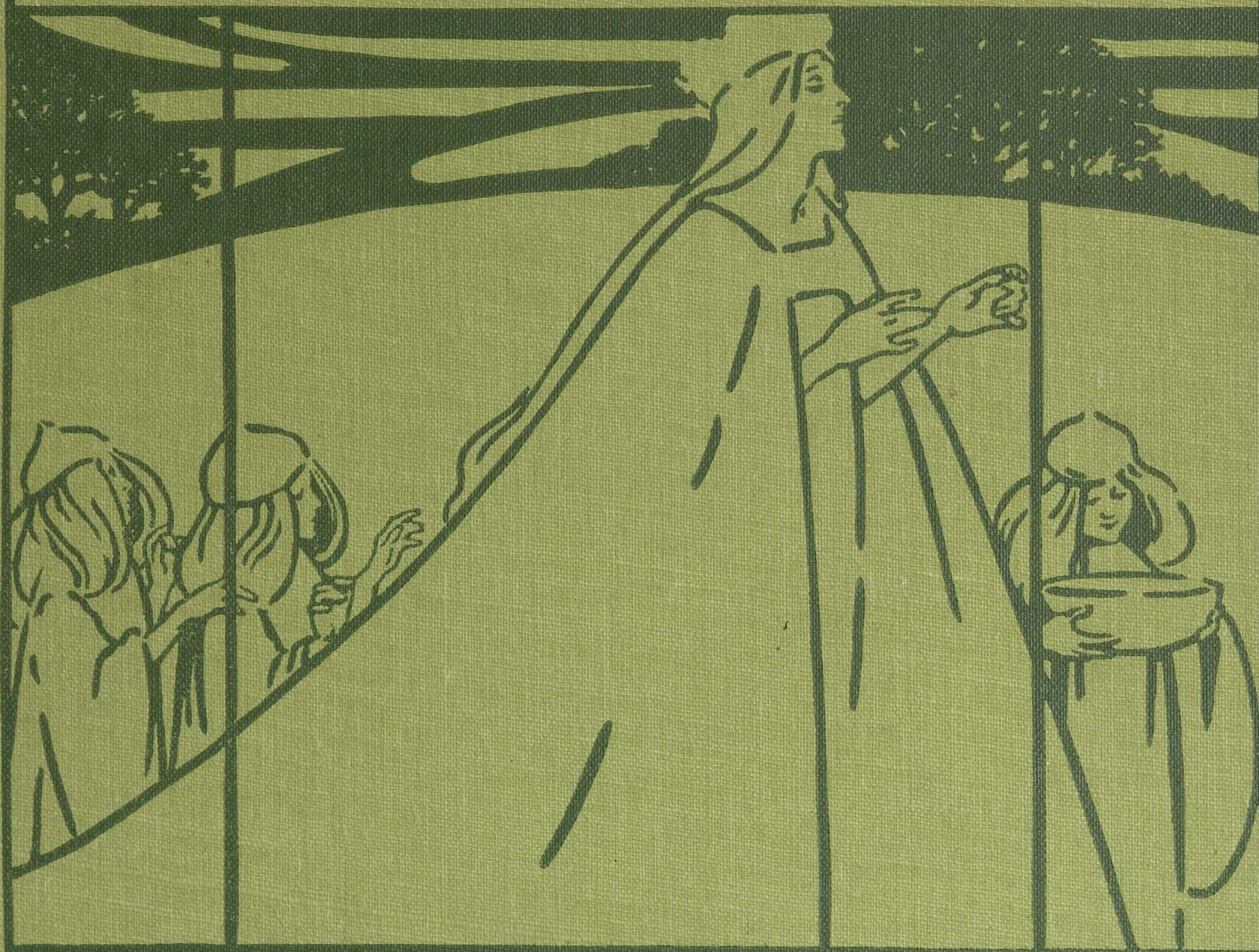


A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

BY W. GRAHAM ROBERTSON



JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD

P.
ROBERTSON, W. G.
MASQUE
1904



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III



GOLDEN GOWN

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

BY W. GRAHAM ROBERTSON
WITH TWELVE DESIGNS IN
COLOUR BY THE AUTHOR



JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON & NEW YORK MDCCCIV

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
London & Edinburgh

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

WINTER

THE SNOWDROP

THE PRIMROSE

THE VIOLET

THE CELANDINE

THE ANEMONE

THREE PERSONAGES IN GREEN

APRIL

MAY

THE SPIRIT OF THE ROSE

VOICES OF THE SNOW

CHORUS OF THE MAY DEW GATHERERS

ILLUSTRATIONS

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A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

[In a woodland clearing stands a small stage. Thick green boughs form a screen at the back. Steps on either side lead up on to the stage. Round it is a stretch of green sward encircled by the dim tangles of the wood. Among the trees soft voices sing as the white-robed figure of WINTER comes slowly out of the shadows and moves over the grass towards the stage]

THE SONG OF THE SNOW-FLAKES

Down through the air we softly sweep,
Feathers that fall from wings of sleep,
Bearing the kisses of cloud and sky
To hush the world with lullaby.

Lullaby.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Silence we bring, a silver seal
Closing the founts of woe and weal.
Sorrow and pleasure, or smile or sigh,
Alike we lull with lullaby.

Lullaby.

[WINTER *passes on to the stage. Her long white hair falls over
trailing robes of glistening white*]

WINTER'S SONG

White-haired Winter, the nurse, am I.
Hush ! Hush ! The world's asleep.
Softly tread, O ye passers by,
Lest she wake in the dark and cry ;
Darkling wake and weep.
Lullaby, lullaby.
Sleep sound and deep.

Warm and soft in your bed you lie.
Hush ! Hush ! Snows are white.
Draw the curtains over the sky



A SONG OF SLEEP

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

With only a glimmer to kiss you by
When nurse puts out the light.
Lullaby, lullaby.
White little world ; good-night.

Waken soon to the sun on high,
Life and love, joy and pain ;
But ere the days of the year go by
The world to her white-haired nurse will sigh,
“Sing me the old refrain !
Lullaby, lullaby.
Rock me asleep again.”

Finger on lip I guard the sleeping world ;
I that am Sleep and Silence. In the air
All sound hangs frozen, save the slumber song
Of the tall pine's eternal hush-a-by.
Over my great white floor no footfall rings,
Men pass as shadows moving silently.
Brown robin pipes a song beneath his breath
And in the woods the echoes lie asleep.
None may awake the world while I keep watch ;
No noisy bird, no flower—

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

A VOICE

O mother, wake !
I am so frightened ! I am in the dark !
Is it not daylight yet ?

WINTER

Who cries aloud,
Breaking the silver silence ?

A VOICE

Mother dear,
I must get up ! I cannot stay in bed !
I am so very very wide awake.

*[The SNOWDROP climbs slowly out of the ground. She is in
white with a little green cap]*

Time to get up !

WINTER

O little phantom flower !
The frozen world is smiling in her sleep ;
You are her dream of Spring.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

SNOWDROP

I am no dream.
I heard the great Sun call and I am here.
Men name me Snowdrop, first-born of the year.

THE SNOWDROP'S SONG

I am the Snowdrop, first up-peeping,
First of flowers and vernal things.
I crept out while the world was sleeping
To feel the sun and to try my wings.
In a land of shadow I linger lonely ;
A-flutter I hang on my tiny stem.
For Spring's first footfall I listen only,
A strayed white pearl from her diadem.

WINTER

What are you doing here, you wakeful child,
Up all too early? Here's no sun for you.
Run back to bed ; I'll have no flowers here !
Flowers indeed !

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

SNOWDROP

Dear nurse, be kind to me.
See me. I am so little of a flower.
A chilly star by Frost's white fingers formed,
Tracing his barren blossoms on the pane ;
One of your snow-flakes that has found a stem
And grown a tiny, tiny golden heart.

WINTER

I'll have no flowers here. Be off to bed.

SNOWDROP

But nurse, I cannot go to sleep again.
The night is spent, it passes in the wind ;
For the dim gates of morning are ajar
And dawn peeps through them. See, beyond the hills
A faint light quickens—nurse ! Is that the Sun ?

WINTER

Aye, 'tis the Sun ! Now snow-flake hide yourself !
Frost flower beware, his burning kiss is death.
Creep close beneath my mantle.



FIRST BORN OF SPRING

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

SNOWDROP [*springing forward*]

No! No! No!

It is the Sun! The Sun! It is the Sun!

[*From below comes an echo of many voices*]

THE VOICES

It is the Sun! The Sun! It is the Sun!

SNOWDROP

My waking kindred call. This way! This way!
Up to the Sun! Up! Up! Up to the light!

THE VOICES [*nearer*]

Up to the light! Up to the light!

WINTER

Be still,
You restless little flower! My drowsy spell
Is broken. All the children are awake,
And I shall never get them back to bed!

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

THE VOICES [*close at hand*]

Up to the Sun ! Up ! Up ! Up to the light !

[*Up out of the earth the flowers climb, slowly and only half awake. PRIMROSE in yellow, VIOLET in blue, CELANDINE in orange and gold*]

SONG OF THE WAKING FLOWERS

PRIMROSE

Faint with the wonder of birth,
Shaking the sleep from our eyes,
Up through the gloom of the earth
We rise. We rise.

CELANDINE

Up through the frost and the rime,
Gathering strength as we go ;
Up to the pride of our prime
We grow. We grow.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

VIOLET

Narrow and chill was the bed.
Seeking our father the Sun
Up from the land of the dead
We run. We run.

PRIMROSE

Dim with the dreams of the night,
Dull with the dust of the mould,
Us in thy garment of light
Enfold. Enfold.

ALL THREE

What though we stay but awhile,
What though we pass with the May !
Grant us the gold of thy smile
To-day. To-day !

[The SNOWDROP moves forward, greeting them]

SNOWDROP

Welcome, dear kindred ! What a brave array !

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Purple and gold and saffron ! Deign you speak
To me who never thought to deck myself,
But in my white smock ran to meet the light ?

VIOLET [*kissing* SNOWDROP]

So we have found you, little runaway.

PRIMROSE [*kissing her*]

Good morning, truant.

CELANDINE [*with dignity*]

You may kiss my hand.

Fall back two paces, now, a curtsy please.
Thank you. You are not versed in etiquette,
But a Princess must think about such things.

SNOWDROP

How are you called, sweet sisters newly found ?
I have forgot—or I have never known ;
For we but dwelt together in that land
Where dreams are born and flowers have no names.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

PRIMROSE

Dear, I am Primrose.

VIOLET

I am Violet.

CELANDINE

I claim precedence. I am Celandine.

CELANDINE'S SONG

In a golden gown
Fare I so fine ;
Golden is my crown,
Queen Celandine.

First of royal line,
High my renown,
Princess Celandine,
Queen Golden Gown.

All men bowing down,
By right divine
Of my golden gown
Crown Celandine.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

[*CELANDINE passes ; PRIMROSE moves forward*]

SONG OF THE PRIMROSE

Yellow stars in the grass,
Yellow stars in the sky.
Heaven can see its face in a glass
While sweet spring days go by.

Yellow stars on the earth,
Yellow stars in the air.
Which of these is of worthier worth ?
Which is the fairer fair ?

Yellow stars in the glade
Long for stars of the sky,
But ever the splendours pale and fade
To the earth star's opening eye.

Waking star in the blue,
Sleeping star in the green ;
Never may meet or greet the two
With the day and the night between.



A SLEEPY STAR

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Each of the golden rout
Fares on the ancient way ;
And the great stars burn their ages out
And the Primrose lives its day.

[*The PRIMROSE passes. VIOLET moves forward*]

SONG OF THE VIOLET

In my hooded cloak of blue
Meekly I appear.

In my eyes a smile for you,
In my heart a tear.

Fair the day and blinding bright ;
Over bright meseems.

There was not so strong a light
In the land of dreams.

Gallant Primrose gazes up
Boldly to the sky,
Straightly stands the Buttercup,
Golden crest on high.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Only I, the Violet,
Go with drooping head.
I can never quite forget
Dreamland and the Dead.

Dear dead folk, who understand
Quiet communings.
I cannot forget the Land
Of Forgotten Things.

Underneath my cloak of blue
If you care to peer,
You will find a smile for you ;
You will find a tear.

[WINTER comes forward angrily, shaking her white mantle]

WINTER

More tears than smiles for you, O foolish ones
Untimely risen. Mother earth still sleeps ;
Your little babbling tongues cannot avail
To pierce the thickly woven web of dreams
Which I draw round her. Still my frost can nip,

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

My snow-clouds gather in the heavy air !
Now pining droop, and, shivering in the cold,
Repent too late your disobedience !

[*The FLOWERS huddle together crying*]

THE FLOWERS

The cold ! The snow ! The darkness ! O ! O ! O !
Close petals all ! Creep underneath the leaves !
'Twill pass ! 'Twill pass !

[*A horn sounds without*]

WINTER

Again the silence broken !
What wender winds his horn ?

PRIMROSE [*joyfully*]

It is the Wind !
The merry Wind, the flower's playfellow.
When Spring's feet falter and the air grows chill
He makes mad music on the sounding pipes,
So that we dance and dance, and quite forget
White winter's cold and all her cruelty.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

THE FLOWERS

It is the Wind ! our playfellow, the Wind !

VIOLET

And see who runs before with flying feet,
Blown like a feather through the gusty air ;
Fragile Anemone, the Wind's white child,
Nimblest and lightest dancer in the wood.

[ANEMONE *runs in panting*]

ANEMONE

O, I am out of breath. But never mind !
Have you all partners ? Am I very late ?
My father's pipes are droning on the hill ;
Soon he'll be here with all his minstrelsy.

THE ANEMONE'S SONG

The Wind is blowing ! The Wind is blowing !
He bends the trees at his fancy's whim ;
But ever and now a light kiss throwing
To me, his child, in the woodland dim.



FLOWER OF THE WIND

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

The curtseying clouds are all advancing
While up in the sky the Wind is dancing,
And I, Anemone, dance with him.

See ; I move like a fine town lady,
My father taught me the modish way ;
Down in the copses thick and shady
I open the ball with him to-day.
Make my curtsey with airs and graces,
Hands across and then back to places,
Set to partners and "balancez."

Hear the music of pipe and fiddle !
Come to the ball and dance with me.
Up the centre and down the middle,
Threading the needle away go we.
While the tunes ring out to our merry mumming,
"Flower o' the Broom," and "Spring's a-coming,"
Mark your steps with a one, two, three !

[ANEMONE *pauses breathless.* PRIMROSE *comes to her*]

PRIMROSE

Light foot, light heart, laughing Anemone !
We all will learn our steps.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

CELANDINE [*taking VIOLET aside*]

Pray pardon me.

Is the young lady—er—professional?

Who did she say her father was?

VIOLET

The Wind.

CELANDINE

Yes, but *which* Wind? One knows so many Winds.

VIOLET

South-west, I fancy.

CELANDINE [*reassured*]

Ah, that would explain—

Very Bohemian. Southern temperament.

—I'll bow to her.

[*Does so, quite unobserved by ANEMONE*

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

ANEMONE

The dance ! Begin the dance !
The guests are bidden and the lights are lit.
Daisy and Cowslip, Squill and Daffodil,
Bold Dandelion and tall Buttercup,
And even little Eyebright, all accept.
The Milkmaids, too, whom some call Lady's Smocks.

CELANDINE

Milkmaids ! Not really ! But—how very mixed !
That is the worst of these provincial balls,
One never can be sure whom one may meet.
—I don't suppose there'll be a soul one knows.

[The Flowers join hands and dance as they sing]

SONG OF THE DANCING FLOWERS

Pipe for our dancing, O playfellow Wind !
Our steps are light and our cheeks are aglow.
What though the Winter prove cold and unkind !
O gaily pipe as we dance to and fro !
 Laughing, singing,
 Swaying, swinging.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Louder the music and madder the measure !

Turning, tripping,

Rising, dipping,

Merry with motion and panting with pleasure.

Pipe for our dancing, O playfellow Wind !

Our steps are light and our cheeks are aglow.

What though the day should prove cold and unkind !

O gaily pipe as we dance in a row.

Whispering Wind, with a message for me,

A word for me from the Spring and the Sun ;

Will they not dance with us here on the lea ?

• O bid them haste, for the ball is begun.

Prattling, playing,

Swinging, swaying.

Leaves all a-flutter and petals a-flying !

Waving, whirling,

Twisting, twirling,

While the mad music is singing or sighing.

Pipe for our dancing, O playfellow Wind !

Our steps are light and our cheeks are aglow.

Skies will be blue again, Spring will be kind.

O gaily pipe as we come and we go !

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Wind of the West, with a smile and a sigh,
A crown of light and a cloak of the rain,
See, at thy bidding the clouds hurry by !
The sun rides forth in the heavens again !

Hurrying, hustling,
Rippling, rustling.

Wind, give us leave. Draw a breath for thy blowing.

Fluttering, flushing,
Babbling, blushing,

Petals flung wide and each yellow heart glowing !
Pipe for our dancing, O playfellow dear !
Our hearts are light as the flight of our feet !
Send us the Sun and the Spring o' the year,
When days are golden and life is complete.

*[The dancers break up their ring and are scattered laughing
over the stage]*

PRIMROSE

Well done ! Ah ha ! We've danced the clouds away.

CELANDINE

Thanks, my brave piper !

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

VIOLET [*listening*]

Hush ! Be still awhile.
I hear the song of Sorrow in the wood ;
A sound of weeping.

SNOWDROP

Weeping ! What is that ?

PRIMROSE

What is't, to weep ?

CELANDINE

I do not know.

SNOWDROP

Nor I.

VIOLET

How should you know the bitter taste of tears,
You laughing blossoms wreathed for festival,
The fairest jewels in the crown of Joy ?
How should you hear the fall of Sorrow's feet ?



DEAD DREAMS

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

But all familiar is her step to me.
O'er me she bends when, clasped in fingers cold,
I sweetly die upon a dead maid's breast
And with her fade away into the dark,
I, who am watered by the tears of men,
Awhile forbear the dance and hush your tune,
For hither through the wood comes one who weeps.

*[In the woods behind the stage a voice is heard singing to an
ancient air]*

THE SONG OF APRIL TEARS

The weeping woods are wet
In the shadow of the sky,
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.
The clouds are weeping yet,
And a-weeping, too, am I.
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.
For a little maid will pout
And a little maid will cry,
Though she know not what about
And she cannot tell you why.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day,
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.

[*All the FLOWERS, much interested, repeat the burden*]

With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day,
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.

[*The voice draws nearer*]

And so I sit and sigh,
Though the world is very fair,
With my sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.
O fain am I to fly
To a castle in the air,
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.
But why I long to go,
And whither I'd away
I truly do not know
And I really cannot say.
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day,
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.

[*All the FLOWERS, deeply touched, repeat the burden*]

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day,
With a sad heigh-ho and alack a well-a-day.

[Out of the wood comes a girl of fourteen, moving towards the stage. Over a flower-broidered gown she wears a black cloak lined with silver]

WINTER

These are but foolish April's ready tears.
'Tis April, ever whimpering for naught ;
Hugging her little Sorrow to her heart
And fondly smiling when the baby cries.

CELANDINE

Green April ! Month of leaves. The flowers' friend !

PRIMROSE

She comes towards us with a sigh half breathed
That trembles into laughter on her lips,
And dewy eyes, blue bright with tears unshed.

VIOLET

How fair she is—and sad. O fairer far
Than all my bright-faced playmates of the field.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Come, let us run to her and comfort her !
She is so sweet.

WINTER

Aye, aye, she's sweet to you,
Taking your first brief look in Sorrow's face.
So fair seems Sorrow to the eyes of Joy.

[*The FLOWERS run to APRIL, taking her hands as she passes up
on to the stage*]

APRIL'S SONG

O joy, O joy ! The air is mad with singing ;
Clear calls the mavis, day is but begun.
Through silver mist, about the wet mead clinging,
Green lies the meadow land, bright with sun.
Hark, in the coppice Spring's glad pulse a-beating.
Gaily rings the note,

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !

From wood to wood peals on the merry greeting,
“ Out ! out ! For fields are green and skies are blue ! ”

O sorrow, sorrow for the cloud-banks growing !
Sorrow for the mavis, hushed his refrain.



YOUNG SORROW

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Through barren branches bleak winds are blowing,
Black lie the meadow lands, blind with rain.
Hark, in the wild wood Spring's sad heart a-throbbing.
Dully sounds the note,

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !

Weeps every flower, for the great sun sobbing,
For the golden sun who has proved untrue.

Sorrow and Joy, sweet Joy is Sorrow's brother,
Move through the meadows ever hand in hand.
Sorrow and Joy ; I know not each from other,
Decked as with diamonds, rainbow spanned.
Hark, in the woodland Spring's shrill trumpet calling.
Loudly swells the note,

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo !

While on my face the last warm tears are falling,
Sunshine is gold again and skies are blue.

[*The FLOWERS crowd round APRIL, caressing her*]

VIOLET

Dear little lady, welcome. Dry your eyes.
Nay, do not weep.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

APRIL [*laughing*]

My children, take no heed.
I weep for pleasure and I laugh for grief ;
A wayward wanton I.

PRIMROSE

Are you the May ?
May, whom the green earth waits for ?

APRIL

No, not May.

But May's own sister, April, and I come
Against her coming to adorn the world,
To dress it all in green and perfume it,
To wash the flowers' faces and to swell
The tinkling music of a thousand streams.

CELANDINE [*to SNOWDROP*]

April ? I've heard of her,—O yes, she moves
In a much better set, and really knows
All the best people ; relatives of mine,

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Lady Spring's Trumpeter, Sir Daffodil,
Gold King-Cup too, and Crown Imperial !

SNOWDROP

But where is May ? Will she not come to us ?

APRIL

Hush ! Speak we softly when we speak of May.
She lies a prisoner in the Other Land,
The world within the world, the Fairies' Realm.
Thrice in the year unlocks the Ivory Gate,
At vigils of All-Hallows and of John,
And this May-Eve which darkens overhead.
Thrice in the year come forth the Elfin Folk
To walk with mortals on the common earth,
And with them May, the changeling, fares along.
Let her but linger till the morning break,
The sun's first ray enchains her here awhile
And wins the world a month of Fairy Land.

PRIMROSE

How can we stay her ?

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

CELANDINE

Fly away, black night !

VIOLET

O quickly come, To-morrow ! Rise, dear sun !

APRIL

Nay, she will linger at the wood's dim heart,
Careless of dawnlight, busied with a spell ;
The strong constraining of the Enchanted Dew.

CELANDINE

A spell ?

VIOLET

Enchanted Dew ?

PRIMROSE

A Fairy Tale !

ALL

O tell us ! Tell us ! Come, begin, begin !

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

WINTER

I have no patience with these tale-tellers ;
Filling the children's heads with foolishness
So that they cry and fall awake o' nights.

APRIL [*gently*]

Yet hear the tale of May's Enchanted Dew.

[*The FLOWERS cluster round April, sitting at her feet*]

The dew-drop is the Fairies' looking-glass,
And, on May-Eve, the dainty Elfin dames
So deck and prank themselves for festival
That not a drop of dew in all the wood
But holds the shadow of a Fairy face,
Locks in its heart the Elfin loveliness
And guards its magic beauty till the day.

PRIMROSE

But—of the spell? What wonder works the charm?

APRIL

If on May morning, just before the light,

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

In this same Dew a maiden bathe her face,
There's none so homely, none so favourless
But glows, a living splendour at the dawn,
With a mysterious beauty not of earth.
But let men-folk beware ; for who has gazed
Deep in a dew-drop's heart when May is born
Must ever wander as the pale moon's thrall,
Lost in a world of shadow and a dream
From which no morrow brings awakening ;
For he has looked upon a Fairy's face
And never more may be at peace again.

PRIMROSE

But hark ! A stir within the silent woods !

SNOWDROP

A tread of tiny feet—a strain of song !

VIOLET

Wide fly the Dreamland Gates and, spell-bound yet,
May moves towards us through the mists of morn.



MAY EVE

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

APRIL

Nay, speak not to her ; she's a Fairy Maid
Till the first sunbeam strike her. In the air
Thin Elfin pipes are sounding. All the train
Of Fairydom moves with her. Hide your eyes !
'Tis not for you, the sun's gay pageantry,
Marshalled beneath his fulgent oriflame,
To look upon the Children of the Moon !

[The FLOWERS all crouch to the ground covering their faces.

APRIL stands watching]

Slowly she comes. Already in her ears
The Fairy music falters and the songs
Fall faint and echoless ; each spirit face,
To her grown dim and all fantastical,
Shows as a dream at dawn. The eyes alone
Gleam brightly, fixed upon her in farewell ;
The mournful Elfin eyes that cannot weep.
Hush ! They are here. Lie close and speak no word.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

[The FLOWERS crouch down, drawing their robes over their heads. At the back of the stage appear three tiny figures clothed in green and leading with them a tall pale maiden. She is clad in a long green mantle, and on her head is a crown of emeralds. Between her hands she bears a crystal bowl filled with clear water. Her eyes are dim with dreams and her steps slow and languid. The three Fairies lead her forward, speaking their rhymes]

SONG OF THE MAY FAIRIES

FIRST FAIRY

Speak your last spell, Sister May,
Look your last on Fairy Land.
Still within our realm you stray
Fairy fettered foot and hand.
Fairy laws you must obey—
Speak your last spell, Sister May.

SECOND FAIRY

Once again but wave the wand ;
Tread the magic circle round.
Never more your feet may stand
In the ring of charmed ground.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

With the dawning of the day
Fairy Land will fade away.

THIRD FAIRY

Now, your Fairy life fulfilled,
Speak the Blessing of the Dew ;
Magic drops by elves distilled
While the white moons waned and grew.
In the east the morn is grey—
Speak your last spell, Sister May.

[The FAIRIES take the crystal bowl from MAY and bear it before her. She dips her hands into the water and sprinkles drops over the ground, murmuring her spell as if half asleep. They pass thus round the stage]

THE SPELL OF THE MAY DEW

MAY

Magic Dew
I bestrew.
Maidens all
At my call,

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Vigil keeping,
All else sleeping,
Ere the day break
Each a way break
Through the greenwood.
All unseen would
Maidens enter.
From the centre
Of each flower
Shake a shower ;
Bathe your faces,
All dead graces
From each dewdrop
Shall anew drop.
Only sprinkle,
Every wrinkle
Fades away.
When 'tis done, rise
In the sun rise
Fair as day !

[The spell concluded, MAY still stands as if in a dream. The FAIRIES gather round her, stripping her of her green mantle and emerald crown]



MAGIC DEW

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

SONG OF THE DEPARTING FAIRIES

FIRST FAIRY

We must leave you, Sister May,
Wave the trees in morning's breath.
'Tis the tryst of Night and Day,
'Tis the kiss of Life and Death.
Fairy days for you are done ;
Lose the Moon and gain the Sun.

SECOND FAIRY

Falls from you our ancient lore,
Fade our secrets from your mind.
Of the Fairies know no more
Than the rest of mortal kind.
Name us never at the noon,
Children of the mystic moon.

THIRD FAIRY

Lay aside the cloak of green ;
Render up the Elfin Crown ;
Kirtled stands our Fairy Queen
In a mortal maiden's gown.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Lost to us our Sister May !
Mortal maiden, go your way.

[Her Fairy apparel gone, MAY stands in a long gown of plain white. From the woods around come the first notes of the Maying Chorus, very faint in the distance. A flush comes into the cheeks of MAY. Her eyes grow bright and she steps eagerly forward. While she speaks the May Music moves nearer]

MAY'S BIRTH SONG

MAY

Fairer and more fair !
Golden and more gold !
In the earth and air
Glories manifold !
Mighty sun dispel
Dews of dawn, and soon.
Fain am I to dwell
In thy highest noon.

THE FAIRIES [*retreating*]

O farewell, farewell !
Back, behind the moon !

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

MAY

Open eyes for me !
Bird song in my ear !
Blind was I—and see !
Deaf was I—and hear !
Hail, O happy day !
Hasten not thy flight.
Ever let me stray
Down thy paths of light !

THE FAIRIES [*disappearing*]

O, away, away !
Back, into the night !

[*The FAIRIES vanish. In the woods the MAY CHORUS swells out loudly. While it is sung the FLOWERS, led by APRIL, flock round MAY, decking her with a wreath and a flowering sceptre*]

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

THE MAY SONG

VOICES OF GIRLS

May morn is breaking
Up in the sky,
Green earth awaking
Smiles a reply.
Come we a-Maying,
Risen anew,
Blindly obeying
The Spell of the Dew.

VOICES OF MEN

Fair maidens flying,
Weaving a spell,
Follow we prying ;
Heed yourselves well !
O'er the hill brimming
Rises the day ;
Join we in hymning
The praises of May.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

VOICES OF CHILDREN

Queen of the wild wood !

Heart of the spring !

Each little child would

Bless thee and sing.

Singing thy praises,

Magical May,

While in the daisies

We merrily play.

ALL IN CHORUS

May, of thy sweetness,

Grant us delight !

Joy in completeness

Morning and night.

Give us but laughter

Under the sun ;

Come tears hereafter—

Youth's hour is begun !

[The chorus dies away in the woods. The FLOWERS stand in a ring round MAY gazing at her]

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

PRIMROSE

O, is this May? Long looked for, hoped for May?
May from the Other Land, the Fairies' Child?

ANEMONE

And may we look at her and touch her?

APRIL

Yes.

Ours is she fully now. The Elfin band,
Like misty exhalations of the night,
Melt at the sun-burst and the day is won.

CELANDINE

Hail, May the Queen!

ALL

Hail, May!

MAY [*bending over them*]

Dear little ones,

What would you of Queen May?



MAY DAWN

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

SNOWDROP

A Fairy Tale.

Tell us what lies beyond the Ivory Gate.

VIOLET

Tell of the Unknown Country.

MAY

Children, nay !

Shame not the summer sun with twilight thoughts,
Tales of the World of Night, the Hollow Land,
Of wild-eyed elves and dreams grey garmented.
Sing we of life and love beneath the blue ;
The joys and sorrows of the world of men.
Come, I will tell you stories of the Rose.

[THE FLOWERS *sit round* MAY]

The wondrous Rose whom you will never see ;
For she's a grown-up flower and sits up late
When all you children are asleep in bed.
Some say she was a maiden, spell transformed,

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

And that, beneath her crimson damask gown,
There lies and beats a living human heart,
A heart that may be broken, and will bleed.
Men dare not strew red roses on the ground
Lest they should turn to blood.

[SNOWDROP *suddenly bursts into tears*]

SNOWDROP

O dear ! O dear !

I don't think that I like this story much !
Nurse ! I want nurse !

WINTER [*leading her away*]

What tales to tell the child !

Come dear, and let nurse put you back to bed
And sing you ditties of the Great North Sea
Where the white bears move slowly, half asleep,
And where the Frost Queen takes you in her arms
And holds you to her breast and hushes you
So that you sleep till all the stars are cold.

[SNOWDROP *curls up under the mantle of WINTER and
falls asleep*]

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

MAY [*continuing*]

And of the Rose men also have a tale,
How on a time there slept a fair Princess
Ensorcelled in a thorny wood of briars.
A hundred years she slept ; and through the years,
As one by one her maiden dreams were born,
They bloomed, white roses on the barren stems,
Till in a white rose bower the maiden lay.
Then through the gloomy barrier sprang the Prince
And, when the first kiss lit upon her lips,
The sleeping world awakened with a shout
And all the white dream-roses turned to red.

PRIMROSE [*puzzled*]

Why did they turn ?

ANEMONE

Yes, why ?

CELANDINE

And why to red ?

They might have worn a golden gown like mine.
I should not like to change.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

ANEMONE [*suddenly*]

O dear ! O dear !

Suppose the Prince should kiss her once again
And we should all turn blue or black or pink !
I don't much like this tale !

[*Running to WINTER*]

Take me away !

WINTER

High time that all the children were away ;
All up too late and growing dull and cross.

[*To the FLOWERS*]

Come. Say good-night, and then away to bed.

[*The FLOWERS advance to MAY one by one*]

PRIMROSE

Good-night.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

VIOLET

Good-night.

CELANDINE [*with a deep curtsey*]

I wish you a good-night.

ANEMONE

Good-night.

WINTER

And little Snowdrop? where is she?
What, fast asleep already? Fie, fie, fie!
What hours for you! Bid Lady May good-night,
Then back with nurse into the Sleepy Land.

SNOWDROP [*faintly*]

Good-night.

MAY

Good-night. Sweet dreams of Spring and me.

WINTER

Back with me, children. Back into the dark.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

[To MAY]

Reign all supreme. Into your hands I yield
My sceptre, Queen of the Awakened World ;
But let the old nurse too bid you farewell.
Nay, shrink not from me. It is this, my touch,
The kiss of Winter on the lips of Spring,
That makes your bowers the fairest of the year.
This is the wailing note, the plaintive fall
That ever rings through gayest melody ;
The mist of tears before the eyes of dawn ;
The little sigh of perfect happiness.

MAY

And shall I see your face no more ?

WINTER

No more,
Until I come to hush the world again ;
To fold her hands and dress her all in white ;
To close the curtains and to say good-night.



WINTER'S KISS

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

[WINTER, *leading the FLOWERS, passes down from the stage and disappears.* MAY stands kissing her hands to the FLOWERS]

MAY

Good-night, dear little ones. Sleep well. Sleep well.
Good-night.

APRIL [*shyly taking MAY's hand*]

O, May—your story of the Rose—
The red Rose with the beating human heart.
The others did not heed it, but I think
I almost understand it. Poor red Rose.
It is a sweet tale.

MAY [*smiling*]

Yes, the tale is sweet.

APRIL

And very, very sad.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

MAY

Ah, no, not sad.

Not sad to have a beating human heart
To throb with life and joy beneath the sun !

APRIL

No—but the heart may break.

MAY

And even so

Better the red Rose with her broken heart
Than all the cold white children of the Spring !

APRIL

And will you see the Rose—and will she speak
And tell her tale to you ?

MAY (*dreamily*)

I think she will.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

APRIL

And then—and then?—

MAY

And then—I pass away
As pass the cold white children of the Spring ;
Yet not as they. I shall have seen the Rose !

APRIL

Dear May, they call me from you. Take this kiss ;
And when you meet her, kiss the Rose for me.
She is so sad.—I do not understand,
But yet I know that she is very sad.

[*APRIL turns away in tears*]

MAY

Look back and smile, dear April.

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

[*APRIL turns with a laugh*]

APRIL

Farewell, May.

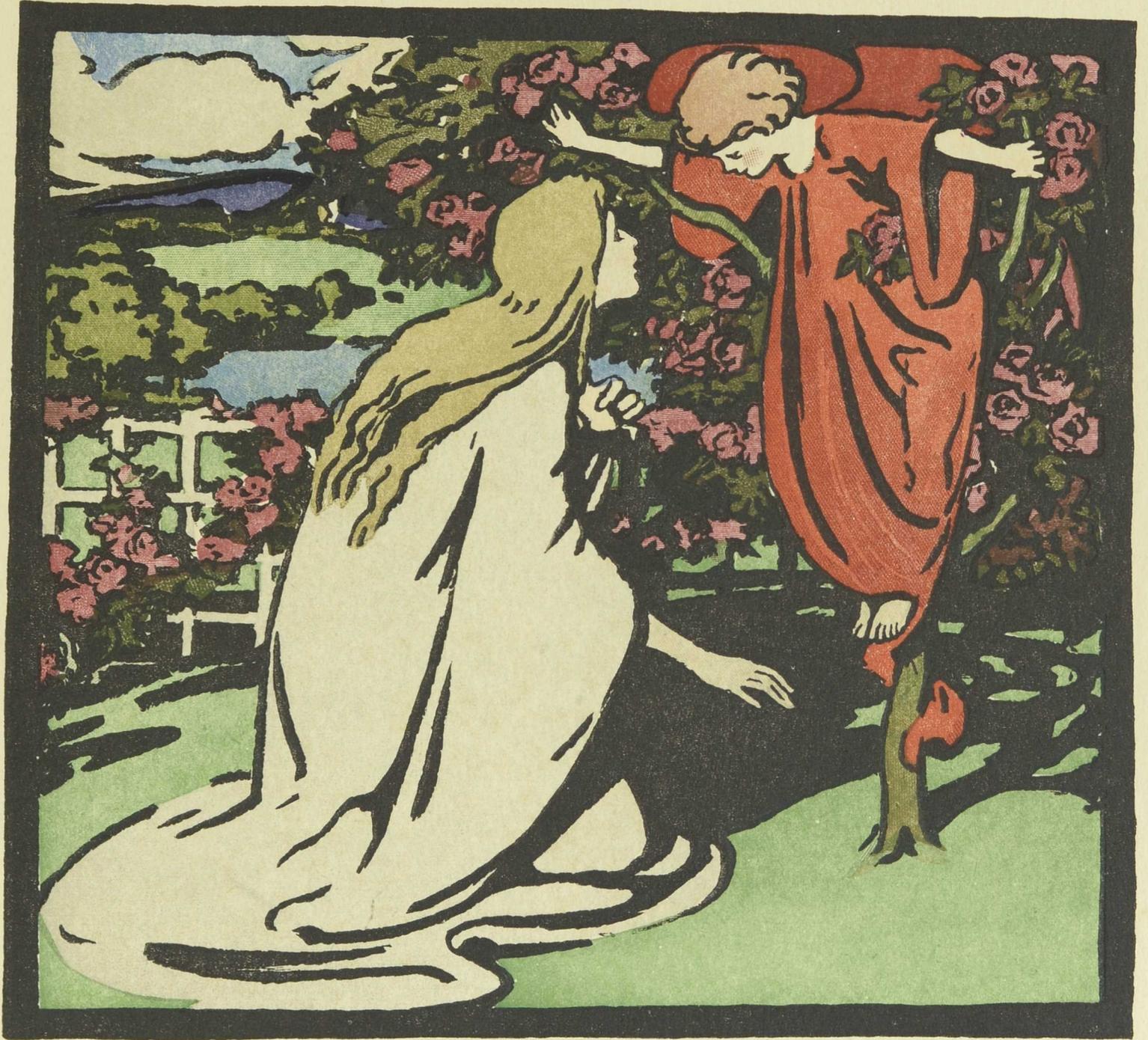
Remember. Kiss the Rose for me. Farewell !

[*APRIL runs laughing off the stage. In the woods the
May Song sounds faintly*]

MAY

With the tears of April wet
 Fade the Blossoms of the Spring.
Snowdrop, Primrose, Violet,
 On my brow fast withering ;
Falling from my coronet
Ere the May-day sun be set.

Take a kiss from Sister May ;
 Fare ye well, ye merry crew.
Newborn to the world to-day,
 I'm too old to play with you.



A RED ROSE

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

Fairer visions in my eyes,
In my ears new melodies.

Other paths I long to pace,
Other songs I crave to sing.
Fain of Summer's warm embrace
Holding still the hand of Spring.
Here do Spring and Summer meet,
Youth and childhood pass and greet.

Rosebuds in your sheaths of green,
Wake and tell your tale to me.
Crimson decked in damask sheen,
O unfold your mystery ;
Till, within my garden close,
Blooms for me the Perfect Rose.

[During this speech the music gradually sounds more loudly while a little figure is seen drawing near amongst the shadows of the wood. It is robed in crimson, on its head is a crown of roses and on its shoulders glitter wings of peacock feathers

A MASQUE OF MAY MORNING

As MAY's last words are spoken she is suddenly aware of the red-robed figure, who, drawing a rose from its wreath, offers the flower with a half-mocking smile. Then, gently grasping her hand, it leads her slowly from the stage, and together they disappear into the wood]

THE END

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