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The Easter Lily Industry

By EDGAR E. WEBB

In addition to the Easter lilies raised from bulbs by the florists to meet the demand for that popular blossom during the Easter season, many thousands blossoms have arrived during the last week from Bermuda, where the flower is said to attain its most perfect growth. It is by its lilies that this little island has made itself famous, and, as extensive as the industry is, it is carried on in a most primitive manner nearly all the labor being performed by negroes and by hand. Since 1878 the cultivation of the blossom has increased yearly.

The growth of the industry is largely attributed to the efforts of Mrs. George Russell Hastings, a niece of ex-President Hayes, who planted some bulbs and, finding that they took kindly to the thin, rich soil of the island, encouraged the farmers to raise lilies as well as vegetables.

The lily industry has two branches—one the raising of bulbs and the other the raising of buds for shipment to firms in various localities. The experiment stations of the United States are endeavoring to ascertain if the lily industry can be made successful and profitable in those states where mild weather prevails, and the florists and growers are eagerly waiting results. Should the results prove encouraging a new American industry with great possibilities would open up, and it has been said that here would be another opportunity for the indefatigable woman of today to engage in an occupation both pleasing and profitable.

The lily fields of Bermuda form some of the most attractive sights of that pleasant spot yet, strange to say, many natives strongly object to the fragrance of the blossoms.

"You can discern the fragrance of a lily field a mile off," said a native the other day. "I don't know of any perfume I dislike as much as that of the lily and you will find that many other persons born in Bermuda feel the same way. You see, unless you live there all the year round, with that heavy overpowering perfume permeating the air, it is impossible to realize



CULTIVATING EASTER LILIES

how tired you become of it, and the fragrance of a bunch of lilies delicately scenting a room or church is decidedly different from the overpowering fragrance exhaled by a field of blossoms thirty or forty acres in extent."

This industry is said to be much more profitable than raising potatoes, onions or fruits, as an acre of lilies will bring three or four times the revenue to be obtained from an acre of onions, although a crop of vegetables can be raised at any time throughout the year in this land of perpetual spring.

Certain rules prevail regarding the growth that must be attained by a lily bulb for the market, and it usually requires three years to bring the bulbs to the required size and perfection for shipment. The bulbs are collected during June and July and carefully packed in dry sand to insure their safe arrival in a condition to force into flower when required.

The fields of blossoms attain their perfection during the early part of April, continuing to cover the land with white blooms for six weeks or longer. The wharf from which a steamer starts for New York twice a week is the scene of great activity. Cold storage accommodations are provided for the bulbs, which are carefully packed in boxes with layers of damp moss or ferns, in addition to tissue paper, which protects the bulbs from cracks or breaks on the white surface. All the work must be got through with almost incredible swiftness, as it is done the day before the steamer sails, in order to avoid keeping the flowers packed longer than necessary. Sometimes a belated packer will arrive a short time before the hour set for sailing and, being too late to pack the blossoms, will stack them up around the side of the cold storage room and trust to luck for their safe arrival. Not infrequently the steamer arrives at New York with \$20,000 worth of bulbs aboard.

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world today,
And hearts bowed down by grief and sadness
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In songs of praise, and even doubters
pray.

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