



Vol. X.—No. 486.]

APRIL 20, 1889.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

PROFESSOR RUSKIN'S MAY-DAY FESTIVAL.

By THE REV. J. P. FAUNTHORPE, Principal of Whitelands College, Chelsea.

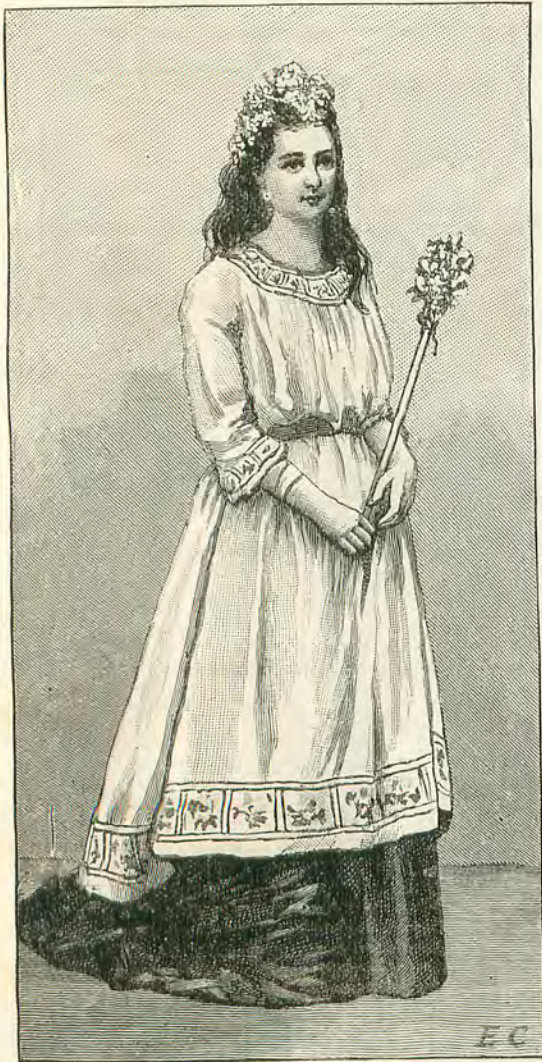


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THE PROCESSION LEAVING CHAPEL.

PERHAPS one of the most characteristic features of the art teaching of Professor Ruskin, founder and first master of the Guild of St. George, is that it is the duty of women and girls—of girls especially—to be as pretty, and as prettily useful, as ever they can. Like all men of great mind, he is an implicit and explicit believer in the Divine influence of girlhood, of womanhood, and wifehood. And in various ways he has let this appear—in his devotion to his own mother; in the personal pleasure he has taken with and for many of his pets; in his teaching; in many of his writings, notably "Queen of the Air," "Ethics of the Dust," and "Fors Clavigera"; and besides all these, in his May Queen Festival at Whitelands College, Chelsea, of which we are to say a few words for the amusement, edification, and, we hope too, the improvement of our girl readers.

The Professor's first attempt at having a May Queen was made in a village, through some rich young lady, and it failed, either because the parents of that young lady interfered, or because she got married and left the village, the would-be May Queen, and the Professor to look after themselves. But when the attempt was made at Whitelands, it turned out a complete success, and Mr. Ruskin was delighted with it in every way, or in every way but one, that one being the dress of the May Queen; which has never pleased him, not



MAY QUEEN.

Dress designed by Miss Kate Greenaway.

even when, as last year, it was designed by Miss Kate Greenaway, at his personal request, and carried out by the Ladies' Working Guild, with all the care and pains that Lady Eden could give to it. "She is," said the master, "like Madge Wildfire." That was the May Queen.

Chelsea is famed in many ways. It has been and is the residence of literary men and artists, and is now being rapidly converted into Queen Anne houses and flats; but it is long since it could furnish forth space for a Rural Queen of May, so the college May Queen has to be elected, and all the rites and mysteries thereto properly pertaining have to be performed within doors, but nevertheless flowers are sent up from all parts of the country. Flowers and evergreens are bought, and by the 1st of May the chapel, the college rooms, and the students present such an appearance of May, and May morning, and going a-Maying, as would do anyone's heart good, who likes flowers, and greenery, and pretty smiling faces, and white dresses, better than bricks and mortar, gas lamps and pavements.

Our first illustration shows the procession leaving the chapel after the bright and beautiful morning service. The students proceed at once to the class-room, and elect the May Queen. A balloting paper is given to every one, on which the name of the May Queen proposed by the voter is written. These are collected, and the governesses enter the votes on a prepared sheet, and the junior who has the majority of votes is Queen of May. Only once has there been a tie. The Queen elect is then taken to be robed, and with her maidens assigns to which of the senior students Mr. Ruskin's gift of about forty volumes of his books should be presented, one volume to each. The Queen herself has by right "The Queen of the Air." Each volume is given at the Queen's absolute will and pleasure, but always for good reason assigned, which reason is written in the book; and if by chance it expresses rather what the girl ought to be, than what she actually at present is, she has a life-long reminder of what she must strive to attain.

Each book contains a label, with the signatures of the Professor and the May Queen. During the assignment of these prizes or gifts, as they are to be called, the students sing various choice May Day songs, or recite passages from Shakespeare, or dance round the May pole; and the Principal makes an address, taking each year some topic connected with the sports, or derived from the Professor's books. Thus, last year he gave some account of "Merrie England" as it was once, and as it shall be again when the writings of Professor Ruskin are more widely known and his teachings more extensively followed.

The text, if we may say so, was this: "To please is woman's work." Women and girls can give and make pleasure. All right pleasure is praise and praiseworthy. They can give pleasure by making rooms clean and pretty, by kindly sympathy with all with whom they come in contact, and by carrying about the "Human face Divine" with a smile on it. "God has made you girls to take pleasure in the use of your eyes, and of your wits, and of your bodies. And foolish creatures are continually trying to live without looking at anything,



THE MAY QUEEN'S GOLDEN CROSS.

without thinking about anything, and still more without doing anything," says Mr. Ruskin, and of course they fail, and become soured and discontented and miserable; and what is worse, they make everybody else miserable also.

The Principal pointed out how girls could, in their daily lives, not only be pleased themselves, but give pleasure—good and right pleasure—to others. And he concluded thus, almost in Mr. Ruskin's words:—

"The angel of beautiful life is sent to all of you, hidden in the simplicity of daily life, daily duty. The root of all the evil in the world is the diabolical hunt after pleasure, apart from its use and the necessary price that must be paid for the right thing. It is a hunt on phantom steeds after a phantom hare with phantom hounds; it is pursuing death and not life, and death can be overtaken."

The grand procession is now announced, and the Queen takes her place on the dais surrounded by her maidens; more songs are sung, all her subjects do obeisance, and then the fortunate ones whose names are called, come up to receive their gifts, which they do in the manner shown in our picture.

But we have omitted the giving of the gold cross and necklet to the May Queen, which is usually done by some personal friend of the Professor. Our illustration shows the cross which was given last year. It is of pure gold, and of unique design.

When all the books are given, the procession is re-formed and the students march out after the Queen has proclaimed a holiday. She and her maidens are then photographed.

In the afternoon a large number of students take down the wreaths, make them into bouquets; and as the large baskets are filled they are taken by two or more girls to all the hospitals in the neighbourhood, and distributed to the patients; so there is May Day also kept, with flowers at hundreds of bedsides.

All our readers who want to know more about Mr. Ruskin and his teaching should read some of his books.

Perhaps one of the happiest features of the Whitelands May Queen Festival is the fact that nearly every student tries to have a May Queen in her school; and to try is to succeed. No one knows what help she will have in giving pleasure to others until she begins. All our girl readers cannot be Queens of May, but they can all be queens in their own homes, diffusing brightness and joy and happiness.

A DAISY CHAIN.

By HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

A LARK upspringing from crimson clover,
Trilling his song at the morning's gate,
Where dew-wet blossoms and grasses cover
His cosy nest and his patient mate.

Young leaves dancing and kissing each other,
Brown bees humming young buds among,
Young lambs sporting beside their mother,
O fresh fair days when the world is young!

A baby beck in the hedgerow shadow,
A beck new born of the sweet spring rain;
And children out in the wide May meadow,
Gaily stringing a daisy chain.

Dear little voices! I hear them calling
Now and again in their childish glee;
Ripples of laughter, rising and falling,
Now and again float back to me.

Thoughtful Mary alone is straying
Along the beck by the meadow bars;
"Here's a big daisy!" I hear her saying,
"This is the moon, and the rest are stars!"

Then came towards me with laughing faces
Three little daughters, a goodly band,
Linked together by daisy traces,
Which wee Ted holds in his dimpled hand.

My daisy chain—yet a link is broken—
My eyes grow wet with a mist of tears,
For still I hold in my heart unspoken
A grief that fell in the bygone years—

One little daughter has long been growing
To girlhood fair beneath Eden's palms—
Where crystal streams through the meads are flowing,
In yon far Heaven's eternal calms.

Of her I think when I hear the others
Laugh and shout in their careless mirth,
For lost lambs live in the hearts of mothers,
Side by side with their lambs on earth

Despite the pain when the links are riven,
God's hand will gather them all again,
And He will help me to knit in Heaven
The broken strands of my daisy chain!



MAY QUEEN DISTRIBUTING MR. RUSKIN'S GIFTS OF HIS OWN BOOKS IN PURPLE CALF AND GOLD.