the fruits on bush and tree set, so do the petals fade and fall to the ground. Shortly afterwards, the birds with the approach of the summer month, cease singing and all the colour and birdsong, so characteristic of May, have gone.

In August, a few birds start to sing again, but their songs are merely an echo of May and our best singer, the Blackbird, is unfortunately not one of their number. Winter must first pass and it won't be until the days again begin to lengthen, that we shall hear his joyous notes, when smiling spring again comes into her kingdom and his song reaches its climax in May – Mary's month.