

*Chronicles of the Garden*, Mrs. Francis King, 1925

John Hunter, the Historian of the New Zealand Daffodil Society, sent us the following excerpts from the book, *Chronicles of the Garden*. He says the second chapter in this book is on daffodils of the early 1920s. The book was published in New York in 1925.

NOTE: Warm thanks are given here to the editors of *House Beautiful*, *McCall's Magazine*, *Landscape Architecture*, and *The Publisher's Weekly* for such parts of this book as first appeared in their publications, and to the many friends who have generously let their gardens figure through word or picture in these pages.

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In the chapter on daffodils, Mrs. King goes into great detail; she obviously knew the subject very well. She discusses some of the English and Irish hybridizers of the day: The Reverend G. H. Engleheart, Dr. N. Y. Lower, Mrs. R. O. Backhouse, and Guy L. Wilson; also the Reverend Joseph Jacob and the two books he wrote (*Daffodils*, 1911; and *Hardy Bulbs for Amateurs*, 1924). Also she mentions a number of the new cultivars that were grown in America in the early 1920s. She writes:

So far as I know, but one organization in this country holds a yearly show of daffodils. This is the Garden Club of Michigan in Detroit. Its members collect regularly, grow the new things in the various classes with the greatest care, show them under the classification rules of the Royal Horticultural Society, and are thus starting, perhaps unconsciously, an educational movement in horticulture which should be developed in all centres where flowers are grown and gardeners congregate.

Mrs. King quotes a report by Guy L. Wilson in his seasonal notes from 1920 and 1921. In these there are very glowing reports of Mrs. R.O. Backhouse's flowers at the English shows. This reads as follows:

But I must quote a sentence or so with regard to one of the exhibitors at this show as tribute to that great hybridizer of the daffodil, Mrs. R. O. Backhouse, whose death is so lamented by all who knew her or knew of her. Mr. Guy L. Wilson writes: "Across the alley was Mrs. Backhouse's

sensational exhibit of flowers, for the most part arrayed in flaming colors, in one or two instances quite barbaric in effect. One could rarely see the flowers, such a crowd of admirers besieged them all the time. I think Mrs. Backhouse must have a feeling for dramatic effect, and of keen appreciation of the value of climax from the way in which she unpacked these flowers. She kept quietly putting up one wonder after another, amid a crescendo of superlatives from the onlookers; thinking she had arranged all her flowers, I left her stand, but passing it again a little later, I saw in the centre three flowers which reduced me to incoherent amazement." It was Mrs. Backhouse who was well on the way to producing a red daffodil. Whether one may or may not fancy the idea, this would have been a triumph in hybridizing. And I myself would like for general use, for instance, a red Barrii, with a cream-white cup, one more bright pigment for our spring palette of color.

The book is dedicated as per the following:

To Miss Gertrude Jekyll, V.M.H., who more than any other has made the planting of gardens in the English-speaking countries one of the fine arts. This book is dedicated in gratitude and affection.

The book has 276 pages, and approximately 24 black and white plates, only three of which show daffodils in garden situations.