



## THE CROWN IMPERIAL LILY.

### A GERMAN LEGEND.

ONE of the most stately ornaments of our gardens in summer is the Imperial Lily, whose tall slender stem supports its crown of red drooping flowers, shaded by a central tuft of graceful emerald leaves. If you peep within the lovely bell you will perceive at its base six drops of water, crystal clear. Remove them gently, similar ones will instantly appear; take them away again, they will come back as before. Whence do they spring? What are they? They cannot be dew, the flower's mouth is bent earthwards, no heaven-dropt moisture could enter its bell-shaped cup.

Listen, and I will tell you their story.

Eighteen centuries ago, when our Lord had taken unto His gracious self human form and walked this earth, our Lily's aspect was not the same she presents to us to-day. Her flowers were then of a pure silvery white, and they stood upright, presenting their fair bosoms to the blue eye of heaven, and to the gaze and joy of men. The slender drooping leaves above its coroneted head were then indeed a protection for the tender flowers from the too boisterous play of the elements, and not a mere futile ornament as they are now. Of the six tearlike drops there was no sign. Still more than now was the Lily a fair ornament in field or dell, and all things named her beautiful. Thus lovely, pure, and innocent, she bloomed in spotless glory in the garden of Gethsemane.

Now our Lord liked this shady spot at the foot of Mount Olivet. Often and often, when He was wearied with the day's teaching, with exhorting the people to sin no more, but believe; when His tender heart bled for our human woe, He would wend His sacred feet to the grove of shadowy olive trees, and crossing the little bridge that spanned the brook of Kedron, rest a while in the garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus loved flowers. He saw in them "God's smile on the earth," and as He trod the winding paths of the enclosure, His eye looked with benign pleasure on the many bright blossoms growing around, that bent their heads beneath His gaze in holy, reverent awe. So many a time had He passed below the grey olive boughs, and not unfrequently had He beheld with unfeigned delight the pure crown of silvery bells which the Lily's stem held up to heaven.

The other flowers noticed this preference, but they were not envious, nay, they were but too glad that one of their number could afford, if but the briefest pleasure, to Him.

"Lily," said the grave old Olive tree, who rarely condescended to conversation with any but his fellow trees, and had never before addressed a plant so far beneath him in age and condition: "Lily, you are favoured above us all; the Master loves you; let me wish you joy of your beauty." And for once the stern,