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Queen Summer

By

Walter Crane

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Queen Summer
or the Tourney
of the Lily & the Rose
penned & portrayed
by Walter Crane

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When Summer on the earth was queen
She held her court in gardens green
Fair hung with tapestry of leaves,
Where threads of gold the sun enweaves
With checquered patterns on the floor
Of velvet lawns the scythe smoothes o'er:
Their waving fans the soft winds spread
Each way to cool Queen Summer's head:
The woodland dove made music soft,
And Eros touched his lute full oft.

Round Time's dial thronged the hours,
Masking in the Masque of Flowers

Like knights and ladies fair be-dight
In silk attire, both red and white.

And as the winds about them played,
And shook the flowers or disarrayed,

A whispered word among them goes
Of how the Lily flouts the Rose,

Suitors for Summer's favor dear,
To win the crown of all the year--
And how each champion brave would fight,
Queen Summer to decide the right.

Then shrill the wind-winged heralds blew;
The lists were set in Summer's view,

With blazoned shields, & pennons spruce
Of fluttering flag & fleur-de-luce:

And spread with 'broidered hangings gay,
Till all was ready for the fray.

Between their banners white and red,
Of Rose and Lily overhead,
Queen Summer took her judgment seat,
Whom all the crowd of flowers did greet.

The silver arum-trumpet's sound
With tongues of gold, & to the ground
The shining champions each did ride,
Their party-colours flaunting wide.

Came first the glowing Rose in view,
With crimson pennon fluttering new;
With glittering spines all armed he came,
With lance and shield--a rose aflame;
With tossing crest and mantling free,
On fiery steed,--a sight to see!

Nor long the Lily knight delayed;
In silver armour white arrayed,
He flashed like light upon the scene,
A lamp amid the garden green.
Milk-white his horse, & housings fair
With silver lilies shining there.

The summer winds the onset blew:
With level lance each champion flew,

And clashed together, mid a snow
Of petals on the grass below.

Pressed eager then the gazing rows:
Some cried, "the Lily", some, "the Rose"
But while the fate of battle hung,
Again the silver trumpets sung;

And, sudden charging from each side,
Of Roses and of Lilies ride
A host to still maintain the strife

For roses or for lilies' life

Rose favoured knights of maidens true,
Their pennons blushing with each hue
Of Rose-craft, since from wild thorn frail
Their order grew--through dark & pale
Of maiden-bloom to damask deep,
Or Gloire-de-Dijon that doth keep
Enfolded fire within his breast,
Still golden hearted like the rest.

Like a cloud of morn they bore,
Or rosy wave on grassy shore,
That, breaking, dashed the silver spray
They met--the Lily-lances play;
In crested legends on that came
Against them--snow & burning flame
Mixing with the crimson flood
Of roses & their fragrant blood,

Whereof the grass undue was rife,
As surged & rolled the floral strife,
With checquered fortune o'er the green,
Until at last up-rose the Queen:

And caused the zephyr horns to blow
A truce, the victor's crown to show.
But like a garland on the ground
Of roses & of lilies found,
So linked & locked in strife they lay
Each silver stem & clinging spray,

The doughty champions could not rise
Before the Queen to claim her prize.
So to the field of battle down
She stepped, with rose & lily crown
Of silver & of gold fair wrought;
And thus Queen Summer spake her thought:

And to each warrior thus did say:
Read in the fortune of your fray
Fit emblem sweet of unity,
Nor Rose nor Lily plant on high,
But side by side in equal right,
And pleasant cheer the Red & White:

That men & maids be glad to see,

Always in pleasant company,

Life & Love close linked together,

And strong to bear times' wintry weather

Love not consumed in passion's heart

But golden flamed & stedfast, sweet:

Time's snows shall quench not, though they hide:

Each spring renews the rosy tide:

Each lover in his lady's face

Sees roses blent with lilies' grace:

The poet & the painter praise

This heraldry of summer days;

And every garden sweet that blows

Doth set the Lily by the Rose.

Peace, then in all my borders be,
Beneath the silvern olive tree."

Each rose, each lily's head bent low,
And each one sought his fallen foe:

And careful hands the wounded bore,
With balm and honey to restore:

And trimmed the grass & decked each seat,
And made all fit for dancer's feet;

Beneath the summer full-orbed moon,
Ruddy & gold that rose full soon,
Like rose & lily fused in fire,
Ere the sunset's torch expire.

Then forth each knightly lily led
A blushing rosy dame so red;

Nor lily hands or hearts denied

The rose-hued warriors erst defied.

Light-footed through the dance's maze,
Quick they moved like wingéd fays;
As measured music soft did swell,
And echoed deep from bosky dell,
Till, from the leafy forest side,
The sweet-tongued nightingale replied,
Dissolved in streams of silver sound,
Merged in the moonlight, lost & found;
Like the dancers, till in shade,
Of Summer's verdant night they fade.