

Legends of Easter Flowers



PRIMROSE by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him—and it was nothing more.

Thus wrote that great flower lover, Wordsworth, in telling about the lack of sentiment in one of his characters. But neither that man nor any of his kind were in Australia when the first English primroses emigrated to that new land. An enormous nugget of gold could not have created more excitement. Rugged, restless men wept over the plants with their pale, modest blossoms. They were fragrantly



A STUDY IN IRIS



BANISHED LILIES

WINTER SPENT ON THE NILE

English Writer Tells of Life on a River Steamer That Passes Through Flowery Fields.

Cairo, Egypt.—Without doubt the pleasantest place in which to spend a non-wintery winter is Egypt—the banks of the Nile. In Cairo, perhaps, it is not quite correct to describe the winter as non-wintery, for the early morning and evening cold is sufficient to make itself very sensibly felt; but in Assuan and Luxor the winter is no winter in the European sense of the word, says a writer in the London Post.

By Christmas the narcissus and the violets, immense beds of which grow in the gardens, are already in bloom; while by March, our early spring, the orange blossom and the scarlet hibiscus are fully out, the pink and white oleanders and petunias are flowering with a profusion utterly unknown in European gardens, and the long, lofty wall of the Winter Palace



Along the Lazy Nile.

gardens in Luxor is hung with, as it were, a tapestry of deep yellow Marchal Niel roses and deep purple bougainvillea—wonderful color-study of tints, both rich and rare. Winter on the Nile, indeed, is more like an ideal summer, with warm days, which are yet not exhausting, and with cool evenings and early mornings, which possess some marvelous quality of freshness and invigorating power of which evenings and early mornings elsewhere seem bereft.

For complete rest and refreshment of mind and body, I think, after considerable experience of travel, that I should send any one to Egypt in preference to any other part of the world. I should not recommend much time being spent in Cairo, as, interesting city though it is in the older and native parts, it is not characteristically Egyptian, and does not, unless, perchance for the incorrigible town lover, possess anything approaching to the nameless charm of the Nile and upper Egypt.

Throughout the entire journey, lasting about a fortnight, from Cairo to Assuan, this abundant life of the Nile is ceaselessly in evidence. In summer, the dead season, it might be less apparent, but in winter or spring the signs of people, habitations, domestic animals, cultivation, wherever the eye rests, are striking beyond all else in the Egyptian landscape. In the winter there are crops to be sown, watered, and tended, and by early spring the first of these crops are ready for harvest.

I do not think I speak for myself alone when I say that I have spent day after day in the bows of a Nile steamer doing nothing whatever but watching the scenes passed through without for a moment finding the days too long.

Apart from the life, actually on the river, with the passage of boats, bearing the peculiar long Nile sails, manned by bawling Arabs and laden with strange cargoes of water jugs, sugar cane, and maize, there is the life on the shore itself—the life of a people unfamiliar and yet familiar, because they seem to have come out of the pages of the family Bibles at whose illustrations we used to look in our childhood, a people doing things as they did them thousands of years ago, living a life which we see to be real because it goes on before our eyes, and which yet seems a life of long ago.

PLEDGE WAR ON AIGRETTE

New York Women Also Place Ban on Much-Prized Bird of Paradise Ornament.

New York.—Pledges never again to wear the much-prized plumage of either the bird of paradise or the aigrette are being signed by many women prominent in society here.

Mrs. H. Fairfield Osborn, who is the president of the American Museum of Natural History, started the pledge-taking at a club meeting, when it was resolved that everything possible should be done to protect from extinction the two birds whose plumage has been much sought by women of fashion.

The women pledge-takers are merely members of the women's auxiliary of the New York Zoological society. By formal resolution they endorsed the principle of federal protection of birds, embodied in the McLean bill now before congress.

Sells Quart of Blood for \$25.
New York.—Joseph Schwartz, out of work and hungry, sold a pint and a half of his blood to Jack Shapiro for \$25. The transfusion took place in Lebanon hospital.

DEAD ARE IGNORED

U. S. Has Done Little to Honor Resting Places of Presidents.

Former Executives of This Country Are Buried in Many Odd Places, Without Proper Monuments to Their Memory.

Washington.—Presidents cannot be kept very long after they are dead—"we are but mortals, after all." Even their initials are often forgotten. The chances are that six and a quarter men out of every ten if they were suddenly asked what were the initials of President Harrison would answer, "Benjamin H.," just as thousands, even now while he "lags superfluous on the stage," think that the only living ex-president is T. R. Roosevelt. Mr. Wattersson himself is often with Henry W. Wattersson, and George Trinton McClellan Harvey is simply known as George, says a correspondent.

Mrs. Martin Littleton's active campaign for the recovery of Monticello does not touch directly the question, "What shall we do with our presidents?" but it suggests inquiry into what we have done with them after they have "shuffled off this mortal coil," and it must be said that the nation has done very little in their honor—in most cases it has not provided for their sepulcher or any adequate monuments to their memory.

The former presidents are buried in all sorts of odd places—in country churchyards, in city cemeteries, in vaults of massive masonry, in leaden caskets and in plain coffins, after the manner of the plain people from whom they sprang—these imperious Caesars, so to say, "dead and turned to clay," who "might stop a hole to keep the wind away"—this "phantom caravan" that "has reach'd the nothing it set out from."

Why not dig up the bones of Thomas Jefferson—which have been resting in the grave chosen by himself at Monticello, his home in Virginia, for eighty-six years—and re-inter them in the National cemetery at Arlington? That would dispose finally and in the most effective way of the question of securing by gift or purchase the home of Jefferson for a national shrine. Without his dust his former place of residence would lose its chief interest to the American people who would do him honor. Buried again at Arlington, still in the soil of the commonwealth which he served so steadfastly, his resting place would be a national charge, a sentimental spot with



VAN BUREN'S MONUMENT, KINDERHOOK, N. Y.

in easy reach of the national capital, to which all pilgrims to the heart of the country could readily resort and pay their vows to the father of American democracy.

Washington is buried at Mount Vernon, his estate situated on the southern bank of the Potomac river, and sixteen miles distant from the national capital. His monument is not one of the most imposing of the memorials to the presidents, but it is the most impressive because of its simple dignity. The tomb is a brick structure, twelve feet high, entrance to which is provided through an iron gateway, flanked by pilasters, and on the arch surmounting the gateway there is an inscription: "Within the inclosure rest the remains of Gen. Washington." In a plain marble sarcophagus placed in the ante-chamber of the tomb rest the remains of Washington. This sarcophagus was fashioned by John Struthers of Philadelphia, from a design made by William Strickland. Another severely plain sarcophagus of the same workmanship and design and containing the remains of Martha Washington stands in the tomb hard by that of her illustrious husband. These sarcophagi were presented by Mr. Strickland to the relatives of Washington. The grave of Washington and his home at Mount Vernon are under the protection of the Mount Vernon association, composed of women from all the original thirteen states, and are well cared for as a patriotic duty by these women as a shrine to which lovers of the country journey every year to pay their vows and catch fresh inspiration meditating upon the virtues of the father of his country.

Martin Van Buren was buried in the Reformed church cemetery at Kinderhook, Columbia County, N. Y., and his grave is marked by a plain granite shaft.

Gem Imports at Vast Sum.
New York.—The January importation of diamonds, pearls and other precious stones was the largest on record at this port for January with a single exception. The total value of imported gems amounted to \$3,399,995, or \$725,000 more than for January, 1912. Two years ago, however, the record of \$4,541,606 was made.



A FIELD OF EASTER LILIES IN BERNUCA

eloquent messages from home. But despite its unassuming manner the primrose has linked with its history a tale of political honors. It is an heraldic flower giving name to a noble Scottish house on whose shield it is graven with a motto that, translated, reads: "Early youth is charming." Besides this, it was taken as the symbol of a political career more bold, brilliant and strange than any other of its time. The statesman was Lord Beaconsfield, and in connection with him there was established in England a new festival called Primrose Day.

Mythology as well as history claims the humble little flower, and tells a tale of its origin. The story is that a beautiful youth named Parasilos died of grief over the loss of his love, and was metamorphosed into the primrose, which in its early days bore his name.

The fair spring blossoms which Mother Earth sent forth to herald the coming of Easter have been gossiping about each other. The tales they tell about the tulip, that bright favorite of Oriental lands, besides being highly romantic, verge on the sensational. Its notorious career has been freely discussed among the less brilliant flowers, some of which, in spite of their sweet, gentle dispositions, resent the tulip's regal bearing and courtly airs. Few people have ever heard the stories they tell. In this busy, hustling age only poets and occasionally other unpractical folk find time to "trace the family trees" and history of flowers.

But the tulip, as well as the other blossoms that are talked about, will probably be welcomed even more cordially than of old into the churches and the homes of the best families after its strange and wonderful past becomes known. The gay-petaled blossom gets its name from a similarity to the Turkish headdress, and one of the chief national festivals in the Sultan's land is known as the feast of tulips. But the proud flower has done something more than please the Turks with its beauty.

Once upon a time it held just as great an influence over the financial affairs of some families as Wall street has had over those of others. This all happened something over 300 years ago, when the tulip was first taken to western Europe.

It was immediately enthroned as czar in the floral kingdom, and so great was the rage for it in Holland and France that many families famed for wealth were bankrupted by it. The newcomer's beauty made even the wise, staid Dutch florists mad, and speculation in costly bulbs became a terrible gambling mania among them. A rare specimen often won a prize as high as that paid for a high-stepping race horse or a fine diamond. Fortunes changed hands daily in bets over the final outcome of almost priceless seedling bulbs. The gambling reached such a height that the government finally had to issue a proclamation to suppress it. During three years tulips yielded to the city of Haarlem the snug little sum of \$50,000,000. The finest bulbs are still brought from that Holland town, and are descendants of those famous tulips.

While this financial career of the tulip is most interesting in speculating circles, the poets love best the tale that tells how the young Persian always makes it the emblem of his declaration of love. The turbaned swain sends to the lady of his dreams the most brilliant tulip he can find. The message it bears is that like the flower his countenance is all on fire and his heart has been reduced to a coal by the intense warmth of his love.

The well beloved violet is another gentle little flower that has been a prominent figure in history. When the first Napoleon was in exile it was adopted as his emblem by his followers. A



ROSE

bunch of violets worn by a Frenchman, or seen in his home, was a secret message that he was loyal to the exiled chieftain's cause.

Ion was the name bestowed upon the violet by the imaginative Greek who loved to people the petals of every blossom and the ripples of every rill with fair creations of their fancy. According to mythology the name was derived from Ia, the daughter of Midas and the betrothed of Atys. The story runs that Diana, desiring to conceal the maid from Apollo, transformed her into a violet. Another myth about the birth of the flower says that Jupiter caused the first violets to spring from the earth as food for the persecuted Ia while she was hiding in the form of a white heifer from the fury of Juno.

The verse makers have a special fondness for the tiny flower, and love to translate the message it is trying to tell to the rest of creation.

It is a singular fact that some flowers suggest pensiveness and even melancholy, while in form, color and bearing others speak only of gladness. While the personality of the flower may be somewhat responsible for its effect on the human moods, more, perhaps, is due to the strain of poets' moods. Most of the Easter flowers seem to be message bearers of joy and hope, lifting their faces to the blue skies in happy worship rather than in sadness. It seems to be natural for poets to give names and human attributes to plants, but the beauty loving Greeks went farther along the path of fancy. They invented human originals for their favorite flowers, and made beautiful legends to account for the transformation. The lovely narcissus, according to their lore, was once a handsome young god who became so lost in admiration of his own shadow that he cruelly slighted the affections of the fair Echo. As a punishment for this crime he was changed into a narcissus, the flower of self love. Shakespeare alludes to another romantic legend in his "Winter Tale." The narcissus was said to have been the flower that the daughter of Ceres was gathering when she was carried off by Pluto of infernal region fame. The night goddesses also chose it for their ancient coronet, and it was a highly important factor in the customs of Greek life. The Chinese, too, have a great fancy for this flower. They use it in many of their sacred ceremonies, and every family in the Mikado's realm takes great pride in having a plant in full bloom at the New Year.

Love and jealousy played leading parts in the story of the birth of the hyacinth, another Oriental favorite. There was a youth, Hyacinthus by name, who was much beloved by Apollo and Zephyr. He preferred the warm, steady affection of the sun to the fitful love of the wind. This made the passionate Zephyr wildly jealous and caused the plotting of a terrible revenge. While Apollo and Hyacinthus were playing quoits, which was a favorite game with the gods, Zephyr saw his awaited opportunity. He made his rival the slayer of Hyacinthus by blowing the god's quoit toward the head of the youth. But while the dying boy was held in the arms of Apollo he was transformed into the fair, fragrant hyacinth. The flower has always meant game or play because of this tale.

Every tradition associated with that Easter flower, the iris, makes it a beauty of richest promise. It signifies a message, and, because it grows in every part of the world, it is a universal message. The Greeks named it for the rainbow, but the Egyptians lay special claim to the flower.

It is the plant spoken of in Exodus as being the hiding place of the infant Moses when he lay in the cradle of the rushes on the river's bosom. It may be that the flowers whispered to him then that his destiny was to lead his people to the promised land. The ancient Egyptians placed the iris on the brow of the sphinx and on the scepters of their monarchs, and among all the eastern nations it has ever been the symbol of power. Another land that highly honors it is France, for it is the veritable fleur-de-lis that figures on the arms of this country. But there is a most beautiful legend that makes the iris a sacred flower as well as a national emblem. The story tells that it was a trembling, agonized witness of the crucifixion.

When it heard the anguished cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" it sobbed out the vow, "Henceforth I will perpetually mourn, and, lest man should ever lose sight of this solemn hour, above my golden chalice I will carry a veil of violet."

Ancient and important is the history of the lily, which was also high in favor with the old Egyptians, for it appears prominently in their hieroglyphics. According to a pretty legend, when lilies first grew on the earth they were none of them pure white, but all of a lovely yellow hue. Seaborn Aphrodite in her happy wanderings suddenly appeared before them wondrously fair and bright and white as the foam of the waves from which she sprang. The lilies trembled before her beauty, and grew so pale with jealousy that ever after they blossomed white. First the goddess Juno chose it as her favorite flower, and, then passing to the Virgin Mary, it was dedicated to the early Christian church.

Besides being the chosen flower of the church, it is also an imperial blossom. Away back in the days of 1048 Garcia IV, king of Navarre, established the Order of the Knights of St. Mary of the Lily, and another Order of the Lily was founded by Ferdinand of Aragon. Dundee carries lilies argent on its arms and beautiful Florence claims the queenly flowers as its emblem.

"The sweet forget-me-not that blooms for happy lovers," has more beautiful legends clinging to its name than any other flower. According to one beautiful tale, the Lord called the plants in the Garden of Eden before him to give them their names and color. As he spoke to one after another, a tiny flower thought itself unnoticed and fearful of being quite overlooked, it timidly pleaded, "Dear Lord, forget me not." The great Creator turned sternly toward the little plant that had dared to interrupt him, then seeing how sorely afraid it was, he gently smiled upon it, gave it for its color the heavens' own blue, and called it Forget-me-not, as a reminder that it had once been so foolish as to doubt him.

It is the Persians who have fashioned a beautiful legend to tell how it is that these flowers are scattered over the earth as the stars are spread over the sky. According to them, one morning of glory when the world was new, an angel stood weeping outside the closed gate of Paradise. He had fallen, in that he had loved a fair daughter of Earth. When his eyes had rested on her as she sat on a river's bank weaving forget-me-nots in her hair, heaven and his mission to earth were alike forgotten. Now he might no more enter in until his beloved had sown all over the earth the forget-me-not. He returned to her and hand in hand they wandered, planting everywhere the sweet azure flowers. When at last there remained on earth no spot barren of these blossoms, they turned again to the gate and found it open. Together they entered in, for the angel's great love had lifted the woman to Paradise.

Some authorities there are who do not hark back to the days of the Garden of Eden, but tell a pathetic tale of the Danube as the origin of the forget-me-not's name. The blue waves of the river washed the foundation walls of a brave knight's ancestral castle. He had but just come home from the wars and laid his honors at the feet of his lady love. His bride and he were wandering along the river's bank when he exclaimed, "Look yonder; there, upon that islet; see those star-like blossoms blue as thine eyes."

Instantly he sprang into the river and swam toward the flowers. In safety he reached the isle and grasped the fragile prize, but when he tried to return with them to the shore his heavy armor made him helpless in the current. Tossing the flowers to his frantic bride with the agonizing cry "Forget-me-not," he sank from sight.