

Somerset

by Casey Hutcheson



I do grow so very weary of London in winter. It's such a bore. Every brick, every light post, every carriage, every suit ... the same melancholy shade of gray. I serve faithfully beside my parents, who are parishioners of one of the largest churches in all of London. It's a purpose-filled life. I must confess, however, I positively live for summer, the season my father takes us to the countryside to live closer to his vacationing flock.

The moment I step out of my carriage onto fresh green grass, I run headlong to the outer edge of our hundreds acre spread, refusing anything and everything but crisp, clean air, filling my lungs with billows of hope eternal. That's not my favorite, part, though. No, not even close.

The second thing I do, or did, before Mr. MacCabe, our Irish gardener, died was join him in the garden wearing my best gardening garment and gloves. I've never been one to fear filth, especially for the cause of hard, meaty work. Mr. MacCabe was once a college professor who left his profession to grow flowers and shepherd a small church in the hills. All of London was convinced he'd gone quite mad, but I knew better. I understood his need to be among the flowers, the colors, the destitute homesteaders. I especially adored his way with words.

"I planted a new speculative crop this year, Sunshine," he'd always say, I assume because he was always experimenting. "This summer we'll have a beauty, but as you know, no, that's never my goal at all. As always it will be commonsensical and unintentional, experimental, and abloom with eventuality!"

I understood him well, but I suspected my father or Shakespeare might have understood him better. Nevertheless, I kept up with him

as he planted all sorts of wild and wonderful things ... many that led to unfortunate ends. He kept a written account of all his successes, but mostly his failures.

“Field beans failed to sprout despite copious amounts of rain ... Maize failed to produce ample kernels per cob ... Turnip rapes eaten by bugs ...”

Perhaps my favorite thing about that devoted little man was that he was never once daunted. He failed at crops more times than not, yet he found such joy in the process of finding out what worked and what would never bring him satisfaction. Perhaps that was his satisfaction ... the perpetual challenge of it all. I suspect true satisfaction could never be found with any less focus or daily devotion than that given by Mr. McCloud.

London life, for me, is a little less like a laboratory and more like a mortuary, but regardless of the season and place I'm in, I've learned ... or at least I'm trying to learn ... how to be more like our red haired, passionate cultivator.

My life, whether it be in the gray or the green, is a beautiful garden of people, filled with promise. It is also a laboratory of finding out what works and what doesn't work for these individuals. My parents and I, too, have “planted” many seeds of hope in the lives of others that failed to bloom. We've “watered” some truths onto lives void of knowledge, only to see them eaten by nasty little “bugs.” Yet, we've also simply learned along the way what works, and what does not.

I am not as daunted as I was two years ago, or even five years ago. If anything, I'm encouraged and look expectantly at each person or task before me as a wondrous laboratory experiment. I anticipate the glorious, or not so glorious, results with the candor of a school-girl in full bloom.

I walk through my little garden, fingertips out just so, touching the tips of petals as I float by them. Deep down, I know some will die. I know there's a possibility that only one or two will survive the winter. Yet, I water them all the same because I cannot see what's going on underneath the ground. I never know which little soul will sprout, which will thrive, or which will wilt. I only know it is God's job to shine, it is the Word's job to anchor, and it is my job to water and reap a living harvest.