

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

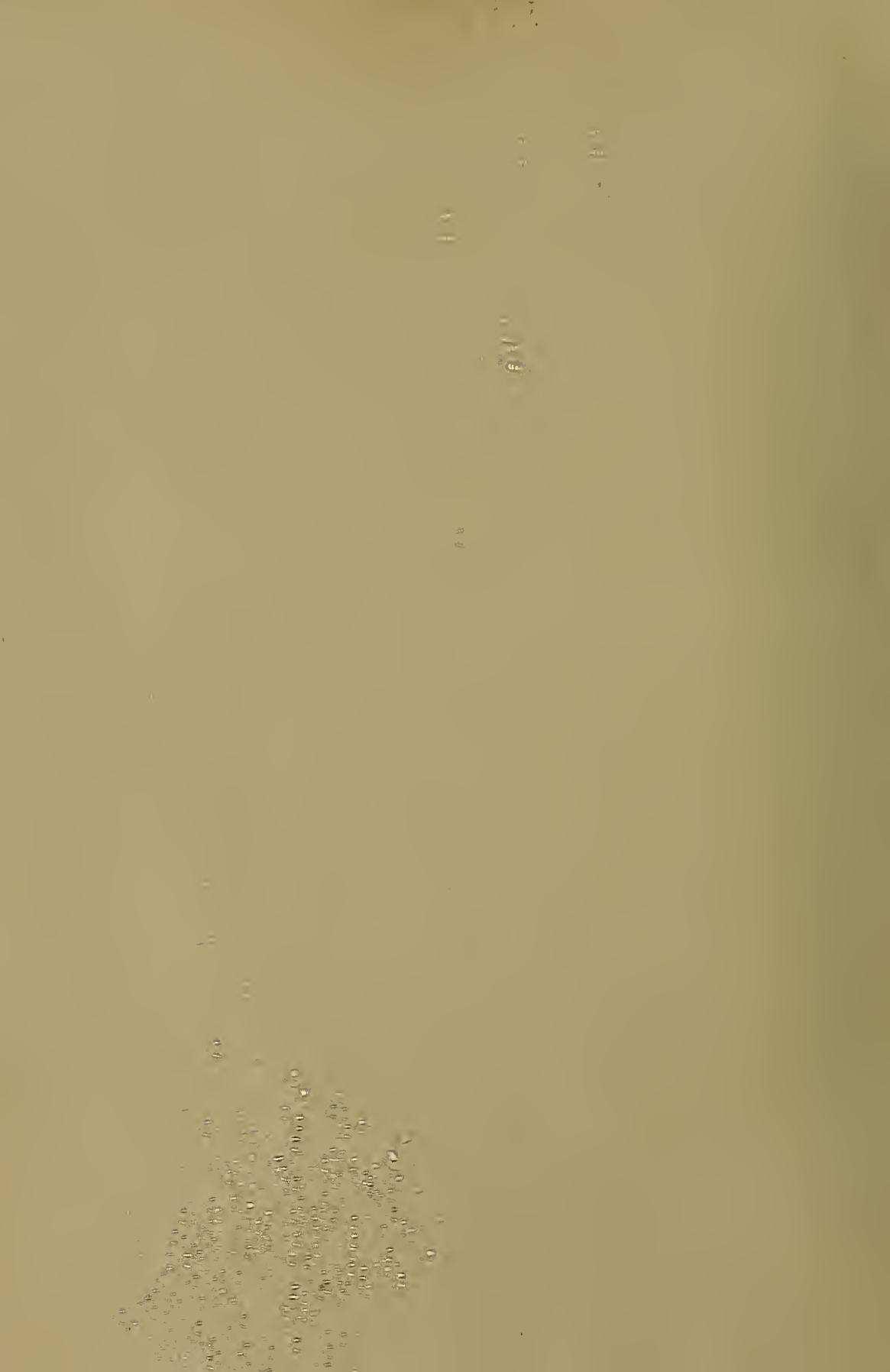
BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANKLIN BOOTH







THE FLYING ISLANDS
OF THE NIGHT.





FOR THE SONG'S SAKE, EVEN SO:
IMMORAL IT, AND LET IT GO
ALL UNTAMED AND WILD OF
WING—
LEAVE IT EVER TRAVANTING



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

BY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY FRANKLIN BOOTH

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TO
MADISON CAWEIN

"A thyng of wytchencreft—an idle dreme."

THE FLYING ISLANDS
OF THE NIGHT.



*FOR the Song's sake; even so:
Humor it, and let it go
All untamed and wild of wing—
Leave it ever truanting.*

*Be its flight elusive!—Lo,
For the Song's sake—even so.—
Yield it but an ear as kind
As thou perkest to the wind.*

*Who will name us what the seas
Have sung on for centuries?
For the Song's sake! Even so—
Sing, O Seas! and Breezes, blow!*

*Sing! or Wave or Wind or Bird—
Sing! nor ever afterward
Clear thy meaning to us—No!—
For the Song's sake. Even so.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KRUNG	King— <i>of the Spirks.</i>
CRESTILLOMEEM	<i>The Queen—Second Consort to Krung.</i>
SPRAIVOLL	<i>The Tune-Fool.</i>
AMPHINE	Prince— <i>Son of Krung.</i>
DWAINIE	<i>A Princess—of the Wunks.</i>
JUCKLET	<i>A Dwarf—of the Spirks.</i>
CREETCH <i>and</i> }	Nightmares.
GRITCHFANG }	

Counsellors, Courtiers, Heralds, etc., etc., etc.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

ACT I.

SCENE—THE FLYING ISLANDS.

SCENE I. Spirkland. *Time, Moondawn. Interior Court of KRUNG. A vast, pendent star burns dimly in dome above throne. CRESTILLOMEEM discovered languidly reclining at foot of empty throne, an overturned goblet lying near, as though just drained. The Queen, in seeming dazed, ecstatic state, raptly gazing upward, listening. Swarming forms and features in air above, seen eerieely coming and going, blending and intermingling in domed ceiling-spaces of court. Weird music. Mystic, luminous, beautiful faces*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*detached from swarm, float, singly, forward,—
tremulously, and in succession, poising in mid-air and
chanting.*

FIRST FACE.

And who hath known her—like as *I*
Have known her?—since the envying sky
Filched from her cheeks its morning-hue,
And from her eyes its glory, too,
Of dazzling shine and diamond-dew.

SECOND FACE.

I knew her—long and long before
High Æo loosed her palm and thought:
“What awful splendor have I wrought
To dazzle earth and Heaven, too!”

THIRD FACE.

I knew her—long ere Night was o’er—
Ere Æo yet conjectured what
To fashion Day of—ay, before
He sprinkled stars across the floor

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Of dark, and swept that form of mine,
E'en as a fleck of blinded shine,
Back to the black where light was not.

FOURTH FACE.

Ere day was dreamt, I saw her face
Lift from some starry hiding-place
Where our old moon was kneeling while
She lit its features with her smile.

FIFTH FACE.

I knew her while these islands yet
Were nestlings—ere they feathered wing,
Or e'en could gape with them or get
Apoise the laziest-ambling breeze,
Or cheep, chirp out, or anything!
When Time crooned rhymes of nurseries
Above them—nodded, dozed and slept,
And knew it not, till, wakening,
The morning-stars agreed to sing
And Heaven's first tender dew were wept.

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SIXTH FACE.

I knew her when the jealous hands
Of Angels set her sculptured form
Upon a pedestal of storm
And let her to this land with strands
Of twisted lightnings.

SEVENTH FACE.

And I heard
Her voice ere she could tone a word
Of any but the Seraph-tongue.—
And O sad-sweeter than all sung-
Or word-said things!—to hear her say,
Between the tears she dashed away:—
“Lo, launched from the offended sight
Of Æo!—anguish infinite
Is ours, O Sisterhood of Sin!
Yet is thy service mine by right,
And, sweet as I may rule it, thus
Shall Sin’s myrrh-savor taste to us—
Sin’s Empress—let my reign begin!”



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

CHORUS OF SWARMING FACES.

We follow thee forever on!
Thro' darkest night and dimmest dawn;
Thro' storm and calm—thro' shower and shine,
Hear thou our voices answering thine:

We follow—*craving* but to be
Thy followers.—We follow thee—
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on—
O'er hill and hollow, brake and lawn;
Thro' grewsome vale and dread ravine
Where light of day is never seen.—

We waver not in loyalty,—
Unfaltering we follow thee—
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on!
The shroud of night around us drawn,
Though wet with mists, is wild-ashine
With stars to light that path of thine;—

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

The glow-worms, too, befriend us—we
Shall fail not as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on.—
The notchèd reeds we pipe upon
Are pithed with music, keener blown
And blither where thou leadest lone—
Glad pangs of its ecstatic glee
Shall reach thee as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on:
We know the ways thy feet have gone,—
The grass is greener, and the bloom
Of roses richer in perfume—
And birds of every blooming tree
Sing sweeter as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on;
For wheresoever thou hast gone

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

We hasten joyous, knowing there
Is sweeter sin than elsewhere—
 Leave still its latest cup, that we
 May drain it as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

[Throughout final stanzas, faces, in fore- and forms in background slowly vanish, and voices gradually fail to sheer silence.—CRESTILLOMEEM, rising, and wistfully gazing and listening; then, evidently regaining wonted self, looks to be assured of being wholly alone—then speaks.]

CRESTILLOMEEM.

The Throne is throwing wide its gilded arms
To welcome me. The Throne of Krung! Ha! ha!
Leap up, ye lazy echoes, and laugh loud!

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For I, Crestillomeem, the Queen—ha! ha!
Do fling my richest mirth into your mouths
That ye may fatten ripe with mockery!
I marvel what the kingdom would become
Were I not here to nurse it like a babe
And dandle it above the reach and clutch
Of intermeddlers in the royal line
And their attendant serfs. *Ho!* Jucklet, ho!
'Tis time my knarlèd warp of nice anatomy
Were here, to weave us on upon our mesh
Of silken villanies. *Ho!* Jucklet, ho!

*[Lifts secret door in pave and drops a star-bud through
opening. Enter JUCKLET from below.]*

JUCKLET.

Spang sprit! my gracious Queen! but thou hast scorched
My left ear to a cinder! and my head

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Rings like a ding-dong on the coast of death!
For, patient hate! thy hasty signal burst
Full in my face as hitherward I came!
But though my lug be fried to crisp, and my
Singed wig stinks like a little sun-stewed Wunk,
I stretch my fragrant presence at thy feet
And kiss thy sandal with a blistered lip.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Hold! rare-done fool, lest I may bid the cook
To bake thee brown! How fares the King by this?

JUCKLET.

Safe couched midmost his lordly hoard of books,
I left him sleeping like a quinsied babe
Next the guest-chamber of a poor man's house:
But ere I came away, to rest mine ears,
I salved his welded lids, uncorked his nose,
And o'er the odorous blossom of his lips

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Re-squeezed the tintured sponge, and felt his pulse
Come staggering back to regularity.
And four hours hence his Highness will awake
And *Peace* will take a nap!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Ha! What mean you?

JUCKLET. [*Ominously.*]

I mean that he suspects our knaveries.—
Some covert spy is burrowed in the court—
Nay, and I pray thee startle not *aloud*,
But mute thy very heart in its out-throb,
And let the blanching of thy cheeks but be
A whispering sort of pallor!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

A spy?—Here?



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JUCKLET.

Ay, *here*—and haply even *now*. And one
Whose unseen eye seems ever focussed keen
Upon our action, and whose hungering ear
Eats every crumb of counsel that we drop
In these our secret interviews!—For he—
The King—through all his talking-sleep to-day
Hath jabbered of intrigue, conspiracy—
Of treachery and hate in fellowship,
With dire designs upon his royal bulk,
To oust it from the Throne.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

He spake my name?

JUCKLET.

O Queen, he speaks not ever but thy name
Makes melody of every sentence.—Yea,
He thinks thee even true to him as thou
Art fickle, false and subtle! O how blind

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

And lame, and deaf and dumb, and worn and weak,
And faint, and sick, and all-commodious
His dear love is! In sooth, O wifely one,
Thy malleable spouse doth mind me of
That pliant hero of the bald old catch
"The Lovely Husband."—Shall I wreak the thing?

[Sings—with much affected gravity and grimace.]

O a lovely husband he was known,
He loved his wife and her a-lone;
She reaped the harvest he had sown;
She eat the meat; he picked the bone.
With mixed admirers every size,
She smiled on each without disguise;
This lovely husband closed his eyes
Lest he might take her by surprise.



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[*Aside, exclamatory.*]

Chorious uprorious!

[*Then pantomime as though pulling at bell-rope—singing
in pent, explosive utterance.*]

Trot!

Run!

Wasn't he a handy hubby?

What

Fun

She could plot and plan!

Not

One

Other such a dandy hubby

As this lovely man!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Or talk or tune, wilt thou wind up thy tongue

Nor let it tangle in a knot of words!

What said the King?

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JUCKLET. [*With recovered reverence.*]

He said: "Crestillomeem—
O that *she* knew this thick distress of mine!—
Her counsel would *anoint* me and her voice
Would flow in limpid wisdom o'er my woes
And, like a love-balm, lave my secret grief
And lull my sleepless heart!" [*Aside*] And so went on,
Struggling all maudlin in the wrangled web
That well-nigh hath cocooned him!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Did he yield
No hint of this mysterious distress
He needs must hold sequestered from his Queen?
What said he in his talking-sleep by which
Some clew were gained of how and when and whence
His trouble came?

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JUCKLET.

In one strange phase he spake
As though some sprited lady talked with him.—
Full courteously he said: "In woman's guise
Thou comest, yet I think thou art, in sooth,
But woman in thy form.—Thy words are strange
And leave me mystified. I feel the truth
Of all thou hast declared, and yet so vague
And shadow-like thy meaning is to me,
I know not how to act to ward the blow
Thou sayest is hanging o'er me even now."
And then, with open hands held pleadingly,
He asked, "Who *is* my foe?"—And o'er his face
A sudden pallor flashed, like death itself,
As though, if answer had been given, it
Had fallen like a curse.

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CRESTILLOMEEM.

I'll stake my soul
Thrice over in the grinning teeth of doom,
'Tis Dwainie of the Wunks who peeks and peers
With those fine eyes of hers in our affairs
And carries Krung, in some disguise, these hints
Of our intent! See thou that silence falls
Forever on her lips, and that the sight
She wastes upon our secret action blurs
With gray and grisly scum that shall for aye
Conceal us from her gaze while she writhes blind
And fangless as the fat worms of the grave!
Here! take this tuft of downy druze, and when
Thou comest on her, fronting full and fair,
Say "*Sherzham!*" thrice, and fluff it in her face.

JUCKLET.

Thou knowest scanty magic, O my Queen,
But all thou dost is fairly excellent—

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

An *this* charm work, thou shalt have fuller faith
Than still I must withhold.

[*Takes charm, with extravagant salutation.*]

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Thou gibing knave!
Thou thing! Dost dare to name my sorcery
As any trifling gift? Behold what might
Be thine an thy deserving wavered not
In stable and abiding service to
Thy Queen!

[*She presses suddenly her palm upon his eyes, then lifts her softly opening hand upward, his gaze following, where, slowly shaping in the air above them, appears semblance—or counter-self—of CRESTILLOMEEM, clothed in most radiant youth, her maiden-face bent downward to a moon-lit sward, where kneels a lover-knight—flawless in manly symmetry and princely beauty,—yet none other than the counter-self of*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

JUCKLET, *eerily and with strange sweetness singing, to some curiously tinkling instrument, the praises of its queenly mistress: JUCKLET and CRESTILLOMEEM transfixed below—trancedly gazing on their mystic selves above.*]

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLËT. [Sings.]

Crestillomeen!

Crestillomeem!

*Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!
Moonlight may fall not as goldenly fair
As falls the gold of thine opulent hair—
Nay, nor the starlight as dazzlingly gleam
As gleam thine eyes, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!—
Stars of the skies, 'Meema—
Crestillomeem!*

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SEMBLANCE OF CRESTILLOMEEM. [*Sings.*]

O Prince divine!

O Prince divine!

*Tempt thou me not with that sweet voice of thine!
Though my proud brow bear the blaze of a crown,
Lo, at thy feet must its glory bow down,
That from the dust thou mayest lift me to shine
Heaven'd in thy heart's rapture, O Prince divine!—*

Queen of thy love ever,

O Prince divine!

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET. [*Sings.*]

Crestillomeem!

Crestillomeem!

*Our life shall flow as a musical stream—
Windingly—placidly on shall it wend,
Marg'd with mazhoora-bloom banks without end—
Word-birds shall call thee and dreamily scream,
"Where dost thou cruise, 'Meema—Crestillomeem?"*

Whither away, 'Meema?—

Crestillomeem!"

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DUO.

[Vision and voices gradually failing away.]

Crestillomeem!

Crestillomeem!

Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!

Star of Love's light, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!

Crescent of Night, 'Meema!—

Crestillomeem!

[With song, vision likewise fails utterly.]

CRESTILLOMEEM.

[To JUCKLET, still trancedly staring upward.]

How now, thy clabber-brainèd spudge!—
Thou squelk!—thou—

JUCKLET.

Nay, O Queen! contort me not
To more condensèd littleness than now
My shamèd frame incurreth on itself,

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Seeing what might fare with it, didst *thou* will
Kindly to nip it with thy magic *here*
And leave it living in that form i' the air,
Forever pranking o'er the daisied sward
In wake of sandal-prints that dint the dew
As lightly as, in thy late maidenhood,
Thine own must needs have done in flighting from
The dread encroachments of the King.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Nay—peace!

JUCKLET.

So be it, O sweet Mystic.—But I crave
One service of thy magic yet.—*Amphine!*—
Breed me some special, damnèd philter for
Amphine—the *fair* Amphine!—to chuck it him,
Some serenade-tide, in a sodden slug
O' pastry, 'twixt the door-crack and a screech
O' rusty hinges.—Hey! Amphine, the *fair!*—
And let me, too, elect his doom, O Queen!—

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Listed against thee, he, too, doubtless hath
Been favored with an outline of our scheme.—
And I would kick my soul all over hell
If I might juggle his fine figure up
In such a shape as mine!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Then this:—When thou
Canst come upon him bent above a flower,
Or any blooming thing, and thou, arear,
Shalt reach it first and, thwartwise, touch it fair,
And with thy knuckle flick him on the knee,—
Then—his fine form will shrink and shrivel up
As warty as a toad's—so hideous,
Thine own shall seem a marvel of rare grace!
Though idly speak'st thou of my mystic skill,
'Twas that which won the King for me;—'twas that
Bereft him of his daughter ere we had
Been wedded yet a haed:—She strangely went



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Astray one moonset from the palace-steps—
She went—nor yet returned.—Was it not strange?—
She would be wedded to an alien prince
The morrow midnight—to a prince whose sire
I once knew, in lost hours of lute and song,
When *he* was but a prince—*I* but a mouth
For him to lift up sippingly and drain
To lees most ultimate of stammering sobs
And maudlin wanderings of blinded breath.

JUCKLET. [*Aside.*]

Twigg-brebblets! but her Majesty hath speech
That doth bejuice all metaphor to drip
And spray and mist of sweetness!

CRESTILLOMEEM. [*Confusedly.*]

Where was I?
O, ay!—The princess went—she strangely went!—

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E'en as I dreamed her lover-princeling would
As strangely go, were she not soon restored.—
As so he did:—That airy penalty
The jocund Fates provide our love-lorn wights
In this glad island: So for thrice three nights
They spun the prince his line and marked him pay
It out (despite all warnings of his doom)
In fast and sleepless search for her—and *then*
They tripped his fumbling feet and he fell—UP!—
Up!—as 'tis writ—sheer past Heaven's flinching walls
And topmost cornices.—Up—up and on!—
And, it is grimly guessed of those who thus
For such a term bemoan an absent love,
And so fall *upwise*, they must needs fall on—
And on and on—and on—and on—and on!
Ha! ha!



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JUCKLET.

Quahh! but the prince's holden breath
Must ache his throat by this! But, O my Queen,
What of the princess?—and—

CRESTILLOMEEM.

The princess?—Ay—
The princess! Ay, she went—she strangely went!
And when the dainty vagrant came not back—
Both sire and son in apprehensive throes
Of royal grief—the very Throne befogged
In sighs and tears!—when all hope waned at last,
And all the spies of Spirkland, in her quest,
Came straggling empty-handed home again,—
Why, then the wise King sleeved his rainy eyes
And sagely thought the pretty princess had
Strayed to the island's edge and tumbled off.
I could have edged his mind at ease on that—

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I could have told him,—*yea*, she tumbled off—
I tumbled her!—and tumbled her so plump,
She tumbled in an under-island, then
Just slow-unmooring from our own and poised
For unknown voyagings of flight afar
And all remote of latitudes of ours.—
Ay, into that land I tumbled her from which
But one charm known to art can tumble her
Back into this,—and *that* charm (guilt be praised!)
Is lodged not in the wit nor the desire
Of my rare lore.

JUCKLET.

Thereinasmuch find joy!
But dost thou know that rumors flutter now
Among thy subjects of thy sorceries?—
The art being *banned*, thou knowest; or, unhoused,
Is unleashed pitilessly by the grim,

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Facetious body of the dridular
Upon the one who fain had loosed the curse
On others.—An my counsel be worth aught,
Then have a care thy spells do not revert
Upon thyself, nor yet mine own poor hulk
O' fearsomeness!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Ha! ha! No vaguest need
Of apprehension there!—While Krung remains—

[She abruptly pauses—startled first, then listening curiously and with awed interest. Voice of exquisite melodiousness and fervor heard singing.]

VOICE.

When kings are kings, and kings are men—
And the lonesome rain is raining!—
O who shall rule from the red throne then,
And who shall covet the sceptre when—
When the winds are all complaining?

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When men are men, and men are kings—
And the lonesome rain is raining!—
O who shall list as the minstrel sings
Of the crown's fiat, or the signet-ring's,
When the winds are all complaining?

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Whence flows such sweetness, and what voice is that?

JUCKLET.

The voice of Spraivoll, an mine ears be whet
And honéd o' late honyéd memories
Behaunted the deserted purlieus of
The court.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

And who is Spraivoll, and what song
Is that besung so blinding exquisite
O cadenced mystery?

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JUCKLET.

Spraivoll—O Queen,—

Spraivoll The Tune-Fool is she named
By those who meet her ere the day long wanes
And naught but janiteering sparsely frets
The cushioned silences and stagnant dusts
Indifferently resuscitated by
The drowsy varlets in mock servitude
Of so refurbishing the royal halls:
She cometh, alien, from Wunkland—so
Hath she deposed to divers questioners
Who have been smitten of her voice—as rich
In melody as she is poor in caste and intellect.
She hath been roosting, pitied of the hinds
And scullions, round about the palace here
For half a node.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

And pray, where is she perched—
This wild-bird woman with her wondrous throat?

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JUCKLET.

Under some dingy cornice, like enough—
Though *wild-bird* she is not, being plumèd in,
Not feathers, but one fustioned stole—the like
Of which so shameth her fair face one needs
Must swear some lusty oaths, but that they shape
Themselves full gentlewise in mildest prayer:—
Not *wild-bird*;—nay, nor *woman*—though, in truth,
She ith a licensed idiot, and drifts
About, as restless and as useless, too,
As any lazy breeze in summer-time.
I'll call her forth to greet your Majesty.
Ho! Spravoll! Ho! my twittering birdster, flit
Thou hither.

[*Enter SPRAVOLL—from behind group of statuary—
singing.*]



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SPRAIVOLL.

Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!
The moon spins round and round for me!
Wind it up with a golden key.
Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Who art thou, and what the strange
Elusive beauty and intent of thy
Sweet song? What singest thou, vague, mystic-bird—
What doth the Tune-Fool sing? Ay, sing me what.

SPRAIVOLL. [*Singing.*]

What sings the breene on the wertling-vine,
And the tweck on the bamner-stem?
Their song, to me, is the same as mine,
As mine is the same to them—to them—
As mine is the same to them.

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In star-starved glooms where the plustre looms
With its slender boughs above,
Their song sprays down with the fragrant blooms,—
And the song they sing is love—is love—
And the song they sing is love.

JUCKLET.

Your Majesty may be surprised somewhat,
But Spraivoll cannot talk,—her only mode
Of speech is melody; and thou might'st put
The dowered fool a thousand queries, and,
In like return, receive a thousand songs,
All set to different tunes—as full of naught
As space is full of emptiness.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

A fool?—
And with a gift so all-divine!—A fool?

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JUCKLET.

Ay, warranted!—The Flying Islands all
Might flock in mighty counsel—moult, and shake
Their loosened feathers, and sort every tuft,
Nor ever most minutely quarry there
One other Spraivoll, itching with her voice
Such favored spot of cuticle as she
Alone selects here in our blissful realm.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Out, jester, on thy cumbrous wordiness!
Come hither, Tune-Fool, and be not afraid,
For I like fools so well I married one:
And since thou art a *Queen* of fools, and he
A *King*, why, I've a mind to bring ye two
Together in some wise. Canst use thy song
All times in such entrancing spirit one
Who lists must so needs list, e'en though the song
Go on unceasingly indefinite?

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SPRAIVOLL. [*Singing.*]

If one should ask me for a song,
Then I should answer, and my tongue
Would twitter, trill and troll along
Until the song were done.

Or should one ask me for my tongue,
And I should answer with a song,
I'd trill it till the song were sung,
And troll it all along.

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Thou art indeed a fool, and one, I think,
To serve my present purposes. Give ear.—
And Jucklet, thou, go to the King and bide
His waking: then repeat these words:—“*The Queen*
Impatiently awaits his Majesty,
And craves his presence in the Tower of Stars,
That she may there express full tenderly

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*Her great solicitude." And then, end thus,—
"So much she bade, and drooped her glowing face
Deep in the showerings of her golden hair,
And with a flashing gesture of her arm
Turned all the moonlight pallid, saying, 'Haste!'"*

JUCKLET.

And would it not be well to hang a pearl
Or twain upon thy silken lashes?

CRESTILLOMEEM.

Go!

JUCKLET. [*Exit, singing.*]

This lovely husband's loyal breast
Heaved only as she might suggest,—
To every whimsey she expressed
He proudly bowed and acquiesced.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

He plotted with her, blithe and gay—
In no flirtation said her nay,—
He even took her to the play,
Excused himself and came away.

CRESTILLOMEEM. [*To Sprairoll.*]

Now, Tune-Fool, *junior*, let me theme *thee* for
A song:—An Empress once, with angel in
Her face and devil in her heart, had wish
To breed confusion to her sovereign lord,
And work the downfall of his haughty son—
The issue of a former marriage—who
Bellowsed her hatred to the whitest heat,
For that her own son, by a former lord,
Was born a hideous dwarf, and reared aside
From the sire's knowing or his princely own—
That *none*, in sooth, might ever chance to guess
The hapless mother of the hapless child.
The Fiends that scar her thus, protect her still
With outward beauty of both face and form.—

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

It so is written, and so must remain
Till magic greater than their own is found
To hurl against her. So is she secure
And proof above all fear. Now, listen well!—
Her present lord is haunted with a dream,
That he is soon to pass, and so prepares
(*All havoc hath been wrangled with the drugs!*)
The Throne for the ascension of the son,
His cursèd heir, who still doth baffle all
Her arts against him, e'en as though he were
Protected by a skill beyond her own.
Soh! she, the Queen, doth rule the King in all
Save this affectionate perversity
Of favor for the son whom he would raise
To his own place.—And but for this the King
Long since had tasted death and kissed his fate
As one might kiss a bride! But so his Queen
Must needs withhold, not deal, the final blow,
She yet doth bind him, spelled, still trusting her;
And, by her craft and wanton flatteries,
Doth sway his love to every purpose but

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

The one most coveted.—And for this end
She would make use of thee;—and if thou dost
Her will, as her good pleasure shall direct,
Why, thou shalt sing at court, in silken tire,
Thy brow bound with wild diamonds, and thy hair
Sown with such gems as laugh hysteric lights
From glittering quespar, guenk and plennocynth,—
Ay, even panoplied as might the fair
Form of a very princess be, thy voice
Shall woo the echoes of the listening Throne.

SPRAIVOLL. [*Crooning abstractedly.*]

And O! shall one—high brother of the air,
In deeps of space—shall he have dream as fair?—
And shall that dream be this?—In some strange place
Of long-lost lands he finds her waiting face—
Comes marvelling upon it, unaware,
Set moonwise in the midnight of her hair,
And is behaunted with old nights of May,
So his glad lips do purl a roundelay
Purloinèd from the echo-triller's beak,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Seen keenly notching at some star's blanch cheek
With its ecstatic twitterings, through dusk
And sheen of dewy boughs of bloom and musk.
For him, Love, light again the eyes of her
That show nor tears nor laughter nor surprise—
For him undim their glamour and the blur
Of dreams drawn from the depths of deepest skies.
He doth not know if any lily blows
As fair of feature, nor of any rose.

CRESTILLOMEEM. [*Aside.*]

O this weird woman! she doth drug mine ears
With her uncanny sumptuousness of song!
[*To Spraivoll.*] Nay, nay! Give o'er thy tuneful
maunderings
And mark me further, Tune-Fool—ay, and well:—
At present doth the King lie in a sleep
Drug-wrought and deep as death—the after-phase
Of an unconscious state, in which each act
Of his throughout his waking hours is so
Rehearsed, in manner, motion, deed and word,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Her spies (the Queen's) that watch him, serving there
As guardians o'er his royal slumbers, may
Inform her of her lord's most secret thought.
And lo, her plans have ripened even now
Till, should he come upon his Throne to-night,
Where eagerly his counsellors will bide
His coming,—she, the Queen, hath reason to
Suspect her long-designèd purposes
May fall in jeopardy;—but if he *fail,*
Through *any* means, to lend his presence there,—
Then, by a wheedled mandate, is his Queen
Empowered with all Sovereignty to reign
And work the royal purposes instead.
Therefore, the Queen hath set an interview—
A conference to be holden with the King,
Which is ordained to fall on noon to-night,
Twelve star-twirls ere the nick the Throne convenes.—
And with her thou shalt go, and bide in wait
Until she signal thee to sing; and then

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Shalt thou so work upon his mellow mood
With that un-Spirkly magic of thy voice—
So all bedaze his waking thought with dreams,—
The Queen may, all unnoticed, slip away,
And leave thee singing to a throneless King.

SPRAIVOLL. [*Singing.*]

And who shall sing for the haughty son
While the good King droops his head?—
And will he dream, when the song is done,
That a princess fair lies dead?

CRESTILLOMEEM.

The haughty son hath found *his* "Song"—*sweet curse!*
And may she sing his everlasting dirge!
She comes from that near-floating land of thine,
Naming herself a princess of that realm
So strangely peopled we would fain evade

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

All mergence, and remain as strange to them
As they to us. No less this Dwainie hath
Most sinuously writhed and lithed her way
Into court-favor here—hath glidden past
The King's encharmèd sight and sleeked herself
Within the very altars of his house—
His line—his blood—his very life:—*AMPHINE!*
Not any Spirkland gentlemaiden might
Aspire so high as *she* hath dared to dare!—
For she, with her fair skin and finer ways,
And beauty second only to the Queen's,
Hath caught the prince betwixt her mellow palms
And stroked him flutterless. Didst ever thou
In thy land hear of *Dwainie of the Wunks?*

SPRAIVOLL. [*Singing.*]

Ay, Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The lurloo ever sings,
A tremor in his flossy crest
And in his glossy wings.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The winno-welvers call;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

The teeper twitters Dwainie!—
The tcheucker on his spray
Teeters up and down the wind
And will not fly away:
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The drowsy oovers drawl;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

O Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The breezes hold their breath—
The stars are pale as blossoms,
And the night is still as death;
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The fainting echoes fall;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

CRESTILLOMEEM.

A melody ecstatic! and—thy words,
Although so meaningless, seem something more—
A vague and shadowy something, eerie-like,
That maketh one to shiver over-chilled
With curious, creeping sweetnesses of pain
And catching breaths that flutter tremulous
With sighs that dry the throat out icily.—
But save thy music! Come! that I may make
Thee ready for thy royal auditor. [Exeunt.]

END ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A garden of KRUNG'S Palace, screened from the moon with netted glenk-vines and blooming zhoomer-boughs, all glimmeringly lighted with star-flakes. An arbor, near which is a table spread with a repast—two seats, drawn either side. A playing fountain, at marge of which AMPHINE sits thrumming a trentoraine.*

AMPHINE. [*Improvising.*]

Ah, help me! but her face and brow
Are lovelier than lilies are
Beneath the light of moon and star
That smile as they are smiling now—
White lilies in a pallid swoon
Of sweetest white beneath the moon—

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

White lilies in a flood of bright
Pure lucidness of liquid-light
Cascading down some plenilune
When all the azure overhead
Blooms like a dazzling daisy-bed.—
So luminous her face and brow
The lustre of their glory, shed
In memory, even, blinds me now.

[Plaintively addressing instrument.]

O warbling strand of silver, where, O where
Hast thou unravelled that sweet voice of thine
And left its silken murmurs quavering
In limp thrills of delight? O golden wire,
Where hast thou spilled thy precious twinkerings?—
What thirsty ear hath drained thy melody,
And left me but a wild, delirious drop
To tincture all my soul with vain desire?

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[*Improvising.*]

Her face—her brow—her hair unfurled!—
And O the oval chin below,
Carved, like a cunning cameo,
With one exquisite dimple, swirled
With swimming shine and shade, and whirled
The daintiest vortex poets know—
The sweetest whirlpool ever twirled
By Cupid's finger-tip,—and so,
The deadliest maelstrom in the world.

[*Pauses.—Enter DWAINIE, behind, in upper bower, unperceived.*]

AMPHINE. [*Again addressing instrument.*]

O Trentoraine! how like an emptied vase
Thou art—whose clustering blooms of song have drooped
And faded, one by one, and fallen away
And left to me but dry and tuneless stems

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

And crisp and withered tendrils of a voice
Whose thrilling tone, now like a throttled sound,
Lies stifled, faint, and gasping all in vain
For utterance.

[*Again improvising.*]

And O mad wars of blinding blurs
And flashings of lance-blades of light,
Whet glitteringly athwart the sight
That dares confront those eyes of hers!
Let any dewdrop soak the hue
Of any violet through and through,
And then be colorless and dull,
Compared with eyes so beautiful!
I swear ye that her eyes be bright
As noonday, yet as dark as night—
As bright as be the burnished bars
Of rainbows set in sunny skies,
And yet as deep and dark, her eyes,
And lustrous black as blown-out stars.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[*Pauses—DWAINIE still unperceived, radiantly smiling
and wafting kisses down from trellis-window above.*]

AMPHINE. [*Again to instrument.*]

O empty husk of song!
If deep within my heart the music thou
Hast stored away might find an issuance,
A fount of limpid laughter would leap up
And gurgle from my lips, and all the winds
Would revel with it, riotous with joy;
And Dwainie, in her beauty, would lean o'er
The battlements of night, and, like the moon,
The glory of her face would light the world—
For I would sing of love.

DWAINIE.

And she would hear,—
And, reaching overhead among the stars,
Would scatter them like daisies at thy feet.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

AMPHINE.

O voice, where art thou floating on the air?—
O Seraph-soul, where art thou hovering?

DWAINIE.

I hover in the zephyr of thy sighs,
And tremble lest thy love for me shall fail
To buoy me thus forever on the breath
Of such a dream as Heaven envies.

AMPHINE.

Ah!

[*Turning, discovers DWAINIE—she feigning, still, invisibility, while he, with lifted eyes and wistful gaze, preludes with instrument—then sings.*]

Linger, My Dwainie! Dwainie, lily-fair,
Stay yet thy step upon the casement-stair—
Poised be thy slipper-tip as is the tine
Of some still star.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,
Yet linger—linger there!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Thy face, O Dwainie, lily-pure and fair,
Gleams i' the dusk, as in thy dusky hair
The moony zhoomer glimmers, or the shine
Of thy swift smile.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,
Yet linger—linger there!

With lifted wrist, whereround the laughing air
Hath blown a mist of lawn and clasped it there,
Waft finger-thipt adieus that spray the wine
Of thy waste kisses to'rd me, Dwainie mine—
Yet linger—linger there!

What unloosed splendor is there may compare
With thy hand's unfurled glory, anywhere?
What glint of dazzling dew or jewel fine
May mate thine eyes?—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine!
Yet linger—linger there!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

My soul comforts thee: On thy brow and hair
It lays its tenderness like palms of prayer—
It touches sacredly those lips of thine
And swoons across thy spirit, Dwainie mine,
The while thou lingerest there.

[*Drops trentoraine, and, with open arms, gazes yearningly on DWAINIE.*]

DWAINIE. [*Raptly.*]

Thy words do wing my being dovewise!

AMPHINE.

Then,

Thou lovest!—O my homing dove, veer down
And nestle in the warm home of my breast!
So empty are mine arms, so full my heart,
The one must hold thee, or the other burst.

DWAINIE. [*Throwing herself in his embrace.*]

Æo's own hand methinks hath flung me here:
O hold me that He may not pluck me back!



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

AMPHINE.

So closely will I hold thee that not e'en
The hand of death shall separate us.

DWAINIE.

So

May sweet death find us, then, that, woven thus
In the corollo of a ripe caress,
We may drop lightly, like twin plustre-buds,
On Heaven's star-strewn lawn.

AMPHINE.

So do I pray.

But tell me, tender heart, an thou dost love,
Where hast thou loitered for so long?—for thou
Didst promise tryst here with me earlier by
Some several layodemes which I have told
Full chafingly against my finger-tips
Till the full complement, save three, are ranged
Thy pitiless accusers, claiming, each,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

So many as their joinèd number be
Shalt thou so many times lift up thy lips
For mine's most lingering forgiveness.
So, save thee, O my Sweet! and rest thee, I
Have ordered merl and viands to be brought
For our refreshment here, where, thus alone,
I may sip words with thee as well as wine.
Why hast thou kept me so athirst?—Why, I
Am jealous of the flattered solitudes
In which thou walkest. [*They sit at table.*]

DWAINIE.

Nay, I will not tell,
Since, an I yielded, countless questions, like
In idlest worth, would waste our interview
In speculations vain.—Let this suffice:—
I stayed to talk with one whom, long ago,
I met and knew, and grew to love, forsooth,
In dreamy Wunkland.—Talked of mellow nights,
And long, long hours of golden olden times

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

When girlish happiness locked hands with me
And we went spinning round, with naked feet
In swaths of bruised roses ankle-deep;
When laughter rang unsilenced, unrebuked,
And prayers went unremembered, oozing clean
From the drowsed memory, as from the eyes
The pure, sweet mother-face that bent above
Glimmered and wavered, blurred, bent closer still
A timeless instant, like a shadowy flame,
Then flickered tremulously o'er the brow
And went out in a kiss.

AMPHINE. [*Kissing her.*]

Not like to *this*!

O blessed lips whose kiss alone may be
Sweeter than their sweet speech! Speak on, and say
Of what else talked thou and thy friend?

DWAINIE.

We talked
Of all the past, ah me! and all the friends
That now await my coming. And we talked

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Of O so many things—so many things—
That I but blend them all with dreams of when,
With thy warm hand clasped close in this of mine,
We cross the floating bridge that soon again
Will span the all-unfathomable gulfs
Of nether air betwixt this isle of strife
And my most glorious realm of changeless peace,
Where summer night reigns ever and the moon
Hangs ever ripe and lush with radiance
Above a land where roses float on wings
And fan their fragrance out so lavishly
That Heaven hath hint of it, and oft therefrom
Sends down to us across the odorous seas
Strange argosies of interchanging bud
And blossom, spice and balm.—Sweet—sweet
Beyond all art and wit of uttering.

AMPHINE.

O Empress of my listening Soul, speak on,
And tell me all of that rare land of thine!—
For even though I reigned a peerless king

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Within mine own, methinks I could fling down
My sceptre, signet, crown and royal might,
And so fare down the thornèd path of life
If at its dwindling end my feet might touch
Upon the shores of such a land as thou
Dost paint for me—*thy* realm! Tell on of it—
And tell me if thy sister-woman there
Is like to thee—Yet nay! for an thou didst,
These eyes would lose all speech of sight
And call not back to thine their utter love.
But tell me of thy brothers.—Are they great,
And can they grapple Æo's arguments
Beyond our skill? or wrest a purpose from
The pink side of the moon at Darsten-tide?
Or cipher out the problem of blind stars,
That ever still do safely grope their way
Among the thronging constellations?

DWAINIE.

Ay!

Ay, they have leaped all earthland barriers
In mine own isle of wisdom-working Wunks:—

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

'Twas Wunkland's son that voyaged round the moon
And moored his bark within the molten bays
Of bubbling silver: And 'twas Wunkland's son
That talked with Mars—unbuckled Saturn's belt
And tightened it in squeeze of such facts
Therefrom as even *he* dare not disclose
In full till all his followers, as himself,
Have grown them wings, and gat them beaks and claws,
With plumage all bescienced to withstand
All tensest flames—glaze-throated, too, and lung'd
To swallow fiercest-spirited jets and cores
Of embered and unquenchable white heat:
'Twas Wunkland's son that alchemized the dews
And bred all colored grasses that he wist—
Divorced the airs and mists and caught the trick
Of azure-tinting earth as well as sky:
'Twas Wunkland's son that bent the rainbow straight.
And walked it like a street, and so returned
To tell us it was made of hammered shine,



Travis D. Smith

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Inlaid with strips of selvage from the sun
And burnished with the rust of rotten stars:
'Twas Wunkland's son that comprehended first
All grosser things, and took our worlds apart
And oiled their works with theories that clicked
In glib articulation with the pulse
And palpitation of the systemed facts.—
And, circling ever round the farthest reach
Of the remotest welkin of all truths,
We stint not our investigations to
Our worlds only, but query still beyond.—
For now our goolores say, below these isles
A million million miles, are *other* worlds—
Not like to ours, but *round*, as bubbles are,
And, like them, ever reeling on through space,
And anchorless through all eternity;—
Not like to ours, for our isles, as they note,
Are living things that fly about at night,
And soar above and cling, throughout the day,
Like bats, beneath the bent sills of the skies;
And I myself have heard, at dawn of moon,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

A liquid music filtered through my dreams,
As though 'twere myriads of sweet voices, pent
In some o'erhanging realm, had spilled themselves
In streams of melody that trickled through
The chinks and crannies of a crystal pave,
Until the wasted juice of harmony,
Slow-leaking o'er my senses, laved my soul
In ecstasy divine: And afferhaiks,
Who scour our coasts on missions for the King,
Declare our island's shape is like the zhibb's
When lolling in a trance upon the air
With open wings upslant and motionless.
O such a land it is—so all complete
In all wise habitants, and knowledge, lore,
Arts, sciences, perfected government
And kingly wisdom, worth and majesty—
And *Art*—ineffably above all else:—
The art of the *Romancer*,—fabulous
Beyond the miracles of strangest fact;
The art of *Poesy*,—the sanest soul
Is made mad with its uttering; the art



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Of *Music*,—words may not e'en whimper what
The jewel-sounds of song yield to the sense;
And, last,—the art of *Knowing what to Know*,
And how to zoon straight to'rd like a bee,
Draining or song or poem as it brims
And over-runs with raciest spirit-dew.—
And, *after*,—chaos all to sense like thine,
Till there, translated, thou shalt know as I. . . .
So furnished forth in all things lovable
Is my Land-Wondrous—ay, and thine to be,—
O Amphine, love of mine, it lacks but thy
Sweet presence to make it a paradise!

[*Takes up trentoraine.*]

And shall I tell thee of the home that waits
For thy glad coming, Amphine?—Listen, then!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

CHANT-RECITATIVE.

A palace veiled in a glimmering dusk;
Warm breaths of a tropic air,
Drugged with the odorous marzhoo's musk
And the sumptuous cyncotwaire—
Where the trembling hands of the lilwing's leaves
The winds caress and fawn,
While the dreamy starlight idly weaves
Designs for the damask lawn.

Densed in the depths of a dim eclipse
Of palms, in a flowery space,
A fountain leaps from the marble lips
Of a girl, with a golden vase
Held atip on a curving wrist,
Drinking the drops that glance
Laughingly in the glittering mist
Of her crystal utterance.



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Archways looped o'er blooming walks
That lead through gleaming halls;
And balconies where the word-bird talks
To the tittering waterfalls:
And casements, gauzed with the filmy sheen
Of a lace that sifts the sight
Through a ghost of bloom on the haunted screen
That drips with the dews of light.

Weird, pale shapes of sculptured stone,—
With marble nymphs agaze
Ever in fonts of amber, sown
With seeds of gold and sprays
Of emerald mosses, ever drowned,
Where glimpses of shell and gem
Peer from the depths, as round and round
The nautilus nods at them.

Faces blurred in a mazy dance,
With a music, wild and sweet,
Spinning the threads of the mad romance
That tangles the waltzers' feet:

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Twining arms, and warm, swift thrills
That pulse to the melody,
Till the soul of the dancer dips and fills
In the wells of ecstasy.

Eyes that melt in a quivering ore
Of love, and the molten kiss
Jetted forth of the hearts that pour
Their blood in the moulds of bliss.—
Till, worn to a languor slumber-deep,
The soul of the dreamer lifts
A silken sail on the gulfs of sleep,
And into the darkness drifts.

[*The instrument falls from her hands—AMPHINE, in
stress of passionate delight, embraces her.*]



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

AMPHINE.

Thou art not all of earth, O angel one!
Nor do I far miswonder me an thou
Hast peered above the very walls of Heaven!
What hast thou seen there?—Didst on Æo bask
Thine eyes and clothe Him with new splendorings?
And strove He to fling back as bright a smile
As thine, the while He beckoned thee within?
And, tell me, didst thou meet an angel there
A-linger at the gates, nor entering
Till I, her brother, joined her?

DWAINIE.

Why, hast thou
A sister dead?—Truth, I have heard of one
Long lost to thee—not dead?

AMPHINE.

Of her I speak,—
And dead, although we know not certainly,
We moan us ever it must needs be death

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Only could hold her from us such long term
Of changeless yearning for her glad return.
She strayed away from us long, long ago.—
O and our memories!—Her wandering eyes
That seemed as though they ever looked on things
We might not see—as haply so they did,—
For she went from us, all so suddenly—
So strangely vanished, leaving never trace
Of her outgoing, that I ofttimes think
Her rapt eyes fell along some certain path
Of special glory paven for her feet,
And fashioned of Æo's supreme desire
That she might bend her steps therein and so
Reach Him again, unseen of our mere eyes.
My sweet, sweet sister!—lost to brother—sire—
And, to *her* heart, one dearer than all else,—
Her *lover*—lost indeed!

DWAINIE.

Nay, do not grieve
Thee thus, O loving heart! Thy sister yet

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

May come to thee in some glad way the Fates
Are fashioning the while thy tear-drops fall!
So calm thee, while I speak of thine own self.—
For I have listened to a whistling bird
That pipes of waiting danger. Didst thou note
No strange behavior of thy sire of late?

AMPHINE.

Ay, he is silent, and he walks as one
In some fixed melancholy, or as one
Half waking.—Even his worshipped books seem now
But things on shelves.

DWAINIE.

And doth he counsel not
With thee in any wise pertaining to
His ailings, or of matters looking toward
His future purposes or his intents
Regarding thine own future fortunings

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

And his desires and interests therein?
What bearing hath he shown of late toward thee
By which thou might'st beframe some estimate
Of his mind's placid flow or turbulent?
And hath he not so spoken thee at times
Thou hast been 'wildered of his words, or grieved
Of his strange manner?

AMPHINE.

Once he stayed me on
The palace-stair and whispered, "Lo, my son,
Thy young reign draweth nigh—prepare!"—So passed
And vanished as a wraith, so wan he was!

DWAINIE.

And didst thou never reason on this thing,
Nor ask thyself what dims thy father's eye
And makes a brooding shadow of his form?



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

AMPHINE.

Why, there's a household rumor that he dreams
Death fareth ever at his side, and soon
Shall signal him away.—But *Jucklet* saith
Crestillomeem hath said *the leeches* say
There is no cause for serious concern;
And thus am I assured 'tis nothing more
Than childish fancy of mine aging sire,—
And so, as now, I laugh, full reverently,
And marvel, as I mark his shuffling gait,
And his bestrangered air and murmurous lips,
As by he glideth to and fro, ha! ha!
Ho! ho!—I laugh me many, many times—
Mind, thou, 'tis *reverently* I laugh—ha! ha!—
And wonder, as he glideth ghostly-wise,
If ever *I* shall waver as I walk,
And stumble o'er my beard, and knit my brows,
And o'er the dull mosaics of the pave
Play chequers with mine eyes! Ha! ha!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

DWAINIE. [*Aside.*]

How dare—
How dare I tell him? Yet I must—I must!

AMPHINE.

Why, art *thou*, too, grown childish, that thou canst
Find thee waste pleasure talking to thyself
And staring frowningly with eyes whose smiles
I need so much?

DWAINIE.

Nay, rather say, their tears,
Poor thoughtless Prince! [*Aside.*] (My magic even
now
Forecasts his kingly sire's near happening
Of nameless hurt and ache and awful stress
Of agony supreme, when he shall stare
The stark truth in the face!)

AMPHINE.

What meanest thou?

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

DWAINIE.

What mean I but thy welfare? Why, I mean,
One hour ago, the Queen, thy mother—

AMPHINE.

Say only "Queen"!

Nay,

DWAINIE.

—The Queen, one hour ago—

As so I learned from source I need not say—
Sent message craving audience with the King
At noon to-night, within the Tower of Stars.—
Thou knowest, only brief space following
The time of her pent session thereseto set
In secret with the King alone, *the Throne*,
Is set, too, to convene; and that *the King*
Hath lent his seal unto a mandate that,
Should he withhold his presence there, the Queen
Shall be empowered to preside—to reign—
Solely endowed to work the royal will

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

In lieu of the good King. Now, therefore, I
Have been advised that she, the Queen, by craft
Connives to hold him absent purposely,
That she may claim the vacancy—for what
Covert design I know not, but I know
It augurs peril to ye both, as to
The Throne's own perpetuity. [*Aside.*] (Again
My magic gives me vision terrible:—
The Sorceress' legions balk mine own.—The King
Still hers, yet wavering. O save the King,
Thou Æo!—Render him to us!)

AMPHINE.

I feel

Thou speakest truth: and yet how know'st thou this?

DWAINIE.

Ask me not that; my lips are welded close.—
And, *more*,—since I have dared to speak, and thou
To listen,—Jucklet is accessory,
And even now is plotting for thy fall.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

But, Passion of my Soul! think not of me,—
For nothing but sheer magic may avail
To work me harm;—but look thou to thyself!
For thou art blameless cause of all the hate
That rankleth in the bosom of the Queen.
*So have thine eyes unslumbered ever, that
No step may steal behind thee—for in this
Unlooked-of way thine enemy will come:*
This much I know, but for what fell intent
Dare not surmise.—*So look thou, night and day,
That none may skulk upon thee in this wise
Of dastardly attack. [Aside.]* (Ha! Sorceress!
Thou palest, tossing wild and wantonly
The smothering golden tempest of thy hair.—
What! lying eyes! ye dare to utter tears?
Help! help! Yield us the King!)

AMPHINE.

And thou, O sweet!
How art thou guarded and what shield is thine
Of safety?

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

DWAINIE.

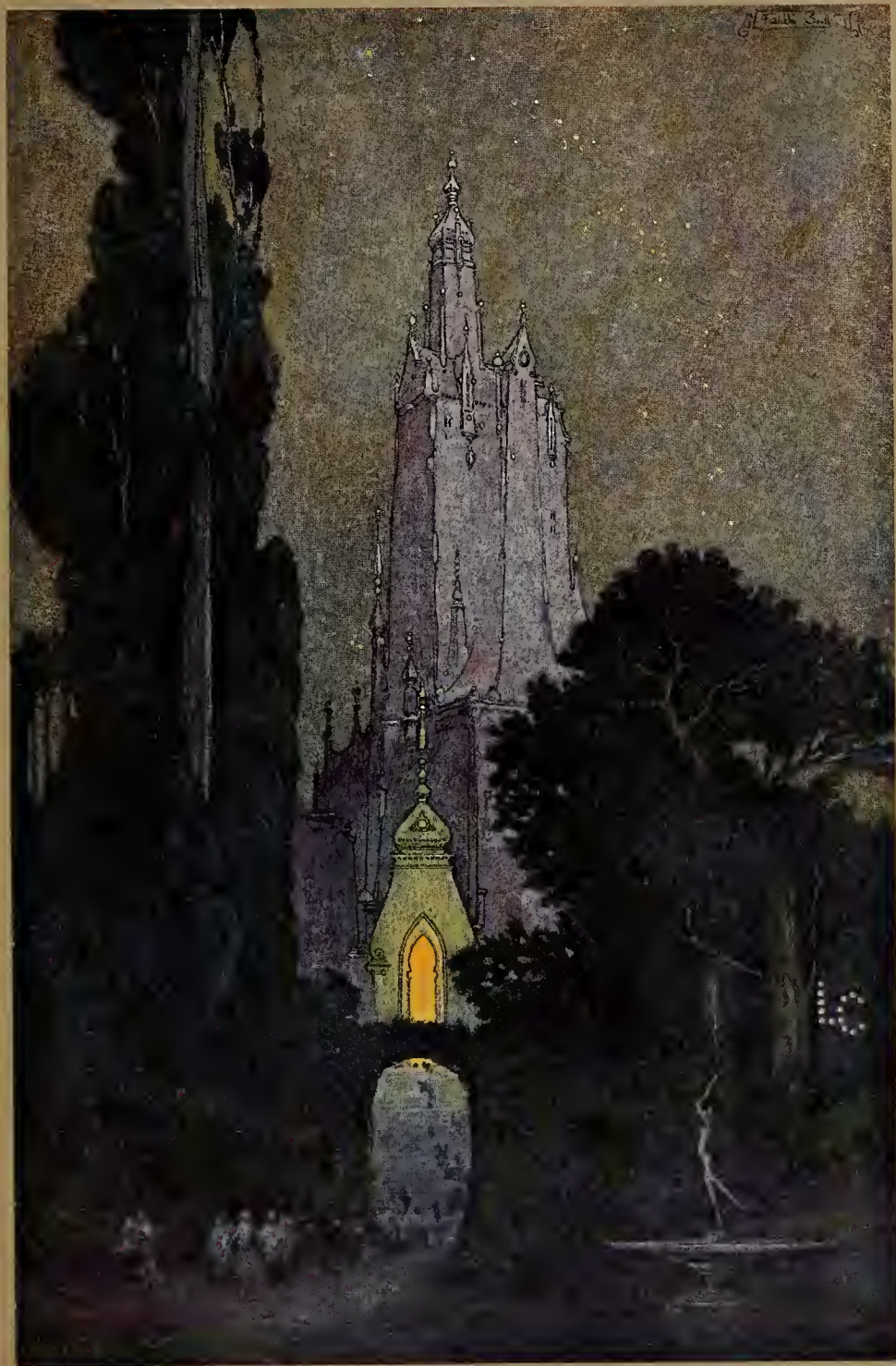
Fear not thou for me at all.—
Possessed am I of wondrous sorcery—
The gift of Holy Magi at my birth:
Mine enemy must *front* me in assault
And must with mummary of speech assail,
And I will know him in first utterance—
And so may thus disarm him, though he be
A giant thrice in vasty form and force.

[*Singing heard.*]

But, list! what wandering minstrel cometh here
In the young night?

VOICE. [*In distance—singing.*]

*The drowsy eyes of the stars grow dim;
The wamboo roosts on the rainbow's rim,
And the moon is a ghost of shine:
The soothing song of the crule is done,
But the song of love is a soother one,
And the song of love is mine.*



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*Then, wake! O wake!
For the sweet song's sake,
Nor let my heart
With the morning break!*

AMPHINE.

Some serenader. Hist!
What meaneth he so early, and what thus
Within the palace garden-close? Quick; here!
He neareth! Soh! Let us conceal ourselves
And mark his action, wholly unobserved.

[AMPHINE and DWAINIE enter bower.]

VOICE. [*Drawing nearer.*]

*The mist of the morning, chill and gray,
Wraps the night in a shroud of spray;
The sun is a crimson blot:
The moon fades fast, and the stars take wing;
The comet's tail is a fleeting thing—
But the tale of love is not.*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*Then, wake! O wake!
For the sweet song's sake,
Nor let my heart
With the morning break!*

[*Enter* JUCKLET.]

JUCKLET.

Eex! what a sumptuous darkness is the Night—
How rich and deep and suave and velvety
Its lovely blackness to a soul like mine!
Ah, Night! thou densest of all mysteries—
Thou eeriest of unfathomable delights,
Whose soundless sheer inscrutability
Is fascination's own ethereal self,
Unseen, and yet embodied—palpable,—
An essence, yet a form of stableness
That stays me—weighs me, as a giant palm
Were laid on either shoulder.—Peace! I cease
Even to strive to grope one further pace,
But stand uncovered and with lifted face.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

O but a glamour of inward light
Hath smitten the eyes of my soul to-night!
Groping here in the garden-land,
I feel my fancy's outheld hand
Touch the rim of a realm that seems
Like an isle of bloom in a sea of dreams:
I stand mazed, dazed and alone—alone!—
My heart beats on in an undertone,
And I lean and listen long, and long,
And I hold my breath as I hear again
The chords of a long-dead trentoraine
And the wraith of an old love-song.
Low to myself am I whispering:—

*Glad am I, and the Night knows why—
Glad am I that the dream came by
And found me here as of old when I
Was a ruler and a king.*

DWAINIE. [To *Amphine*.]

What gentle little monster is this dwarf—
Surely not Jucklet of the Court?

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

AMPHINE. [*Ironically.*]

Ay, ay!

But he'll *ungentle* an thy woman's-heart
Yield him but space. Listen: he mouths again.

JUCKLET.

It was an age ago—an age
Turned down in life like a folded page.—
See where the volume falls apart,
And the faded bookmark—'tis my heart,—
Nor mine alone, but another knit
So cunningly in the love of it
That you must look, with a shaking head,
Nor know the quick one from the dead.
Ah! what a broad and sea-like lawn
Is the field of love they bloom upon!—
Waves of its violet-velvet grass
Billowing, with the winds that pass,
And breaking in a snow-white foam
Of lily-crests on the shores of home.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Low to myself am I whispering:—

Glad am I, and the Night knows why—

Glad am I that the dream came by

And found me here as of old when I

Was a ruler and a king.

[Abruptly breaking into impassioned vocal burst.]

SONG.

Fold me away in your arms, O Night—

Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—

Tumble it down till my yearning sight

And my unkissed lips are hidden quite

And my heart is havened there,—

Under that mystical dark despair—

Under your rich black hair.

Oft have I looked in your eyes, O Night—

Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—

Looked in your eyes till my face waned white

And my heart laid hold of a mad delight

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

That moaned as I held it there
Under the deeps of that dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

Just for a kiss of your mouth, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—
Lo! will I wait as a dead man might
Wait for the Judgment's dawning light,
With my lips in a frozen prayer—
Under this lovable dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

[With swift change to mood of utter gayety.]

Ho! ho! what will my dainty mistress say
When I shall stand knee-deep in the wet grass
Beneath her lattice, and with upturned eyes
And tongue out-lolling like the clapper of
A bell, outpour her *that?* I wonder now
If she will not put up her finger thus,
And say, "Hist! heart of mine! the angels call

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

To thee!" Ho! ho! Or will her blushing face
Light up her dim boudoir and, from her glass,
Flare back to her a flame upsprouting from
The hot-cored socket of a soul whose light
She thought long since had guttered out?—Ho! ho!
Or, haply, will she chastely bend above—
A Parian phantomette, with head atip
And twinkling fingers dusting down the dews
That glitter on the tarapyzma-vines
That riot round her casement—gathering
Lush blooms to pelt me with while I below
All winkingly await the fragrant shower?
Ho! ho! how jolly is this thing of love!
But how much richer, rarer, jollier
Than all the loves is this rare love of mine!
Why, my sweet Princess doth not even dream
I *am* her lover,—for, to here confess,
I have a way of wooing all mine own,
And waste scant speech in creamy compliment
And courtesies all gaumed with winy words.—
In sooth, I do not woo at all—I *win*!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

How is it now the old duet doth glide
Itself full ripplingly adown the grooves
Of its quaint melody?—And whoso, by
The *bye*, or by the *way*, or *for the nonce*,
Or, eke ye, *peradventure*, ever durst
Render a duet singly but myself?

[*Singing—with grotesque mimicry of two voices.*]

JUCKLET'S OSTENSIBLE DUET.

How is it you woo?—and now answer me true,—
How is it you woo and you win?
Why, to answer you true,—the first thing that you do
Is to simply, my dearest—begin.

But how can I begin to woo or to win
When I don't know a Win from a Woo?
Why, cover your chin with your fan or your fin,
And I'll introduce them to you.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

But what if it drew from my parents a view
With my own in no manner akin?
*No matter!—your view shall be first of the two,—
So I hasten to usher them in.*

Nay, stay! Shall I grin at the Woo or the Win?
And what will he do if I *do*?
*Why, the Woo will begin with "How pleasant it's been!"
And the Win with "Delighted with you!"*

Then supposing he grew very dear to my view—
I'm speaking, you know, of the Win?
*Why, then, you should do what he wanted you to,—
And now is the time to begin.*

The time to begin? O then usher him in—
Let him say what he wants me to do.
*He is here.—He's a twin of yourself,—I am "Win,"
And you are, my darling, my "Woo"!*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[Capering and courtesying to feigned audience.]

That song I call most sensible nonsense;
And if the fair and peerless Dwainie were
But here, with that sweet voice of hers, to take
The part of "Woo," I'd be the happiest "Win"
On this side of futurity! Ho! ho!

DWAINIE. *[Aside to AMPHINE.]*

What means he?

AMPHINE.

Why, he means that throatless head
Of his needs further chucking down betwixt
His cloven shoulders!

[Starting forward—Dwainie detaining him.]

DWAINIE.

Nay, thou shalt not stir!
See! now the monster hath discovered our
Repast. Hold! Let us mark him further.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

JUCKLET. [*Archly eying viands.*]

What!

A roasted wheffle and a toc-spiced whum,
Tricked with a larvey and a gherghgling's tail!—
And, sprit me! wine enough to swim them in!
Now I should like to put a question to
The *guests*; but as there *are* none, I direct
Mine interrogatory to the host.

[*Bowing to vacancy.*]

Am I behind-time?—Then I can but trust
My tardy coming may be overlooked
In my most active effort to regain
A gracious tolerance by service now:—
Directing rapt attention to the fact
That I have brought mine appetite along,
I can but feel, ho! ho! that further words
Would be a waste of speech.

[*Sits at table—pours out wine, drinks and eats voraciously.*]

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

—There was a time

When I was rather backward in my ways
In courtly company (as though, forsooth,
I felt not, from my very birth, the swish
Of royal blood along my veins, though bred
Amongst the treacled scullions and the thralls
I shot from, like a cork, in youthful years,
Into court-favor by my wit's sheer stress
Of fomentation.—*Pah! the stench o' toil!*)
Ay, somehow, as I think, I've all outgrown
That coarse, nice age, wherein one makes a meal
Of two estardles and a fork of soup.
Hey! sanaloo! Lest my starved stomach stand
Awe-stricken and aghast, with mouth agape
Before the rich profusion of this feast,
I lubricate it with a glass of merl
And coax it on to more familiar terms
Of fellowship with those delectables.

[*Pours wine and holds up goblet with mock courtliness.*]

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Mine host!—Thou of the viewless presence and
Hush-haunted lip:—Thy most imperial,
Ethereal, and immaterial health!
Live till the sun dries up, and comb thy cares
With star-prongs till the comets fizzle out
And fade away and fail and are no more!

[*Drains and refills goblet.*]

And, if thou wilt permit me to observe,—
The gleaming shaft of spirit in this wine
Goes whistling to its mark, and full and fair
Zips to the target-centre of my soul!
Why, now am I the veriest gentleman,
That ever buttered woman with a smile,
And let her melt and run and drip and ooze
All over and around a wanton heart!
And if my mistress bent above me now,
In all my hideous deformity,
I think she would look over, as it were,
The hump upon my back, and so forget
The kinks and knuckles of my crooked legs,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

In this enchanting smile, she needs must leap,
Love-dazzled, and fall faint and fluttering
Within these yawning, all-devouring arms
Of mine! Ho! ho! And yet Crestillomeem
Would have me blight my dainty Dwainie with
This feather from the Devil's wing!—But I
Am far too full of craft to spoil the eyes
That yet shall pour their love like nectar out
Into mine own,—and I am far too deep
For royal wit to wade my purposes.

DWAINIE. [*To AMPHINE.*]

What can he mean?

AMPHINE. [*Chafing in suppressed frenzy.*]

Ha! to rush forward and
Tear out his tongue and slap it in his face!

DWAINIE. [*To AMPHINE.*]

Nay, nay! Hist what he saith!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

JUCKLET.

How big a fool—

How all magnificent an idiot
Would I be to blight *her*—(my peerless one!—
My very soul's soul!) as Crestillomeem
Doth instigate me to, for *her* hate's sake—
And inward *jealousy*, as well, belike!—
Wouldst have my Dwainie blinded to my charms—
For charms, good sooth, were every several flaw
Of my malformed outer-self, compared
With that his Handsomeness the Prince Amphine
Shalt change to at a breath of my puff'd cheek,
E'en were it weedy-bearded at the time
With such a stubble as a huntsman well
Might lose his spaniel in! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!
I fear me, O my coy Crestillomeem,
Thine ancient coquetry doth challenge still
Thine own vain admiration overmuch!
I to crush *her*?—when thou, as certainly,
Hast armed me to smite down the only bar

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

That lies betwixt her love and mine? Ho! ho!
Hey! but the revel I shall riot in
Above the beauteous Prince, instantuously
Made all abhorrent as a reptiled bulk!
Ho! ho! my princely wooer of the fair
Rare lady of mine own superior choice!
Pah! but my very 'maginings of him
Refinèd to that shamèd, sickening shape,
Do so beloathe me of him there be qualms
Expostulating in my forum now!
Ho! what unprincifying properties
Of medication hath her Majesty
Put in my tender charge! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!
Ah, Dwainie! sweetest sweet! what shock to thee?—
I wonder, when she sees the human toad
Squat at her feet and cock his filmy eyes
Upon her and croak love, if she will not
Call me to tweezer him with two long sticks
And toss him from her path.—O ho! Ho! ho!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Hell bend him o'er some blossom quick, that I
May have one brother in the flesh!

[*Nods drowsily.*]

DWAINIE. [*To AMPHINE.*]

Ha! See!

He groweth drunken.—Soh! Bide yet a spell
And I will vex him with my sorcery:
Then shall we hence,—for lo, the node when all
Our subtlest arts and strategies must needs
Be quickened into acts and swift results.
Now bide thou here, and in mute silence mark
The righteous penalty that hath accrued
Upon that dwarfèd monster.

[*She stands, still in concealment from the dwarf, her tense gaze fixed upon him as though in mute and painful act of incantation.—JUCKLET affected drowsily—yawns and mumbles incoherently—stretches, and gradually sinks at full length on the sward.—*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

DWAINIE *moves forward*—AMPHINE, *following*, is about to set foot contemptuously on sleeper's breast, but is caught and held away by DWAINIE, who imperiously waves him back, and still, in pantomime, commanding, bids him turn and hide his face—AMPHINE obeying as though unable to do otherwise. DWAINIE then unbinds her hair, and throwing it all forward covering her face and bending till it trails the ground, she lifts to the knee her dress, and so walks backward in a circle round the sleeping JUCKLET, crooning to herself an incoherent song. Then pausing, letting fall her gown, and rising to full stature, waves her hands above the sleeper's face, and runs to AMPHINE, who turns about and gazes on her with new wonderment.]

DWAINIE. [*To AMPHINE.*]

Now shalt thou
Look on such scaith as thou hast never dreamed.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[As she speaks, half averting her face as with melancholy apprehension, chorus of lugubrious voices heard chanting discordantly.]

VOICES.

When the fat moon smiles,
And the comets kiss,
And the elves of Spirkland flit,
The Whanghoo twunkers
A tune like this,
And the Nightmares champ the bit.

[As chorus dies away, a comet, freighted with weird shapes, dips from the night and trails near JUCKLET'S sleeping figure, while, with attendant goblin-forms, two Nightmares, CREECH and GRITCHFANG, alight. —The comet hisses, switches its tail and disappears, while the two goblins hover buzzingly over JUCKLET,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*who starts wide-eyed and stares fixedly at them, with
horribly contorted features.]*

CREECH. [*To GRITCHFANG.*]

Buzz!

Buzz!

Buzz!

Buzz!

Flutter your wings like your grandmother does!
Tuck in your chin and wheel over and *whir-r-r*
Like a dickerbug fast in the web of the wuhrr!
Reel out your tongue, and untangle your toes
And rattle your claws o'er the bridge of his nose;
Tickle his ears with your feathers and fuzz,
And keep up a hum like your grandmother does!

[*JUCKLET moans and clutches at air convulsively.*]

AMPHINE. [*Shuddering.*]

Most grewsome sight! See how the poor worm writhes!
How must he suffer!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

DWAINIE.

Ay, but good is meant—
A far voice sings it so.

GRITCHFANG. [*To CREECH.*]

Let me dive deep in his nostriline caves,
And keep an eye out as to how he behaves:
Fasten him down while I put him to rack—
And don't let him flop from the flat of his back!

[*Shrinks to minute size, while goblin attendants pluck from shrubbery a great lily-shaped flower which they invert funnel-wise, with small end at sleeper's nostrils, hoisting GRITCHFANG in at top and jostling shape downward gradually from sight, and—removing flower,—voice of GRITCHFANG continues gleefully from within sleeper's head.*]

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Ho! I have bored through the floor of his brains,
And set them all writhing with torturous pains;
And I shriek out the prayer, as I whistle and whiz,
I may be the nightmare that my grandmother is!
[*Reappears, through reversal of flower-method, assuming
former shape, crosses to CREECH, and, joining, the
twain dance on sleeper's stomach in broken time to
duo.*]

DUO.

Whing!

Whang!

So our ancestors sang!

And they guzzled hot blood and blew up with a *bang!*—
But they ever tenaciously clung to the rule
To only blow up in the hull of a fool—
To fizz and explode like a cast-iron toad
In the cavernous depths where his victuals were stowed—
When chances were ripest and thickest and best
To burst every button-hole out of his vest!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[They pause, float high above, and fusing together into a great square iron weight, drop heavily on chest of sleeper, who moans piteously.]

AMPHINE. *[Hiding his face.]*

Ah! take me hence!

[DWAINIE leads him off, looking backward as she goes and waving her hands imploringly to CREECH and GRITCHFANG, reassuming former shapes, in ecstasies of insane delight.]

CREECH. *[To GRITCHFANG.]*

Zipp!

Zipp!

Zipp!

Zipp!

Sting his tongue raw and unravel his lip!

Grope, on the right, down his windpipe, and squeeze

His liver as dry as a petrified wheeze!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[GRITCHFANG—as before—shrinks and disappears at
sleepers' mouth.]

Throttle his heart till he's black in the face,
And bury it down in some desolate place
Where only remorse in pent agony lives
To dread the advice that your grandmother gives!

[*The sleeper struggles contortedly, while voice of*
GRITCHFANG *calls from within.*]

GRITCHFANG.

Ho-ho! I have clambered the rungs of his ribs
And beriddled his lungs into tatters and dribs;
And I turn up the tube of his heart like a hose
And squirt all the blood to the end of his nose!
I stamp on his stomach and caper and prance,
With my tail tossing round like a boomerang-lance!
And thus may success ever crown my intent
To wander the ways that my grandmother went!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[Reappears, falls hysterically in CREECH'S outstretched arms.—Then dance and duo:]

DUO.

Whing!

Whung!

So our ancestors sung!

And they snorted and pawed, and they hissed and they stung,—

Taking special terrific delight in their work
On the fools that they found in the lands of the Spirk.—

And each little grain of their powders of pain

They scraped up and pestled again and again—

Mixed in quadruple doses for gluttons and sots,

Till they strangled their dreams with gung-jibbrious knots!

[The comet again trails past, upon which the Nightmares leap and disappear. JUCKLET staggers to his feet and glares frenziedly around—then starts for oppo-

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

site exit of comet—is there suddenly confronted with fiend-faces in the air, bewhiskered with ragged purplish flames that flare audibly and huskily in abrupt alternating chill gasps and hot welterings of wind. He starts back from them, reels and falls prostrate, grovelling terrifiedly in the dust, and chattering, with eerie music accompanying his broken utterance.]

JUCKLET.

Æo! Æo! Æo!

Thou that dost all things know—

Waiving all claims of mine to *dare* to pray,
Save that I needs *must*:—Lo,

What *may* I pray for? Yea,

I have not *any* way,

An *Thou* gainsayest me a tolerance so.—

I dare not pray

Forgiveness—too great

My vast o'ertoppling weight

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Of sinning; nor can I
Pray my
Poor soul unscourged to go.—
Frame *Thou* my prayer, Æo!
What may I pray for? Dare
I shape a prayer,
 In sooth,
For any cancelled joy
 Of my mad youth,
Or any bliss my sin's stress did destroy?
What may I pray for—What!—
That the wild clusters of forget-me-not
 And mignonette
 And violet
Be out of childhood brought,
 And in mine hard heart set
A-blooming now as then?—
 With all their petals yet
Bediamonded with dew—
Their sweet, sweet scent let loose
Full sumptuously again!

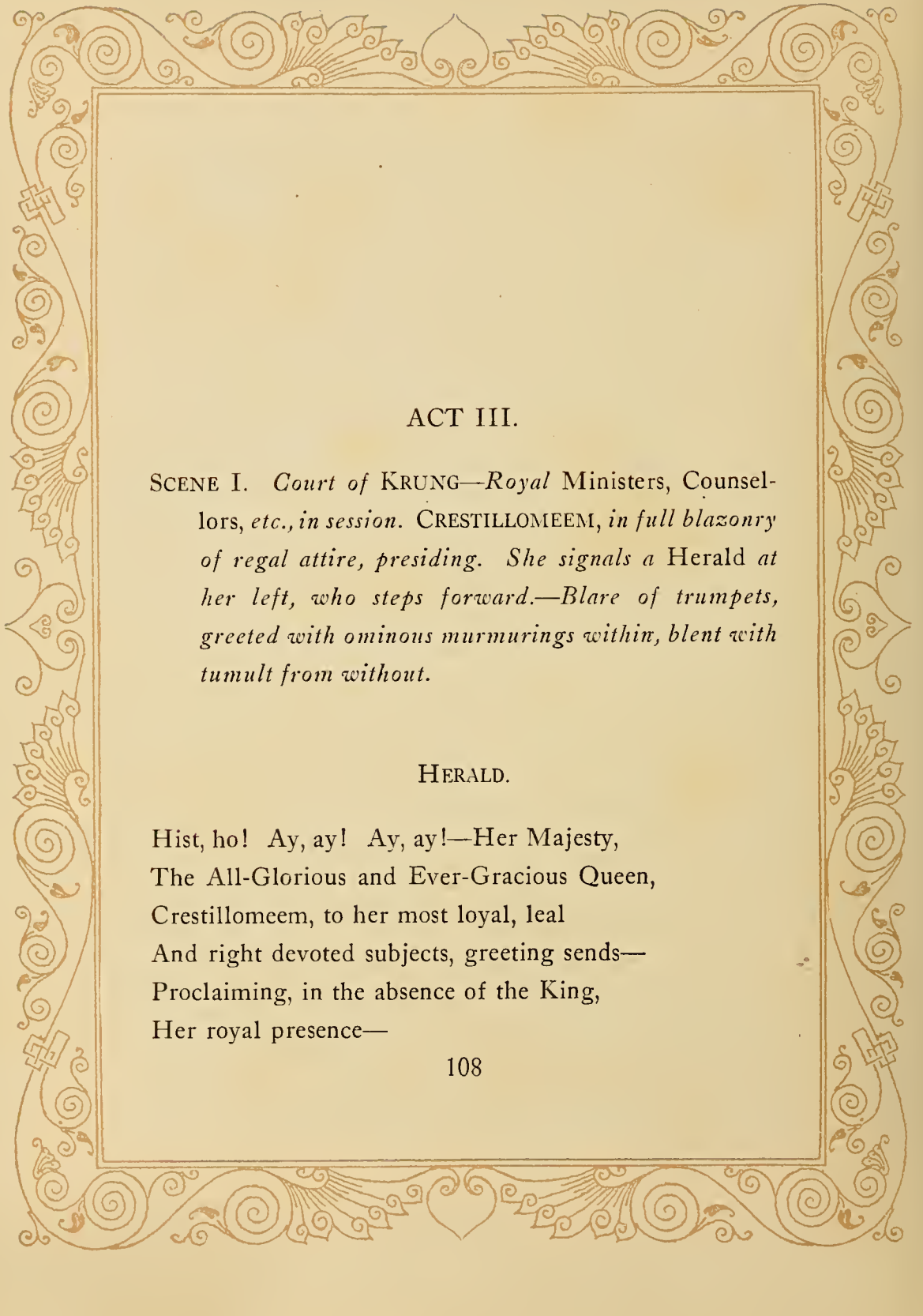
THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

What *may* I pray, Æo!
For the poor hutchèd cot
Where death sate squat
Midst my first memories?—Lo!
My mother's face—(they, whispering, told me so)—
That face!—so pinchedly
It blanched up, as they lifted me—
Its frozen eyelids would
Not part, nor could
Be ever wetted open with warm tears.
. . . Who hears
The prayers for all dead-mother-sakes, Æo!
Leastwise *one* mercy:—May
I not have leave to pray
All *self* to pass away—
Forgetful of all needs mine own—
Neglectful of all creeds;—alone,
Stand fronting Thy high throne and say:
To Thee,
O Infinite, I pray
Shield *Thou* mine enemy!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*[Music throughout supplication gradually softens and
sweetens into utter gentleness, with scene slow-fading
into densest night.]*

END ACT II.



ACT III.

SCENE I. *Court of KRUNG—Royal Ministers, Counselors, etc., in session. CRESTILLOMEEM, in full blazonry of regal attire, presiding. She signals a Herald at her left, who steps forward.—Blare of trumpets, greeted with ominous murmurings within, blent with tumult from without.*

HERALD.

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,
Her royal presence—

Franklin D. R.



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[Voice of Herald fails abruptly—utterly.—A breathless hush falls sudden on the court.—A sense oppressive—ominous—affects the throng. Weird music heard of unseen instruments.]

HERALD. *[Huskily striving to be heard.]*

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem—

[The Queen gasps, and clutches at Herald, mutely signing him to silence, her staring eyes fixed on a shadowy figure, mistily developing before her into wraith-like form and likeness of the Tune-Fool, SPRAIVOLL. The shape—evidently invisible and voiceless to all senses but the Queen's—wavers vaporishly to and fro before her, moaning and crooning in infinitely sweet-sad minor cadences a mystic song.]

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

WRAITH-SONG OF SPRAIVOLL.

*I will not hear the dying word
Of any friend, nor stroke the wing
Of any little wounded bird.
. . . Love is the dearest thing!*

*I wist not if I see the smile
Of prince or wight, in court or lane.—
I only know that afterwhile
He will not smile again.*

*The summer blossom, at my feet
Swims backward, drowning in the grass.—
I will not stay to name it sweet—
Sink out! and let me pass!*

*I have no mind to feel the touch
Of gentle hands on brow and hair.—
The lack of this once pained me much,
And so I have a care.*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*Dead weeds, and husky-rustling leaves
That beat the dead boughs where ye cling,
And old dead nests beneath the eaves—
Love is the deadest thing!*

*'Ah! once I fared not all alone;
And once—no matter, rain or snow!—
The stars of summer ever shone—
Because I loved him so!*

*With always tremblings in his hands,
And always blushes unaware,
And always ripples down the strands
Of his long yellow hair.*

*I needs must weep a little space,
Remembering his laughing eyes
And curving lip, and lifted face
Of rapture and surprise.*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*O joy is dead in every part,
And life and hope; and so I sing:
In all the graveyard of my heart
Love is the dearest thing!*

[With dying away of song, apparition of SPRAIVOLL slowly vanishes, CRESTILLOMEEM turns dazedly to throng, and with labored effort strives to reassume imperious mien.—Signs for merl and tremulously drains goblet—sinks back in throne with feigned complacency, mutely waving Herald to proceed.]

HERALD. *[Mechanically.]*

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,
Her royal presence, as by him empowered

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

To sit and occupy, maintain and hold,
And therefrom rule the Throne, in sovereign state,
And work the royal will—[*Confusion.*] Hist, ho!
Ay, ay!
Ay, ay!—And be it known, the King, in view
Of his approaching dissolution—

[*Sensation among Counsellors, etc., within, and wild
tumult without and cries "Long live the King!" and
"Treason!" "Intrigue!" "Sorcery!" CRESTILLO-
MEEM, in suppressed ire, waving silence, and Herald
striving to be heard.*]

HERALD.

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—The King, in view
Of his approaching dissolution, hath
Decreed this instrument—this royal scroll

[*Unrolling and displaying scroll.*]

With royal seal thereunto set by Krung's
Most sacred act and sign—

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[General sensation within, and growing tumult without, with wrangling cries of "Plot!" "Treason!" "Conspiracy!" and "Down with the Queen!" "Down with the usurper!" "Down with the Sorceress!"]

CRESTILLOMEEM. *[Wildly.]*

Who dares to cry
"Conspiracy!" Bring me the traitor-knave!

[Growing confusion without—sound of rioting.—Voice, "Let me be taken! Let me be taken!" Enter Guards, dragging JUCKLET forward, wild-eyed and hysterical—the Queen's gaze fastened on him wonderingly.]

CRESTILLOMEEM. *[To Guards.]*

Why bring ye Jucklet hither in this wise?

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

GUARD.

O Queen, 'tis he who cries "Conspiracy!"
And who incites the mob without with cries
Of "Plot!" and "Treason!"

CRESTILLOMEEM. [*Starting.*]

Ha! Can this be true?
I'll not believe it!—Jucklet is my fool,
But not so vast a fool that he would tempt
His gracious Sovereign's ire. [*To Guards.*] Let him be
freed!

[*Then to JUCKLET, with mock service.*]

Stand hither, O my Fool!

JUCKLET. [*To Queen.*]

What! I, thy fool?
Ho! ho! *Thy* fool?—ho! ho!—Why, *thou* art *mine*!
[*Confusion—cries of "Strike down the traitor!"*] JUCK-
LET *wrenching himself from grasp of officers.*]

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Back, all of ye! I have not waded hell
That I should fear your puny enmity!
Here will I give ye proof of all I say!

[Presses toward throne, wedging his opposers left and right—CRESTILLOMEEM sits as though stricken speechless—pallid, waving him back—JUCKLET, fairly fronting her, with folded arms—then to throng continues.]

Lo! do I here defy her to lift up
Her voice and say that Jucklet speaks a lie.

[At sign of Queen, officers, unperceived by JUCKLET, close warily behind him.]

And, further—I pronounce the document
That craven Herald there holds in his hand
A forgery—a trick—and dare the Queen,
Here in my listening presence, to command
Its further utterance!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

CRESTILLOMEEM. [*Wildly rising.*]

Hold, hireling!—Fool!—

The Queen thou dost in thy mad boasts insult
Shall utter first thy doom!

[JUCKLET, *seized from behind by Guards, is hurled face upward on the dais at her feet, while a minion, with drawn sword pressed close against his breast, stands over him.*]

—Ere we proceed

With graver matters, let this demon-knave
Be sent back home to hell.

[*With awful stress of ire, form quivering, eyes glittering and features twitched and ashen.*]

Give *me* the sword,—
The insult hath been mine—so even shall
The vengeance be!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

[*As CRESTILLOMEEM seizes sword and bends forward to strike, JUCKLET, with superhuman effort, frees his hand, and, with a sudden motion and an incoherent muttering, flings object in his assailant's face,—CRESTILLOMEEM staggers backward, dropping sword, and, with arms tossed aloft, shrieks, totters and falls prone upon the pave. In confusion following JUCKLET mysteriously vanishes; and as the bewildered Courtiers lift the fallen Queen, a clear, piercing voice of thrilling sweetness is heard singing.*]

VOICE.

The pride of noon must wither soon—
The dusk of death must fall;
Yet out of darkest night the moon
Shall blossom over all!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

*[For an instant a dense cloud envelops empty throne—
then gradually lifts, discovering therein KRUNG
seated, in royal panoply and state, with JUCKLET in
act of presenting sceptre to him.—Blare of trumpets,
and chorus of Courtiers, Ministers, Herald, etc.]*

CHORUS.

All hail! Long live the King!

KRUNG. *[To throng, with grave salutation.]*

Through Æo's own great providence, and through
The intervention of an angel whom
I long had deemed forever lost to me,
Once more your favored Sovereign, do I greet
And tender ye my blessing, O most good
And faith-abiding subjects of my realm!
In common, too, with your long-suffering King,
Have ye long suffered, blamelessly as he:
Now, therefore, know ye all what, until late,

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

He knew not of himself, and with him share
The rapturous assurance that is his,—
That, for all time to come, are we restored
To the old glory and most regal pride
And opulence and splendor of our realm.

*[Turning with pained features to the strangely stricken
Queen.]*

There have been, as ye needs must know, strange spells
And wicked sorceries at work within
The very dais-boundaries of the Throne.
Lo! then, behold your harrier and mine,
And with me grieve for the self-ruined Queen
Who grovels at my feet, blind, speechless, and
So stricken with a curse herself designed
Should light upon Hope's fairest minister.

*[Motions attendants, who lead away CRESTILLOMEEM—
the King gazing after her, overmastered with stress
of his emotions.—He leans heavily on throne, as*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

though oblivious to all surroundings, and, shaping into speech his varying thought, as in a trance, speaks as though witless of both utterance and auditor.]

I loved her.—Why? I never knew.—Perhaps
Because her face was fair; perhaps because
Her eyes were blue and wore a weary air;—
Perhaps . . . perhaps because her limpid face
Was eddied with a restless tide, wherein
The dimples found no place to anchor and
Abide: perhaps because her tresses beat
A froth of gold about her throat, and poured
In splendor to the feet that ever seemed
Afloat. Perhaps because of that wild way
Her sudden laughter overleapt propriety;
Or—who will say?—perhaps the way she wept.
Ho! have ye seen the swollen heart of summer
Tempest, o'er the plain, with throbs of thunder
Burst apart and drench the earth with rain? She
Wept like that.—And to recall, with one wild glance

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Of memory, our last love-parting—tears
And all. . . . It thrills and maddens me! And yet
My dreams will hold her, flushed from lifted brow
To finger-tips, with passion's ripest kisses
Crushed and mangled on her lips. . . . O woman! while
Your face was fair, and heart was pure, and lips
Were true, and hope as golden as your hair,
I should have strangled you!

[As KRUNG, ceasing to speak, piteously lifts his face, SPRAIVOLL all suddenly appears, in space left vacant by the Queen, and, kneeling, kisses the King's hand.—He bends in tenderness, kissing her brow—then lifts and seats her at his side. Speaks then to throng.]

Good Subjects—Lords:

Behold in this sweet woman here my child
Whom, years ago, the cold, despicable
Crestillomeem—by baleful, wicked arts
And grewsome spells and fearsome witcheries—



THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

Did spirit off to some strange otherland
Where, happily, a Wunkland Princess found
Her, and undid the spell by sorcery
More potent—ay, *Divine*, since it works naught
But *good*—the gift of Æo, to right wrong.
This magic dower the Wunkland Princess hath
Enlisted in our restoration here,
In secret service, till this joyful hour
Of our complete deliverance. Even thus.—
Lo, let the peerless Princess now appear!

*[He lifts sceptre, and a gust of melody, divinely beautiful,
sweeps through the court.—The star above the throne
loosens and drops slowly downward, bursting like a
bubble on the sceptre-tip, and, issuing therefrom,
AMPHINE and DWAINIE, hand in hand, kneel at the
feet of KRUNG, who bends above them with his bless-
ing, while JUCKLET capers wildly round the group.]*

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

JUCKLET.

Ho! ho! but I could shriek for very joy!
And though my recent rival, fair Amphine,
Doth even now bend o'er a blossom, I,
Besprit me! have no lingering desire
To meddle with it, though with but one eye
I slept the while she backward walked around
Me in the garden.

[AMPHINE *dubiously smiles*—JUCKLET *blinks and leers*
—and DWAINIE *bites her finger.*]

KRUNG.

Peace! good Jucklet! Peace!
For this is not a time for any jest.—
Though the old order of our realm hath been
Restored, and though restored my very life—
Though I have found a daughter,—I have lost
A son—for Dwainie, with her sorcery,
Will, on the morrow, carry him away.
'Tis Æo's largess, as our love is His,
And our abiding trust and gratefulness.

CURTAIN.

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