

THOMAS GRIMSHAW and the EASTER LILY

BY S. E. KISER.

It was typhoid fever that brought Henry Colthorpe to the end of his faith. So often faith depends upon material things.

For a year things had been steadily going against Colthorpe. In May his wife had suffered a nervous breakdown. The doctors said at first that a complete rest of a month or two in an institution which they recommended would be sufficient to restore her to health and strength. So she was taken away, and Henry was left in the little flat with the Easter Lily. They called her the Easter Lily because she had been born on Easter day and because her real name was Lillian. The Easter Lily was nine years old.

But the doctors were mistaken, as doctors often are. It was November before Mrs. Colthorpe was well enough to return home. Even then she was pale, thin and so weak that the work in the little flat would have been too much for her if the Easter Lily had not been there to help. All that they had been able to save was gone. The doctors' bills and the charges at the institution had been heavy. Henry Colthorpe was in debt for the first time in his life, but he remained hopeful.

"Never mind. We'll soon be on our feet again. Everything will turn out all right if you'll just keep from worrying and get well as fast as you can."

Mary Colthorpe smiled wearily, but hopefully, and promised to do her best.

The Easter Lily, who had been waiting and listening, heard them and rushed down the stairs to meet them. She threw her arms around her mother's neck and said:

"Oh, mother, I'm so glad. Now it will not be lonesome here any more."

A week after Mary's return the Easter Lily came down with scarlet fever.

Henry Colthorpe began sometimes, while she was hovering between life and death, to wonder whether there was really an All-Wise Father who watched over people. He tried to do his work faithfully, but his heart was full of trouble and his mind was often clouded. He made mistakes that exasperated his employer. His face became haggard, his shoulders drooped and his feet grew heavy. In a few months he seemed to have become an old man.

Thomas Grimshaw had never been regarded as a philanthropist or as a man who cared much if other people happened to be in distress. He was what is known as "a hard-headed business man." Such a man is likely to be hard-hearted, as well as hard-headed. It did not matter to Mr. Grimshaw how his employes got along. If they did their work well, he paid them and took no interest in their personal affairs.

To him there were no more than automatons, filling their places in his establishment to be cast aside when they ceased to be useful and to be replaced by other automatons. If he had been told that the men who worked for him deserved any credit for the success of his business he would have regarded the statement as preposterous. His idea was that his obligations to his employes ceased when he paid them their wages, which were always as small as he could make them without bringing on trouble.

Mr. Grimshaw noticed that Henry Colthorpe lagged at his work. Henry Colthorpe had for years been a faithful and useful employe, but that did not give him an excuse for being slow or for making mistakes now.

The Easter Lily had begun to recover and Mary Colthorpe was regaining her spirits and her strength when Christmas came. On St. Valentine's day Henry Colthorpe carried two pretty cards to his wife and daughter. He had gone without his lunch that day, so that he could afford to buy the cards, but neither Mary nor the Easter Lily knew that.

In the evening, when the Easter Lily had said her prayers and kissed her mother good night, she called her father to her bedside. She put her arms around his neck and drew his face down beside her own upon the pillow.

"Dear, good papa," she said. "Are you glad that I got well?"

"Of course I am, darling."

"Would you be very sorry if you had no little girl?"

"Yes, very sorry."

"But you would have mother."

"I would be glad to have mother, but I could not get along without my little girl."

"Why couldn't you?"
"Because a little girl gives one courage."
"Couldn't you have courage without a little girl?"
"I'm afraid not. I'm afraid I should not have courage or hope or kindness any more, if I had no little girl. I'm afraid I should give up the struggle."
"What struggle?"

"A struggle that I have to keep making every day. But I have my little girl and so I am able to keep on, and everything is going to be all right. So go to sleep, and dream happy dreams, and tomorrow—tomorrow—why, tomorrow everything will be lovely."

Henry Colthorpe was so weak the next morning that it was difficult for him to get out of bed, but he wearily put on his clothes, ate a mouthful of breakfast and started away to his work.

At noon he was called into Thomas Grimshaw's office.

"Colthorpe," said the "hard-headed business man," frowning. "I have noticed for some time that you've been loafing at your work. You've made a number of mistakes that have annoyed me very much. This is Wednesday. We will not need you here after the end of this week."

During the afternoon Henry Colthorpe lost the remnant of faith that had been left in his heart, and when he got home at night his wife put her hand upon his brow and fearfully cried:

"Henry, you are burning up with fever."

The doctor decided that he had for weeks been afflicted with "walking typhoid," and said it was marvelous that he had been able to keep up as he did.

One day when he was able to sit up in bed again the doctor said:

"Well, sir! We'll soon have you well again. You notice 'we.' Your wife deserves more credit than I do for pulling you through. It was her nursing, more than my medicine, that did it."

Sometimes during the days of his convalescence Henry Colthorpe was inclined to be sorry they had not let him die. If it had not been for the Easter Lily he would have had no wish to live.

One day she overheard her mother and father talking about their misfortunes. It was the day before Easter. She listened while Henry explained how he had been discharged by Grimshaw and for the first time she was able to understand the seriousness of their situation.

She put on the best things she had and went out. Around the corner there was a florist's shop. The window was full of Easter lilies. She stopped to look at them and while she was looking and wishing that some of them could be hers a young man came out. He noticed her pitiful look.

Fortunately the young man was in love. When a young man is in love he is generous and likely to be actuated by kindly impulses.

The young man turned back into the shop and a moment later he came out again, with an Easter lily in his hand.

"Here," he said, handing the flower to Lillian. "Tomorrow is Easter. I hope you will be happy."

She took the flower and turned away. When she reached Thomas Grimshaw's office he was seated alone at his desk.

"I don't want to buy any flowers," he said, looking over his glasses at Lillian. "Who let you in here?"

"I—I just came in by myself," she replied. "And I don't want to sell any flowers. I brought this lily to give to you."

"You did, eh? Why do you want to give it to me?"

"Because tomorrow is Easter."

"Who sent you here?"

"Nobody sent me. I came all by myself."

"Well, I don't want your flower. Take it and go away. I'm busy."

"Tomorrow is Easter."

"Yes, I know tomorrow is Easter."

"Everybody ought to be kind and glad on Easter. Everybody ought to be happy on Easter."

"All right. I'm not keeping anybody from being happy on Easter."

"Have you a little girl?"

"No."

"Did you ever have a little girl?"

Thomas Grimshaw gave a little start, as if somebody had dealt him an unexpected blow. He drew a long breath and turning his back toward Lillian, looked out the window at the high walls across the street. At length he swung around in his chair and asked:

"Who are you?"

"I'm the Easter Lily."

"What do you mean by that?"

"They call me the Easter Lily because I was born on Easter and my name is Lillian."

"Oh. And you brought that lily for me?"

"Yes."

"Why did you ask whether I had

ever had a little girl?"
"Because I was wishing you had."
"What difference would that make? Come here and sit on my knee."
"Thank you. I knew if you ever had a little girl you would be good and kind."
"Can't a man be good and kind unless he has a little girl?"
"I don't know. Maybe he would be good and kind if he had a little boy."

Thomas Grimshaw seemed to be strangely affected. He got his handkerchief out of his pocket and blew his nose very vigorously.

They talked about Easter and about lilies and about little girls and little boys. At last Mr. Grimshaw asked:

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to come with me," Lillian replied.

It was getting late. He locked his desk and said:

"Very well. Let me carry the lily. It is mine, because you have given it to me, haven't you?"

After Thomas Grimshaw had informed Henry Colthorpe that he would be paid for the time he had been ill and that as soon as he was well enough to work again he could have his old place at an increased salary he started away.

The Easter Lily went out into the dark, narrow hall with him to show him the way down stairs. When he had reached the first landing he turned and looked up and held out his arms toward her. She ran down and kissed him good-by.

Out in the street he stopped for a moment and looked up at the little flat. He held his lily in his hand, and when Lillian appeared at one of the dimly-lighted windows, he waved it at her.


Then he started on again, muttering: "God bless me! What a fine evening it is."

The Life Eternal

MEN of science have offered two strong arguments for the faith of which the Easter day is the efflorescence and the sign. One is that analogy seems to exclude the idea that the universe was built through such infinite labor and abysmal time to produce creatures of man's dignity and intellect who were to perish miserably in a day. Such waste of energy and planning is incredible, such a ghastly mockery is unthinkable in a world of order and of love.

That there is a subtle influence of some sort pervading the earth and skies, to which the soul of man unconsciously or subconsciously responds, is a hypothesis which is rather confirmed than discredited by such wonders as wireless telegraphy, the energy of radium and the multitude of psychic phenomena which coincidence seems inadequate to explain. Out of the vast unknown man is somehow stamped indelibly with the consciousness that he is in God's world, that God wants him and that the riddle of existence, like all other of nature's puzzles, will find its happy solution when this corruption shall have put on incorruption and mortality is swallowed up of life.

I will
ransom
them from
the power
of the
grave



Religion No Longer Terrible.
It is a glorious thing to remember that men are turning more and more to god and to religion because a more humane theology has stripped both God and religion of their former terrors. From a myriad of Christian pulpits the nobler message will go forth that Jesus died and rose again, not to reconcile an angry God to his wandering children, but to reconcile and draw those wayward ones to the Father's love and care. From the thunders of Sinai and the avenging wrath the theology of today is turning to the gospel of the prodigal son, the woman taken in adultery, the lost sheep, the Sermon on the Mount. How passing strange that the Redeemer who was all gentleness and forgiveness should have been made into a monster of tyrannous bigotry from which men and women and children have shrunk in terror for 2,000 years!

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Consider the Lilies

CONSIDER the lilies of the field.—Matt. 6:26, 28, 29.
What has this text to do with Easter day? Let us think awhile of life and death; the battle between life and death; life conquered by death; and conquered again by life. Those were the mysteries over which the men of old time thought, often till their hearts were sad. And because our forefathers were a sad and earnest folk; because they lived in a sad and dreary climate, where winter was far longer and more bitter than it is, thank God, now; therefore all their thoughts about winter and spring were sad; and they grew to despair, at last, of life ever conquering death, or light conquering darkness.

All living things would die. The very gods would die, fighting to the last against the powers of evil, till the sun should sink forever, and the world be a heap of ashes. And then—so strangely does God's gift of hope linger in the hearts of men—they saw—beyond all that, a dim dream of a new heaven and a new earth, in which should dwell righteousness; and of a new sun, more beautiful than ours; of a woman called "Life," hid safe, while all the world around her was destroyed, fed on the morning dew, preserved to be the mother of a new and happier race of men. And so to them, heathens as they were, God whispered that Christ should some day bring life and immortality to light.

"So it pleased the Father," says St. Paul, "to gather together to Christ all things, whether in heaven or in earth."

In him were fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, the dim longings, the childlike dreams, of heathen poets and sages, and of our own ancestors from whom we spring. He is the desire of all nations, for whom all were longing, though they knew it not. And now we may see, it seems to me, what the text has to do with Easter day. Be not anxious, says our Lord, for your life. Is not the life more than meat? There is an eternal life which depends not on earthly food, but on the will and word of God your Father; and that life in you will conquer death. Consider the lilies in the field. All the winter they are dead, unsightly roots, hidden in the earth. What can come of them? But no sooner does the sun of spring shine on their graves than they rise into sudden life and beauty as it pleases God, and every seed takes its own peculiar body. Even so is the resurrection of the dead.—Charles Kingsley.

ADOPT CUSTOMS OF EUROPE

Old Country Ideas for the Celebration of Easter Have Found Favor in America.

In many homes in America there have been transplanted some of the old country Easter customs. One of these is the Scotch custom of egg rolling. On Easter morning the entire family practices this custom with brightly decorated eggs, boiled so hard that there is no danger of their cracking. Very few of the English customs have been transplanted, however, although the various shires of England have notably quaint Easter observances.

In Shropshire and Herefordshire, and especially at Shrewsbury, it is the custom to make for Easter a rich and expensive cake that is known as simnel cake. These simnel cakes are raised cakes, with a crust made of fine flour and water with saffron color added, to give it a deep yellow color. The cake itself is a very rich plum cake, with candied lemon peel added. The crust is of the consistency of set cement. There is a tradition that Herefordshire women have used simnel cakes as footstools, and it is known that the cake is commonly boiled in order to be made edible. The simnels are usually marked with a figure of Christ or of the Virgin, thus preserving the religious significance of the day.

Another special English Easter cake is the Biddenden cake. In the parish of Biddenden there is an endowment of unknown date, supposed to have been made by two women named Preston, for making a distribution of cakes among the poor every Easter Sunday afternoon. The source of the benefaction consists of twenty acres of land, commonly called the "bread and cheese" lands. Six hundred of these Biddenden cakes and 270 loaves of bread are distributed under this endowment.

The Great Beyond.
The return of Easter is one of our Lord's ways of letting down a ladder to us that we may climb to the stars and see a little of the great beyond. Tollers of the plains below, we often miss the flashing lights thrown across the battlements for our relief. Enriched in soul we shall descend tomorrow to follow again the well-worn path of duty. But there will be a cheer upon the lips and a song in the heart, for we have dwelt a little in the heights, and the consummation of our hope draweth nigh!—Rev. M. Campbell.

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