

MY GARDEN By CLARE OGDEN DAVIS

no time to go out and see it. The supposedly stolid British fill all the parks in London, too, and it is no mean show in Hyde Park, St. James's and the Green Park, nor even in the smaller squares.

In front of Buckingham Palace the great beds were massed with thousands alongside thousands of rose-red tulips, all the same height, all the same shade, and it seemed to me that as many people were looking at them as at the medieval pomp and ceremony of the guard. Every time I passed them, I was reminded that the British have their royalty, their traditions and their now somewhat apprehensive Empire, but above all they have their love of gardens. The sun never sets on the Englishman with a trowel.

All over again I found out that they are literally a nation not of shopkeepers but of gardeners. Every little cottage has its tiny dooryard brave with bloom, its garden square tended as lovingly as any great park, manicured and swept with a passionate care. Five or six lupines or a dozen wallflowers, perhaps, and nothing more, among the vegetables destined to make that horrid boiled concoction they call "greens". (The English are a great people and I like them better than I remembered that I did, but I do wish they could learn to cook.)

Yet one of the fairest gardens I saw has been made by a pair of Americans at Stondon Massey in Essex. I spent Whit Sunday with Clare and Fontie Mahannah and marvelled at what they have done with a meadow in two years.

The house is a mellowed red brick, and old. Wisteria and clematis in full bloom climb the walls. The front yard, as we would call it, had been planted years ago in laburn-

ums and white lilacs, those copper beeches that are like a churchful of Bach music, and one enormous pink horse chestnut. No blooming tree, except perhaps a Southern crepe myrtle or a pink dogwood have I ever seen as beautiful, and certainly none so huge. The candles or bloom, delicately pink and crisp and fair, covered this one so that at a little way off it looked as though a tulle veil had been thrown over a green giantess. Close up, it was a giant's Christmas tree with the rosy candles ready to light.

Those things the Mahannahs found on the place. Close to the house, on either side of a tall hedge of clipped hew, Fontie has formal beds of tulips: rose-hued tall tulips above forget-me-nots, dark red tulips above yellow wallflowers; the pale yellow chalcids of Mrs. Moon elevated above an alter cloth of rose-colored English daisies, and, in another bed, rose tulips glowing above white daisies.

On either side of the garden path was a long bed of hundreds of tea roses not yet in bloom; out beyond the sweep of lawn, a three-hundred foot perennial border of all the English garden favorites: Sweet William, Canterbury bells, delphiniums, lilies, geums and fine Russell lupines with now and then an accent of exquisite pink rhododendrons. This border ran along a fence beyond which lay the tennis, badminton and croquet courts. Back of those were the greenhouses and kitchen garden.

The Mahannahs, from Memphis, are growing sweet corn and new potatoes. They haven't been able to get bush beans in England; I am sending them some. They fed me fried chicken and cornbread with chicken gravy, those grand people.

Blackbirds sing entrancingly and in the late afternoon the cuckoo calls. They promised me a nightingale if I would stay until midnight, but I had to go back to London. (That sentence, a poem by Alfred Noyes. "Obviously," he adds, "you got home.")

So not all they are old, like the story: "You the lawn in it and cuts it waters it rolls, feeds it top every day, you keeps it up dresses it and"

for three hundred year, and there you are—a lawn."

The Tennesseans' garden is only two years old, but, mingling American vision with English charm, it pleased me more than did the famous roast joints at Simpsons, which gave me indigestion. (Not even Queen Mary has been able to do anything about English cooking).

In a London flower shop I found an amazing iris, pale grey, so heavily stippled with dark purple that it looks like a smoky cloud. It is named, oddly, Susiana.

I have not yet had time to get to my garden. I hear we've had a drought, and I know how much weeding and digging there is to do on the hillside at Cooper Head in Weston. Farewell to the manicures and pale hands I loved beside the Hudson and the Thames. Tarantara, tarantara the trowel, and heigh ho the hoe! Summer is yecumin in, sing ho, cuckoo!