

Per centenary Exhibition,
"The Daily Graphic"
June 30th 1905

"THE GOLDEN TREE."

MASKE AT THE GUILDHALL SCHOOL.

Thomas Campion's famous maske of "The Golden Tree" was first produced at Whitehall, in the Banqueting Room, on St. Stephen's Night in the year 1614, the day of the marriage of "the Right Honourable the Earl of Somerset and the Right Noble the Lady Frances Howard"; and, as will presently appear, it right nobly celebrated those interesting nuptials. Last night it was presented again, at the Guildhall School of Music, before Prince and Princess Christian, the Princesses Victoria and Louise Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein, the Worshipful Company of Musicians (at the invitation of whose Master, Mr. C. T. D. Crews, the guests assembled), and a company as distinguished as those who in the day of Scottish James looked on the first presentment of its mingled speeches, dance and song. The Maske had, and has, an enormous list of dramatis personæ, ranging from his Majesty King James the First, his Queen, and "his Royal Highness Prince Charles," to the immortal Thalassa, the Sea Nymph, the Four Winds, the Four Elements, the Four Quarters of the Earth, many ladies, pages, and musicians, and finally—"Six Skippers, the Crew of a Barge." The device (as it was called) of the Maske was that the fame of the approaching nuptials of the Earl of Somerset and the Lady Frances Howard having spread throughout all the world, knights and squires from all parts, wishing to do honour to the occasion, had assembled and embarked in a flotilla for England; but this laudable purpose had been almost entirely frustrated by some evil-minded sorceress, through whose machinations many of the knights had been shipwrecked and drowned, while others had been spirited away into space. Finally a remnant of four, who succeeded in landing, were forthwith transformed where they stood into pillars of gold, from which state they could only be released by the exhibition of a branch plucked by royal hands from "The Golden Tree." This preamble was set forth by four squires; and when their speeches are ended there follows a changeful dance, "A Jigge and a Sarabande Intermingled," in which, after the Powers of Evil have temporarily triumphed, the Powers of Good, aided by the Nymph Thalassa, finally triumph. This brave "Jigge and Sarabande" was set to music by Master William Lawes, only less famous than his brother. There follow other dances, other conflicts of the powers of good and evil, other overthrowing of the powers of good and of enchaunters, till at last all is set right by the majestic intervention of the Queen, who hands a branch of the Golden Tree to a nobleman, who delivers it to a squire, who with it does the magic trick. The whole ends with an "Allmaine," composed by Anthony Holborne, and in conclusion we have to add that this skeleton description of the performance does as little justice to the charm, the antique grace, the beauty and harmony of the original as it can do to the real artistic spirit in which the pupils of the Guildhall School of Music took the many parts, and the orchestra, under Miss Nellie Chaplin's direction, acquitted themselves of their delightful task. It was a performance so unique and so graceful that we can but hope that an opportunity will arise for its repetition.