



Vol. XVI.—No. 803.]

MAY 18, 1895.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

### ROSE LEGENDS.

THE old legend as to the origin of the rose runs thus. The rose came of nectar spilled from heaven. Love, who bore the celestial vintage, tripped and upset the vase; and the nectar spilling on the valleys of the earth bubbled up in roses. The rose is a very old flower, it goes back to remote antiquity. The number of species of roses known to the ancients was not great. They knew in fact of only the four main species, which are to this day indigenous to Greece—the hedge-rose, the heptree (of which the moss-rose is a variety), the pimpnel-rose, and the centifolia, the queen of all the roses, which has been celebrated by the poets of every age and people. It appears to have been a native of Schirwan, in the province of Bagdad, and probably was first introduced into Europe in the time of Alexander the Great. The most beautiful roses were those of Campania, as they were the earliest in flower, while those of Malta were the most fragrant, and those of Cyrene (where the moss-rose is cultivated with great diligence and care) the most celebrated for yielding oil. The roses of Pæstum were universally famous. Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Propertius vie with each other in singing the praises of

"Pæstum's twice-blooming roses."

There they grew in unwonted luxuriance, and flowered, as the poet intimates, twice in the year. Herodotus tells us that there were roses in the garden of Midas, the son of Gordius, in Phrygia that had sixty leaves, which grew of themselves, and had a more agreeable fragrance than all the others. The roses of Damascus were of a magnificent bloom. It is said that it was the rose-gardens of this old city in which, then as now, the Syrian lords sat among the damask flowers by the rushing streams from Lebanon, that Naaman had in mind when he asked, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Egypt?"

In the early centuries of the Christian era, when a constant migration of nations was taking place, the cultivation of the rose perished in



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ROSES FOR THE INVALID.



the same grave with ancient civilisation, leaving scarcely a trace behind. During the Mediæval Ages the training of the rose seems to have been strangely neglected. The times were rude and barbarous, and war and conquest occupied the thoughts of men more than the cultivation of the arts of peace. There exists, however, a precept of Charlemagne in his *Capitularies de Villis et Centis*, in which he recommends the Franks to cultivate the rose. The Benedictine monks subsequently greatly advanced its growth, and wherever a cloister of this order was set up a rose-garden was sure to be found in its vicinity. The rose was much cultivated and improved among the Arabs. The Crusaders brought many species, hitherto unknown in Europe, into France and Germany. The Damascus rose, for example, was carried by them to Provence in the year 1100. But it was not until the latter part of the sixteenth century that any real and general interest was awakened in this beautiful flower. Lobel published in 1581 a description of ten kinds of roses. Bauhin, in 1620, mentions nineteen species. Willdenow, in 1797, describes thirty-six species, and Persoon in his *Synopsis Plantarum*, published in 1798, speaks of forty-six, among which was the beautiful Bengal rose, that is indigenous to China, eclipsed long since by the modern favourite, the soft, delicate tea-rose, with its additional beauty of red-brown foliage and crimson stem.

The greatest impulse to the cultivation of the rose was given by the Empress Josephine, in France, at the beginning of the present century, while immense progress in the same delightful field has been made in this country. In our time so many varieties of the rose are cultivated, that he who should now attempt to point out their number would perhaps have to alter his figures to-morrow, as some new variety was presented to him.

The history of literature furnishes us with abundant evidence that the rose has been preserved in men's affections and memories all along the ages. It is still the queen of flowers, as it was in the time of the Romans. Pliny ranked the rose as the first of all flowers. A writer in the *Spectator* lately remarked: "The rose has still the purest perfume in Nature." Over the door of the chapter-house in York Minster is the legend in Saxon characters—

"Ut Rosa Flos Florum,

Sic est Domus ista Domorum."

"As is the rose the flower of flowers,  
So of houses is this of ours."

Martin Luther, the great German reformer, often wore a rose at his girdle, and had the same flower engraved on his seal. The rose was the favourite flower of Sappho, the Greek poetess. Meleager sings—

"Sappho's flowers—so few, but roses all."

The rose is prominent as an emblem in the arms of many princes of olden times, as the princes of Lippe and the dukes of Saxony. The white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster, as we all know, played an important part in English history. At Mid-Lent the Pope sends a golden rose to particular churches, or crowned heads whom he designs specially to honour. Alexander III. sent one to Louis the Young of France, Urban V. gave one to Joanna of Sicily, the Elector Frederic of Saxony, Luther's friend, received one, and Henry VIII. of England, defender of the faith, was honoured by two such roses. The Empress Eugenie and Queen Isabella of Spain in our own day have been rewarded by a like gift.

In the Tyrol at the present day betrothed swains are expected to carry a rose during the period of their betrothal, as a warning to young maidens of their engaged state. Roses

play an important part in popular usages in many other parts of the world. When a stranger enters a house for the first time at St. Jago, in Chili, the lady of the house presents him with a rose, in token of his being welcome. In Germany young girls deck their hair with white roses for their confirmation, their entrance into society; and when at the end of life the aged grandmother departs to her eternal rest, a last gift in the shape of a rose-garland is laid upon her bier. It used to be the custom in ancient Germany for a bridegroom to send or bring to his betrothed a golden rose, as a token that he was about to claim her. There is the sad legend of the young girl who tells her sister how she dreamed of her dead lover coming to her, and placing the golden rose on her bosom, and how she and he floated together, "hand in hand," up and away into the heaven of the stars—

"For the bride has met the bridegroom,  
Death has brought the golden rose."

Amongst the Romans, as we have intimated, the rose was regarded with enthusiastic admiration and became a conspicuous object in all their entertainments. The Roman bride used to carry a wreath of roses and myrtle twigs beneath her purple veil. All the statues of the gods and of illustrious men in Rome were decorated with wreaths of roses. At the public games the senators used to receive wreaths of roses from the ædiles.

When Scipio, conqueror of Hannibal, returned from Africa, he ordered the soldiers of the eighth legion, which had been the first to penetrate into the Carthaginian camp, to carry bunches of roses in their hands on the day of triumph, and thenceforward in commemoration of their victory to wear the rose upon their shields. The Romans sought to give an additional relish to their feasts by the aid of the fragrance of the rose. People were not satisfied unless their cup of Falernian wine were swimming with roses. In some of his banquetings Nero caused showers of roses to be rained down upon his guests from an opening in the ceiling. The Sybarites used to sleep upon beds that were stuffed with rose-leaves. In one of his most graceful odes Horace alludes to this use of the rose. "What dainty youth, bedewed with liquid perfumes, caresses you, Pyrrha, in some pleasant grotto, amidst a profusion of roses?" Cleopatra in the entertainment she gave in honour of Marc Antony, spent an immense sum in the roses with which she had the floor of the banqueting room covered to the depth of an ell; and over the flowers a fine net was drawn. It is recorded that Julius Cæsar concealed his baldness at the age of thirty with the produce of the Roman rose-gardens, and Anacreon hid the snows of eighty winters under a wreath of roses. Verres wore a garland of roses on his head and another round his neck. He used to travel in a litter, reclining on a mattress stuffed with roses.

On the axe of the Secret Society, the *Vehmgericht*, there was the figure of a knight with a bunch of roses in his hand. The custom of the Freemasons of adorning themselves with roses sprung, no doubt, from the Middle Ages. Many orders and societies have taken the same flower as their badge, the "Rosicrucians," for example, a philosophical sect which arose in the early part of the fourteenth century. The "Society of the Rose of Hamburg," an association of learned ladies of the seventeenth century is another instance of the same kind, though not so well known. It was divided into four sections, the roses, the lilies, the violets and the pinks. At Treviso, in Italy, there used to be held annually, a curious rose feast. A castle was erected with tapestry and silken hangings, and defended by the best-born maidens in the city against the attacks of the young bachelors, almonds, nutmegs,

roses, and squirts filled with rose water, being the ammunition freely used on both sides. The holy Medardus, Bishop of Noyon, in the sixth century instituted in France the custom of *La Rosière*, the festival of the Rose Maiden, by which, in certain localities, a gift of twenty-five livres and a crown of roses were bestowed on the most deserving maiden in the commune.

The romancers of the Middle Ages always coupled roses and young girls in their songs. In Provence the first of May was kept in honour of the Queen of the May who, decked out with roses and garlands, used to occupy a throne at the entry of the chief thoroughfares while her companions at the foot of the throne levied contributions in her honour from all that passed by. The crowning of the rose queen, typical of the reign of high summer, as that of the May queen, six weeks before, typified the sway of early summer, is one of those quaint old customs still observed in some continental places, and dates back to an early age. Her ceremonies are no doubt a survival of the worship of the goddess Flora, in the days before it was wailed—

"Pan is dead—great Pan is dead!"

In the neighbourhood of Jerusalem there is a lovely valley which still bears the name of Solomon's "rose garden," and where, according to a Mahomedan myth, a compact was made between the wise man and the genii of the Morning Land which was written, not in blood, like the bond between Faust and Mephistopheles, nor in gall, like our modern treaties, but with saffron and rose-water upon the petals of white roses. The old Jewish writers say that Jerusalem was distinguished from all the other towns in Judæa, as by several other particulars so in this especially, that no garden nor trees were planted within its walls save rose-bushes. The Persians have long held their celebrated "Feast of Roses," and Hafiz makes his hero say, "Call for wine and scatter roses round," while we find one mentioned in the Apocrypha who said, "Let us crown ourselves with roses before they are withered." The Scriptures make mention of the rose by name only in two places. Isaiah speaks of the happy age of the Church, when "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." And in the "Song of Solomon," the bride is represented as saying, "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley."

Let me bring this paper to a close by a reference to the wonderful rose-tree which grows at the east end of the cathedral of Hildesheim in Hanover, and the legend connected with it. The tree is said to be eight hundred years old, and is nourished through pipes with bullocks' blood. It spreads over the east end of the church and produces thousands of flowers. Tradition tells us that one of the early emperors when going a-hunting took with him his chaplain, and had mass celebrated in the wild forest that then covered the site of Hildesheim. At the conclusion of the service the priest hung the sacred vessels on a rose-bush which grew hard by, and went on to the sport with his master. In the evening when they returned, what was their astonishment to find that the rose-tree had grown to such an enormous size, that the holy vessels were beyond their reach, and hidden in a thicket of thorny rose-branches! The emperor on witnessing the miracle built a shrine on the spot to commemorate what had happened; and this being greatly resorted to, the town of Hildesheim grew up around the cathedral, which was erected on the site of the shrine with the original rose-tree clinging to the walls.

"And there it stands unto this day  
To witness if I lie."

WILLIAM COWAN.