

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 5, 1931

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MAY DEW

That the dew of May has special virtue as a beautifier is an old and once common belief. The dew of May Day morning was especially sought in this connection, but not exclusively, for in Pepys' "Diary" we read under date of May 28, 1667: "My wife away down with Jane and W. Hewer to Woolwich, in order to a little ayre and to lie there tomorrow, and so to gather May-dew tomorrow morning, which Mrs. Turner hath taught her is the only thing in the world to wash her face with." Again on May 9, 1669, Mrs. Pepys "went with her coach abroad" for the same purpose.

According to Brand's "Popular Antiquities": "It was long an article of popular faith in eastern and western Europe that a maiden, washing herself with dew from the hawthorn on the first day of May at daybreak, would preserve her beauty forever; the operation being of course annually repeated."

In the London Morning Post of Monday, May 2, 1791, 'twas said that "yesterday, being the first of May, according to annual and superstitious custom, a number of persons went into the fields and bathed their faces with the dew on the grass, under the idea that it would render them beautiful."

Then there's Austin Dobson:

"The ladies of St. James
Wear satin on their backs,
They sit all night at ombre,
With candles all of wax;
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
She dons her russet gown
And runs to gather May-dew
Before the world is down."

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