<table>
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<th>MAY DAY TRADITIONS</th>
<th>UNDERMINING MEANING</th>
<th>FEAST OF FOOLS</th>
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| Celebration of virtue/Secularization of holiday:  
- May Day pole a children’s game; protecting the pole about a town’s pride  
- Morris dancing became accepted as part of traditional folk dancing | ...but these are actually symbols of sensuality  
- May Day pole dancing carries sexual imagery for pagans today (phallic symbol?)  
- Pagan traditions of chasing evil spirits away at the beginning of the new year on this date...and the Morris dancing with beating sticks, etc., does seem reminiscent of a rudimentary exorcism  
- Ignoring custom of “bringing in the May,” when all the young people of the village go into the woods to indulge in carnal desires (Sid and Nancy) | Openly embraces sensuality  
-in original Roman Saturnalia festival, nudity allowed |

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| - Victorians denied pagan/Celtic origins and made it a secular holiday  
- Puritans banned the holiday for a time, but later the May Day pole became a symbol of loyalty to the king and the holiday was reinstituted  
- Also associated with Day of the Circumcision | - Denying that the original Celtic/pagan meanings behind the traditions were crude and sensual.  
- Celtic Beltane festival celebrates fertility; celebrated with several rituals involving fire (Does this give new meaning to Albert’s gas lamp explosion??)  
- Roman Floralia festival | - Pagan roots: Roman Saturnalia |

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| - Supposed to be celebrating Albert’s good behavior and striving to be as good  
- This holiday is all about throwing social expectations out the window and indulging in bad behavior (drunkenness, gluttony, sacrilegious church ceremonies, promiscuity) | ...but the Loxford townspeople’s behavior at/around May Day actually exemplifies the Seven Deadly Sins (see Seven Deadly Sins presentation) | |

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<th>CROWNING A KING/QUEEN</th>
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<td>- May Queen title an honor to</td>
<td>...but by crowning Albert,</td>
<td>All about inverting the social</td>
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the most virtuous/prettiest
girl in the town. Presides
over the dances and games
instead of participating
who clearly does not belong
with the Loxford elites, and
is utterly humiliated to be
paraded about his town like
a hero, the May Day
Committee is actually
mocking Albert.
-Public position=in view of
the public eye=ripe for
ridicule
-Albert’s coronation only
confirms that he is not like
the others in his town, that
he doesn’t belong, and that
he needs to be treated
differently than everyone
else because of both his
behavior and his class.
structure!
- revelers crowned a King of
Fools/Bean Boy/King of the
Bean—someone from a low-
class position who got to be
king for a day and revel in
debauchery to his heart’s
content.
-choir boys could be
priests/Popes for a day and
lead mock church services,
etc.
-As great as it is to be king
for a day, it was somewhat of
a backhanded-compliment.
The whole idea of bringing
the lowest person in the
social structure up to the
highest position, even for a
day, means that everyone
must acknowledge how
lowly that person is.

**MAIN TAKE-AWAYS**
1. The Loxford elites believe they are celebrating virtue when really, during their
coloration, they are surrounded by vice, both in the historic symbolism of their May Day
activities and in their indulgence in the Seven Deadly Sins throughout the festival.

**May Day (a celebration of Virtue) is actually a Feast of Fools (a celebration of vice) in
disguise.**

2. Albert knows intuitively that being May King will hurt him more than help him. By being
forced into the public eye as the “town simpleton who’s too simple to commit sin,” he is
vulnerable to the public’s mockery.

Furthermore, he is presiding at the head of a celebration that exemplifies the vices of the
townspeople...and that same celebration honors him, as an lower-class, “simple” man
raised up to a position of power and honor, which he takes advantage of to commit sin.

**Albert, the May King, is actually more of a King of Fools.**

**Sources:**
Floralia➔Beltane➔May Day
http://www.learnenglish.de/culture/mayday.html
Saturnalia → Feast of Fools

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/calendar/saturnalia.html