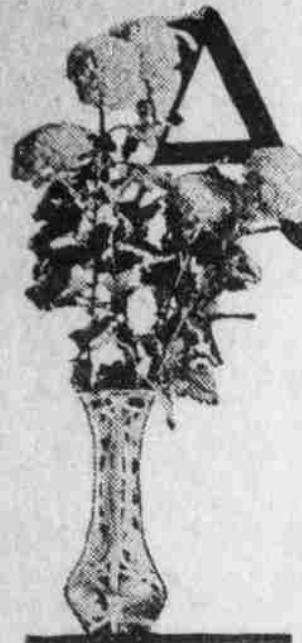


# Legends of Easter Flowers



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

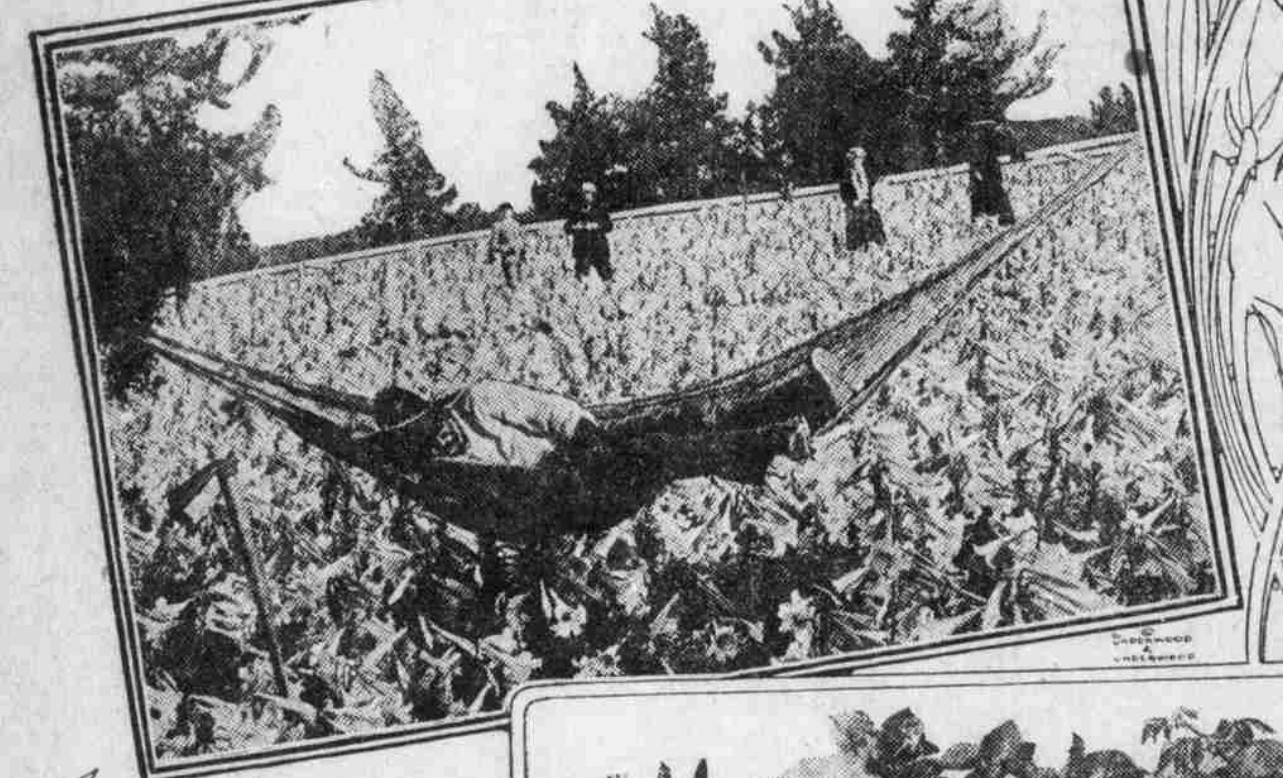
Thus wrote that great flower lover, Wordsworth, in telling about the lack of sentiment in one of his characters. But neither that man nor any of his kind were in Australia when the first English primroses emigrated to that new land. An enormous nugget of gold could not have created more excitement. Rugged,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



A STUDY IN LILIES



EASTER LILIES



A FIELD OF EASTER LILIES IN BERMUUDA

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 Parisios 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 impractical 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 he 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

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 Ila, 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 Ila 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 Garcias 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.

## INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By F. O. SELLERS, Director of Evening Department The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

LESSON FOR MARCH 23

THE EMPTY TOMB.

LESSON TEXT—Mark 16:1-11. GOLDEN TEXT—"Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." 1 Cor. 15:20.

Some teachers may prefer the study of the lesson of Israel and Rebekah, Gen. 24, but because of its relative value and its relation to the day we celebrate we prefer to consider the Easter lesson.

There are five main points in the evidence St. Mark presents to show us that Jesus was the True Son of God, (1) the testimony of John the Baptist, 1:2-8; (2) the baptism of Jesus, 1:9-11; (3) the transfiguration, 9:2-8; (4) the testimony of the centurion at his crucifixion, 15:39, and (5) the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus. Of the ten different appearances of our Lord, Mark records four, (a) to Mary, 16:9; (b) on the way to Emmaus, 16:12, 13; (c) in the upper room, 16:14, and (d) the ascension, 16:19.

**Purchased Spices.** Today we are to consider the first of these appearances. From a careful reading of this and the parallel accounts it is evident that as soon as the Sabbath day had closed and the shops were opened these friends of Jesus purchased spices that early the next morning they might anoint his dead body. Matthew 28:1 R. V. would indicate a possible earlier visit on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

1. "In the morning of the first day of the week," vv. 1-8. Starting while it was yet dark (John 20:1) these faithful friends hurried on their way to the tomb. It was Mary Magdalene who first reached the tomb, Matt. 28:1, John 20:1, she who had received much (Luke 8:2) loved much. Nor was it the Virgin Mary that had the privilege of first beholding him (v. 9). It was the love of these women (v. 1) that brought them to the tomb of him, "which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). That all the followers were shaken in faith the records clearly suggest, yet love remained, hence this desire to anoint his body. This service though unnecessary (Matt. 28:12, 20:19) was, however, rewarded by the revelation of the angelic messengers.

**Serious Question Raised.** Pursuing their way a very serious question was raised (v. 3), but God had already removed the difficulty (v. 4), so, too, if we will but be "looking up" (v. 4 R. V.), God will give us all necessary knowledge, (Jas. 1:5), and will enable us to overcome all difficulties. The empty tomb is the standing rebuke for all skeptics. If he be not risen let his enemies tell us where and what became of his body. The true basis of Christianity is in the risen Christ, see 1 Cor. 15:1-18.

Had the friends pondered well the words of Christ they would not have wasted their time and money seeking to anoint a dead body. That was the reason why they did not know and that is why we do not know many things we ought to know about our Lord. It is noticeable that none of the men were at the tomb.

Entering the tomb they found, not his body, but a young man, and later two in dazzling apparel (Luke 23:4) stood beside them. When Mary returned from the city, having told the news, the two angels were sitting one at the head and one at the feet of where the body had lain. John notes that the disciples found the napkin which had bound his head lying folded in its original folds in a place by itself (John 20:7).

In the midst of all their perplexity as to what had become of the body of him whom they loved they failed to recall his words (Luke 9:22) and hence could offer no solution of the difficulty. But the God of mercy supplied their need (Phil. 4:19) and hence the glad triumphant message of the angel, "He is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they (enemies and friends) laid him," v. 6. Cf. Matt. 28:6. Then, as though to make their knowledge of service to others, he commands them to go and tell the disciples "and Peter" and that they are no more to look for him there for "He goeth before you into Galilee," v. 7.

II. "And they went out quickly," vv. 8-11. It is well to reverence holy places and to remember sacred associations, but God is a spirit and cannot be localized. Of course the women would like to dwell at that place in meditation, but having had revealed to them the fact, their duty was to publish it abroad. A definite knowledge imposes a definite obligation of testimony.

Out of death came forth life. The seeming defeat of Jesus was the prelude to the world's greatest victory—its most astounding miracle. Living unto self means claiming yourself for yourself. Living "unto him" means that in your mind your spirit, your body, you show forth the risen, victorious, triumphant life.

This Easter day is the day of all days to remember such words as these:

Just as I am, young, strong and free, To be the best that I can be, For truth, and righteousness and thee, Lord of my life, I come to thee.

## Four Great Facts

By REV. PARLEY E. ZARTMANN, D.D., Secretary of Extension Department, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago

TEXT—But now is Christ risen from the dead. 1 Cor. 15:20.



The blustering winds of March remind one of the phenomena of spring; the trees bursting into bud and leaf and bloom; the lawns putting on their coats of green; the birds rejoicing in the triumph of the sun; the warmth of a new life pulsating in nature; spring is a fact.

These natural phenomena lead one's mind up to that more profound event the day on which we will sing our alleluias, for our Christ is risen from the dead. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And as I sit and think of the glorious heritage to which the church has attained by the resurrection of the Christ, four great facts impress themselves upon me. Let us meditate on them.

I. He is risen. "Vain the stone, the watch, the seal." What a jubilant shout was that as the once terrified disciples now greeted each other, "He is risen." Put to flight is every fear, rekindled is their hope for the gospel, and henceforth they go forth in the animation of this fact preaching the power of his resurrection. That Christ is risen is a monumental fact, it is the foundation of all Christianity. No, let me rather say that it is the keystone of Christianity; for without it the beautiful arch would go to pieces and the entire fabric would be in irretrievable ruin. What an awful condition we are in, if Christ be not risen; (1 Cor. 15:14-19). Life is fruitless, faith is rootless, hope is wretchedness, sin is without atonement, night without promise of day, death without assurance of resurrection, earth without promise of heaven, humanity without redemption, no Savior, no Lord, no King, no life eternal; nothing but waste and woe and wretchedness. What a dismal picture! But, blessed be God, Christ is risen from the dead, and that fact changes everything, drives away the darkness and gives promise and guarantee of eternal day and eternal joy.

II. He lives. "Lives again our glorious King." The angels said to those early seekers at the tomb: "Why seek ye the living among the dead; he is not here." No dead Christ for us; no speculative basis for our creed and no dead principle for our life, but a risen and a living Christ, a Christ alive forevermore, a living God who has promised to be with us even unto the end. Oh, what a joy to have the Easter life pulsing in us! What inspiration to know his promise is true, "Because I live ye shall live also." "God hath quickened us together with Christ."

III. He reigns. Once he was holder of death (and the powers of darkness were jubilant over destruction of Jesus), but it was only that his triumph might be more glorious and complete, and that he might make us heirs of his glory. And now he is victor and conqueror and king. He has led captivity captive. Jesus reigns. He is now king—oh, may he soon be king of kings. He is in our hearts the only Potentate. Is this Easter Christ your lord and king? Give him the throne of your heart, the service of your life, that you may have the victory over yourself and may know the fullness of joy of the life ruled by Jesus. "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all."

IV. He intercedes. What a climax in all the precious truths of this Easter time! Our risen, living, reigning Lord "ever liveth to make intercession for us." We were without strength, we were ungodly, aliens from God and enemies of his kingdom; and until Jesus went to the right hand of the father as our advocate we had closed to ourselves the way of approach to forgiveness and blessing and peace. But Jesus Christ is "able to save for evermore them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Therefore, we can rejoicingly shout that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Note the rest of that intercessory prayer, "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am." Could infinite love do more than this? and can I do less than accept this wonderful gift of God's grace to be with him.

"Far from a world of grief and sin, With God eternally shut in." And this makes Easter in the soul and crowns the life with Easter flowers. . . fills the world with Easter perfumes. Tremendous thought—Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us. Hence, for me the seal is broken, I am risen from the dreadful and restless sepulcher of my old self, I live the life of Jesus Christ.