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**Opening Extract from...**

# Country

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IT IS hard to travel through the countryside for long without feeling cheerful. There is always something to raise your spirits. You can, for example, walk down almost any village street and, within a few minutes, find at least one garden that will bring a smile to your lips with its particular charms. There is so much to choose from: the range of individuality on view is amazing. There are neat gardens, ambitious gardens, modest gardens, extravagant gardens, natural gardens, gardens full of artifice, cluttered gardens, witty gardens, gardens that obviously spend a lot of time being played in; and, not least, plenty of neglected gardens.

I remember one particular cottage, near Ashmore in Kent, whose front garden was gloriously overgrown. You could hardly see the house behind the riot of colour; there were poppies that came up to the eaves. The scent was intoxicating, while the overall effect – if you also took into account the moss-matted roof and lichen-dappled front





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