

# **The Wicked World**

*AN ORIGINAL FAIRY COMEDY*

IN THREE ACTS

BY

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## *Dramatis Personæ*

### FAIRIES

ETHAIS .....	MR. KENDALL
PHYLLON.....	MR. ARNOTT
LUTIN, <i>a Serving Fairy</i> .....	MR. BUCKSTONE
SELENE, <i>a Fairy Queen</i> .....	MISS MADGE ROBERTSON
DARINE .....	MISS AMY ROSELLE
ZAYDA .....	MISS M. LITTON
LEILA .....	MISS HARRISON
NEODIE .....	MISS HENRI
LOCHRINE .....	MISS FRANCIS

### MORTALS

SIR ETHAIS .....	MR. KENDALL
SIR PHYLLON.....	MR. ARNOTT
LUTIN, <i>Sir Ethais's Henchman</i> .....	MR. BUCKSTONE

SCENE: IN FARY LAND

*The action is comprised within the space of twenty-four hours.*

## PROLOGUE

*Spoken by MR. BUCKSTONE.*

The Author begs you'll kind attention pay  
While I explain the object of his play.  
You have been taught, no doubt, by those professing  
To understand the thing, that Love's a blessing:  
Well, *he* intends to teach you the reverse –  
That Love is not a blessing, but a curse!  
But pray do not suppose it's his intent  
To do without this vital element –  
His drama *would* be in a pretty mess!  
With quite as fair a prospect of success,  
Might a dispensing chemist in his den  
Endeavour to dispense with oxygen.  
Too powerful an agent to pooh-pooh,  
There will be Love enough I warrant you:  
But as the aim of every play's to show  
That Love's essential to all men below,  
*He* uses it to prove, to all who doubt it,  
How well all men – but he – can do without it.  
To prove his case (a poor one, I admit),  
He begs that you with him will kindly flit  
To a pure fairy-land that's all his own,  
Where mortal love is utterly unknown.  
Whose beings, spotless as new-fallen snow,  
Know nothing of the Wicked World below.  
These gentle sons and daughters of the air,  
Safe, in their eyrie, from temptation's snare,  
Have yet one little fault I must confess –  
*An overweening sense of righteousness.*  
As perfect silence, undisturbed for years,  
Will breed at length a humming in the ears,  
So from their very purity within  
Arise the promptings of their only sin.  
Forgive them! No? Perhaps you will relent  
When you appreciate their punishment!

But prithee be not led too far away,  
By the hack author of a mere stage-play:  
It's easy to affect this cynic tone,  
But, let me ask you, had the world ne'er known  
Such Love as you, and I, and he, must mean –  
Pray where would you, or I, or he, have been?

# THE WICKED WORLD.

## ACT I

SCENE – *Fairy Land. A beautiful, but fanciful landscape, which is supposed to lie on the upper side of a cloud. The cloud is suspended over the earth, a portion of which (representing “a bird’s eye-view” of a mediæval city) is seen, far below, through a rent or gap in the cloud.*

*As the curtain rises ZAYDA is discovered standing in a thoughtful attitude, contemplating the world at her feet. To her enters DARINE.*

DAR. My sister, Zayda, thou art deep in thought,  
What quaint conjecture fills thy busy brain?

ZAY. Oh, sister! It’s my old and favourite theme –  
That wonderful and very wicked world  
That rolls in silent cycles at our feet!

DAR. In truth a fruitful source of wonderment!

ZAY. Fruitful indeed – a harvest without end!  
The world – the wicked world! the wondrous world!  
I love to sit alone and gaze on it,  
And let my fancy wander through its towns,  
Float on its seas and rivers – interchange  
Communion with its strange inhabitants:  
People its cities with fantastic shapes,  
Fierce, wild, barbaric forms – all head and tail,  
With monstrous horns, and blear and bloodshot eyes,  
As all should have who deal in wickedness! (*Enter PHYLLON.*)  
Oh, Phyllon! picture to thyself a town  
Peopled with men and women! At each turn  
Men – wicked men – then, farther on, more men,  
Then women – then again more men – more men –  
Men, women, everywhere – all ripe for crime,  
All ghastly in the lurid light of sin!

*Enter SELENE.*

PHYL. In truth, dear sister, if man’s face and form  
Were a true index to his character,  
He were a hideous thing to look upon;  
But man, alas! is formed as we are formed.  
False from the first, he comes into the world  
Bearing a smiling lie upon his face,  
That he may cheat ere he can use his tongue.

ZAY. Oh! I have heard these things, but heed them not.

*The Wicked World*

I like to picture him as he should be,  
Unsightly and unclean. I like to pair  
Misshapen bodies with misshapen minds.

SEL. Dost thou not know that every soul on earth  
Hath in our ranks his outward counterpart?

DAR. His outward counterpart!

SEL. 'Tis even so;  
Yes, on that world – that very wicked world –  
Thou – I – and all who dwell in fairyland,  
May find a parallel identity:  
A perfect counterpart in outward form;  
So perfect that, if it were possible  
To place us by these earthly counterparts,  
No man on earth, no fairy in the clouds,  
Could tell which was the fairy – which the man!

ZAY. Is there *no* shade of difference?

PHYL. Yes, one;  
For we are absolutely free from sin,  
While all our representatives on earth  
Are stained with every kind of infamy.

DAR. Are *all* our counterparts so steeped in sin?

PHYL. All, in a greater or a less degree.

ZAY. What, even mine?

PHYL. Alas!

ZAY. Oh, no – not mine.

PHYL. All men and women sin.  
DAR. I wonder what  
My counterpart is doing now ?

SEL. Don't ask.

No doubt, some fearful sin!

DAR. And what are sins?

SEL. Evils of which we hardly know the names.  
There's vanity – a quaint, fantastic vice,  
Whereby a mortal takes much credit for  
The beauty of his face and form, and claims  
As much applause for loveliness as though  
He had designed himself! Then jealousy –  
A universal passion – one that claims  
An absolute monopoly of love,  
Based on the reasonable principle  
That no one merits other people's love  
So much as – every soul on earth by turns!  
Envy – that grieves at other men's success,  
As though success, however placed, were not  
A contribution to one common fund!  
Ambition, too, the vice of clever men

*The Wicked World*

Who seek to rise at others' cost; nor heed  
Whose wings they cripple, so that they may soar.  
Malice – the helpless vice of helpless fools,  
Who, as they cannot rise, hold others down,  
That they, by contrast, may appear to soar.  
Hatred and avarice, untruthfulness,  
Murder and rapine, theft, profanity –  
Sins so incredible, so mean, so vast,  
Our nature stands appalled when it attempts  
To grasp their terrible significance.  
Such are the vices of that wicked world!

*Enter ETHAIS, LOCHRINE, NEODIE, LEILA, and other Fairies.*

ETH. My brother, sisters, Lutin has returned,  
After a long delay, from yonder earth:  
The first of all our race who has set foot  
Upon that wicked world. See! he is here!

*Enter LUTIN.*

SEL. Good welcome, Lutin, back to fairyland!  
So thou hast been to earth?

LUT. I have indeed!

SEL. What hast thou seen there?

LUT. Better not inquire.

It is a very, very wicked world!

I went, obedient to our King's command,  
To meet him in mid-earth. He bade me go  
And send both Ethais and Phyllon there.

ETH. Down to mid-earth?

LUT. Down to mid-earth at once.

He hath some gift, some priceless privilege  
With which he would endow our fairy world;  
And he hath chosen Phyllon and thyself  
To bear his bounty to this home of ours.

ZAY. Another boon? Why, brother Ethais,  
What can our monarch give that we have not?

ETH. In truth, I cannot say – 'twould seem that we  
Had reached the sum of fairy happiness!

SEL. But then we thought the same, before our King  
Endowed us with the gift of melody;  
And now, how tame our fairy life would seem  
Were melody to perish from our land!

PHYL. Well said, Selene. Come, then, let's away, (*going*)  
And on our journey through the outer world

*The Wicked World*

We will take note of its inhabitants,  
And bring you fair account of all we see.  
Farewell, dear sisters!

*Exeunt PHYLLON and ETHAIS.*

SEL. Brothers, fare-you-well.  
(to LUTIN) And thou hast really met a living man?  
LUT. I have indeed – and living women too!  
ZAY. And thou hast heard them speak, and seen their ways,  
And didst thou understand them when they spake?  
LUT. I understand that what I understood  
No fairy being ought to understand.  
I see that almost everything I saw  
Is utterly improper to be seen.  
Don't ask for details – I've returned to you  
With outraged senses and with shattered nerves,  
I burn with blushes of indignant shame.  
Read my experiences in my face,  
My tongue shall wither ere it tell the tale.  
It is a very, very wicked world!

DAR. But surely man can summon death at will;  
Why should he live when he at will can die?

LUT. Why, that's the most inexplicable thing  
I've seen upon that inconsistent globe –  
With swords and daggers hanging at their sides,  
With drowning seas and rivers at their feet,  
With deadly poison in their very grasp,  
And every implement of death at hand –  
Men live – and live – and seem to like to live!

*Exit LUTIN.*

DAR. How strangely inconsistent!

SEL. Not at all.  
With all their misery, with all their sin,  
With all the elements of wretchedness  
That teem on that unholy world of theirs,  
They have one great and ever glorious gift,  
That compensates for all they have to bear –  
The gift of Love! Not as we use the word,  
To signify mere tranquil brotherhood;  
But in some sense that is unknown to us.  
Their love bears like relation to our own,  
That the fierce beauty of the noonday sun  
Bears to the calm of a soft summer's eve.

*The Wicked World*

It nerves the wearied mortal with hot life,  
And bathes his soul in hazy happiness.  
The richest man is poor who hath it not,  
And he who hath it laughs at poverty.  
It hath no conqueror. When death himself  
Has worked his very worst, this love of theirs  
Lives still upon the loved one's memory.  
It is a strange enchantment, which invests  
The most unlovely things with loveliness.  
The maiden, fascinated by this spell,  
Sees everything as she would have it be:  
Her squalid cot becomes a princely home;  
Its stunted shrubs are groves of stately elms,  
The weedy brook that trickles past her door  
Is a broad river fringed with drooping trees;  
And of all marvels the most marvellous,  
The coarse unholy man who rules her love  
Is a bright being – pure as we are pure;  
Wise in his folly – blameless in his sin;  
The incarnation of a perfect soul;  
A great and ever-glorious demi-god!

DAR. Why, what have we in all our fairyland  
To bear comparison with such a gift?

ZAY. Oh! for one hour of such a love as that;  
O'er all things paramount! Why, after all,  
That wicked world is the true fairyland!

LOC. Why, who can wonder that poor erring man  
Clings to the world, all poisoned though it be,  
When on it grows this glorious antidote?

ZAY. And may we never love as mortals love?

SEL. No; that can never be. Of earthly things  
This love of theirs ranks as the earthliest.  
'Tis necessary to man's mode of life;  
He could not bear his load of misery  
But for the sweet enchantment at his heart  
That tells him that he bears no load at all  
We do not need it in our perfect land.  
Moreover, there's this gulf 'twixt it and us:  
Only a mortal can inspire such love;  
And mortal foot can never touch our land.

ZAY. But – is that so?

SEL. (*surprised*) Of course.

ZAY. Yet I have heard  
That we've a half-forgotten law which says,  
That when a fairy quits his fairy home  
To visit earth, those whom he leaves behind



*The Wicked World*

May summon from the wicked world below  
That absent fairy's mortal counterpart;  
And that that mortal counterpart may stay  
In fairyland and fill the fairy's place  
Till he return. Is there not some such law?

SEL. And if there be, wouldst put that law in force? (*horrified*)

ZAY. No; not for all the love of all the world! (*equally horrified*)

SEL. A man in fairyland! Most horrible!

He would exhale the poison of his soul,  
And we should even be as mortals are,  
Hating as man hates!

DAR. (*enthusiastically*) Loving as man loves! (*SELENE looks reproachfully.*)  
Too horrible! Still –

SEL. Well!

DAR. I see a trace  
Of wisdom lurking in this ancient law.

SEL. Where lurks this wisdom, then? I see it not.

DAR. (*with emphasis*) Man is a shameless being, steeped in sins  
At which our stainless nature stands appalled;  
Yet, sister, if we took this loathsome soul  
From yonder seething gulf of infamy –  
E'en but for one short day – and let him see  
The beauty of our pure, unspotted lives,  
He might return to his unhappy world,  
And trumpet forth the strange intelligence:  
"Those men alone are happy who are good."  
Then would the world immediately repent,  
And sin and wickedness be known no more!

LOC. Association with so foul a thing  
As man must needs be unendurable  
To souls as pure and sinless as our own:  
Yet, sister dear, it has occurred to me,  
That his foul deeds, perchance, proceed from this –  
That we have kept ourselves too much aloof,  
And left him to his blind and wayward will.

ZAY. Man is everything detestable –  
Base in his nature, base in thought and deed,  
Loathsome beyond all things that creep and crawl!  
Still, sister, I must own I've sometimes thought  
That we who shape the fortunes of mankind,  
And grant such wishes as are free from harm,  
Might possibly fulfil our generous task  
With surer satisfaction to himself  
Had we some notion what these wishes were!

NEO. We give him everything but good advice,  
And that which most he needs do we withhold.

*The Wicked World*

DAR. Oh! terrible, dear sister, to reflect,  
That to *our* cold and culpable neglect,  
The folly of the world is chargeable!

SET. To *our* neglect!

ZAY. It may in truth be so.

LEI. In very truth I'm sure that it is so.

SEL. Oh, horrible! It shall be so no more.

A light breaks over me! Their sin *is* ours!

But there – 'tis easy still to make amends.

A mortal *shall* behold our blameless state,

And learn the beauties of a sinless life!

Come. let us summon mortal Ethais.

DAR. But –

SEL. Not a word – I am resolved to this.

NEO. But sister –

SEL. Well?

NEO. (*timidly*) Why summon only one?

SEL. Why summon more?

NEO. The world's incredulous;

Let *two* be brought into our blameless land,

Then should their wondrous story be received

With ridicule or incredulity,

One could corroborate the other.

DAR. Yes –

Phyllon has gone with Ethais. Let us call

The mortal counterpart of Phyllon too –

SEL. Two mortals – two unhappy men of sin  
In this untainted spot!

LOC. Well, sister dear,

Two Heralds of the Truth will spread that Truth

At the least twice as rapidly as one.

SEL. Two miserable men! Why, *one* alone

Will bring enough pollution in his wake,

To taint our happy land from end to end!

ZAY. Then, sister, two won't make the matter worse!

SEL. There's truth in that. (*After a pause.*) The two *shall* come to us,  
We have deserved this fearful punishment;

Our power, I think, is limited to two?

LEI. Unfortunately.

SEL. Yes – more might be done

Had each of us a pupil to herself.

Now then to summon them. But, sisters all,

Show no repugnance to these wretched men;

Remember that, all odious though they be,

They are our guests; in common courtesy

Subdue your natural antipathies;

*The Wicked World*

Be very gentle with them, bear with them,  
Be kind, forbearing, tender, pitiful.  
Receive them with that gentle sister love,  
That forms the essence of our fairyhood;  
Let no side-thought of their unholy lives  
Intrude itself upon your charity;  
Treat them as though they were what they will be  
When they have seen how we shall be to them.  
What is the form?

DAR.           Two roses newly plucked  
Should each in turn be cast upon the earth;  
Then, as each rose is thrown, pronounce the name  
Of him whose mortal self it typifies.  
Here *are* two roses plucked from yonder tree.

SEL. (*taking them*) Well then, fair rose, I name thee Ethais! –  
Go, send thy mortal namesake to our cloud; (*throws rose to earth*)  
'Tis done; conceal yourselves till they appear!

*The fairies conceal themselves. Hurried music; to which enter SIR ETHAIS and SIR PHYLLON, hurriedly, over the edge of cloud, as if impelled by some invisible and irresistible power from below. SIR ETHAIS and SIR PHYLLON have their swords drawn. They are dressed as barbaric knights, and, while bearing a facial resemblance to their fairy counterparts, present as strong a contrast as possible in their costume and demeanour.*

SIR ETH. Why, help, help, help!  
SIR PHY.           The devil seize us all!  
Why, what strange land is this? How came we here?  
SIR ETH. How came we here ? Why, who can answer that  
So well as thou?  
SIR PHY.    As I?  
SIR ETH.           Yes, cur; as thou!  
This is some devil's game of thy design,  
To scare me from the task I set myself  
When we crossed swords.  
SIR PHY.           I use no sorcery.  
A whirlwind bore me to this cursed spot;  
But whence it came I neither know nor care.  
SIR ETH. There – gag thy lying tongue; it matters not,  
Or here or there we'll fight our quarrel out.  
Come! call thy devils; let them wait at hand  
And when I've done with thee I'll do with them.

*They fight. The fairies watch the combat unobserved with great interest.*

DAR. What are they doing?

*The Wicked World*

SEL. It's some game of skill.  
It's very pretty.  
DAR. Very. (*Knights pause.*) Oh, they've stopped.  
PHY. Come, come – on guard. (*Fight resumed.*)  
ZAY. Now they begin again.  
ETH. (*Sees fairies, who have gradually surrounded them.*)  
Hold! we are overlooked.

ETHAIS, *who has turned for a moment in saying this, is severely wounded by*  
PHYLLON.

SEL. You may proceed.  
We like it much.  
DAR. You do it very well –  
Begin again.  
ETH. Black curses on that thrust!  
I am disabled. Ladies, bind my wound;  
And if it please you still to see us fight,  
We'll fight for those bright eyes and cherry lips  
Till one or both of us shall bite the dust.  
PHY. Hold! call a truce till we return to earth –  
Here are bright eyes enough for both of us.  
ETH. I don't know that! Well, there – till we return. (*shaking hands*)  
But once again on earth, we will take up  
Our argument where it was broken off,  
And let thy devils whirl me where they may,  
I'll reach conclusion and corollary.  
DAR. (*looking at PHYLLON*) Oh, fairyhood!  
How wonderfully like our Phyllon!  
SEL. (*looking at ETHAIS*) Yes.  
And see – how strangely like our Ethais.  
Thou hast a gallant carriage, gentle knight. (*sighing*)  
ZAY. How very, very like our Ethais.  
ETH. It's little wonder that I'm like myself;  
Why, I am he.  
SEL. No, not *our* Ethais. (*sighing*)  
ETH. In truth, I am the Ethais of all  
Who are as gentle and as fair as thou.  
SEL. That's bravely said; thou hast a silver tongue;  
Why! what can gods be like if these be men.  
(*During this dialogue, DARINE shows by her manner that she takes great interest in*  
ETHAIS.)  
Say, dost thou come from earth or heaven?  
ETH. (*gallantly putting his arm round them*) I think  
I've come from earth to heaven.  
SEL. (*to DARINE with delight*) Oh! didst thou hear?

*The Wicked World*

He comes from earth to heaven! No, Ethais,  
We are but fairies – this, our native home.  
Our fairyland rests on a cloud which floats  
Hither and thither, as the breezes will;  
At times a mighty city's at our feet,  
At times a golden plain, and then the sea,  
Dotted with ships and rocks and sunny isles.  
We see the world, yet saving that it is  
A very wicked world, we know it not –  
We hold no converse with its denizens;  
But on the lands o'er which our island hangs,  
We shed fair gifts of plenty and of peace –  
Health and contentment – charity – goodwill;  
Drop tears of love upon the thirsty earth,  
And shower fair waters on the growing grain.  
This is our mission.

ETH. 'Tis a goodly one!  
I'd give my sword – aye, and my sword-arm, too,  
If thou wouldst anchor for a year or so  
O'er yonder home of mine. But tell me, now,  
Does every cloud that hovers o'er our heads  
Bear in its bosom such a wealth of love?

SEL. Alas! Sir Ethais, we are too few  
To work the good that we could wish to work.  
Thou hast seen black and angry thunder-clouds  
That spit their evil fire at flocks and herds,  
And shake with burly laughter as they watch  
The trembling shepherds count their shrivelled dead  
These are our enemies, sir knight, and thine.  
They sow the seeds of pestilence and death –  
May heaven preserve thee from their influence!

ETH. Amen to that!

PHY. But tell us, gentle maid,  
Why have you summoned us?

SEL. Because we seek  
To teach you truths that now ye wot not of;  
Because we know that you are very frail,  
Poor, blind, weak, wayward mortals – willing reeds,  
Swayed right and left by every tempting wind;  
And we are pure, and very, very brave,  
Having no taste for trivial solaces; (*taking ETHAIS' hand*)  
Scorning such idle joys as we have heard  
Appeal most strongly to such men as you;  
And we have cherished earnest hope that we,  
By the example of our sacred lives,  
May teach you to abjure such empty joys,

*The Wicked World*

May send you back to earth, pure, childlike men,  
To teach your mothers, sisters, and your wives,  
And those perchance (*sighing*) who are to be your wives!  
That there are fairy maidens in the clouds,  
Whose gentle mode of thought and mode of life  
They would do well to imitate. We would  
That every maid on earth were such as we! (*Placing her arms round his neck.*)

ETH. In truth we would that every maiden were, –  
(*aside*) Except our mothers, sisters, and our wives!

SEL. If you will be our pupils, you must give  
Some token of submission to our will.  
No doubt you have some form of fealty?

ETH. When man desires to show profound respect –  
To indicate most forcibly his own  
Inferiority, he always puts  
His arm round the respected object's waist,  
And drawing her (or him) towards him, thus.  
Places a very long and tender kiss  
On his (or her) face – as the case may be.

SEL. That form is not in vogue in fairyland;  
Still, as it holds on earth, no doubt 'twill have  
Far greater weight with you poor sons of earth,  
Than any formula we could impose.

PHY. Its weight is overpowering. (*About to kiss.*)

SEL. But stay!  
We would not *wrest* this homage from you, sir;  
Or give it willingly, or not at all.

ETH. Most willingly, fair maid, we give it you.

SEL. Good! Then proceed.

ETHAIS *kisses* SELENE and PHYLLON *kisses* ZAYDA.

ETH. There! does it not convey  
A pleasant sense of influence?

SEL. It does.  
Some earthly forms seem rational enough.  
Why Ethais, what ails thee? (*ETHAIS staggers.*)

ETH. Why I'm faint  
From loss of blood. My wound – here, take this scarf,  
And bind it round my arm – so – have a care!  
There, that will do till I return to earth;  
Then, Lutin, who's a fairly skilful leech,  
Shall doctor it.

SEL. (*amazed*) Didst thou say Lutin?

ETH. Yes,  
He is my squire – a poor, half-witted churl, (*Enter LUTIN unobserved.*)

*The Wicked World*

Who shudders at the rustling of a leaf;  
A strange, odd, faithful, loving, timid knave;  
More dog than man, and, like a well-thrashed hound,  
He loves his master's voice, and dreads it, too.

Why, here he is! (*in intense astonishment*)

LAT. Who is this insolent,  
A mortal here in fairyland?

LOC. Yes, two!

LUT. Oh, this is outrage!

ETH. (*crossing to him*) Why, thou scurvy knave,  
How cam'st thou here? Thou didst not come with us!  
What is the meaning of this masquerade? (*alluding to LUTIN'S dress*)

Be off at once; if I could use my arm,  
I'd whip thee for this freak, but as it is,  
I'll hand thee over to that wife of thine;  
Her hand is heavier than mine. (*To SEL.*) This churl  
(So rumour saith) is mated to a shrew;  
A handsome, ranting, jealous, clacking shrew;  
And he, by means of this tom-fool disguise,  
Has 'scaped his home to play the truant here;

LUT. Who are these men?

SEL. The mortal counterparts  
Of Ethais and Phyllon. Look at them! (*Crosses to LUTIN.*)  
Dost thou not love them?

LUT. (*indignantly*) No!

SEL. How very strange!  
Why we all loved them from the very first.

LUT. Is this indeed the truth?

DAR. It is indeed.  
Obedient to our queen's command, we have  
Subdued our natural antipathies.

ZAY. They are our guests, all odious though they be, (*Takes PHYLLON'S hand*)  
And we must bid them welcome to our home,  
As if e'en now they were what they will be  
When they have seen what we shall be to them. (*Kissing his hand.*)

LUT. Be warned in time, and send these mortals hence;  
Why, don't you see that in each word they speak,  
They breathe of love?

SEL. (*enthusiastically*) They do!

LUT. Why Love's the germ  
Of every sin that stalks upon the earth:  
The brawler fights for love – the drunkard drinks  
To toast the girl who loves him, or to drown  
Remembrance of the girl who loves him not!  
The miser hoards his gold to purchase love.  
The liar lies to gain, or wealth, or love;

*The Wicked World*

And if for wealth, it is to purchase love.  
The very footpad nerves his coward arm  
To stealthy deeds of shame by pondering on  
The tipsy kisses of some tavern wench!  
Be not deceived – this love is but the seed;  
The branching tree that springs from it is Hate!

DAR. (*to ETH.*) Nay, heed him not. There is a legend here –  
An idle tale, that man is infamous,  
And he believes it. So, indeed, did we,  
Till we beheld you, gallant gentlemen!

LUT. Why, they are raving! Let me go at once  
And join my brothers at our monarch's court;  
While they are here this is no place for me.

ZAY. (*eagerly to SEL.*) Let him depart; then we can summon here  
His mortal counterpart. (*Fairies delighted; SELENE expresses indignant surprise,*

*ZAYDA changes her manner.*) A poor frail man  
No doubt, who stands in very sorest need  
Of such good counsel as we can afford.

SEL. Thou speakest wisely. Lutin, get thee gone.

ETH. Be off at once.

PHY. Begone, thou scurvy knave!  
Thy wife shall hear of this – she'll punish thee.

LUT. Oh, moral plague! oh, walking pestilence!  
Oh, incarnation of uncleanness!  
You call me knave! Why, hark ye men of sin.  
You've kings and queens upon that world of yours  
To whom you crawl in apt humility;  
Well, sir, there's not an emperor on earth  
Who would not kiss the dust I tread upon,  
And I'm the meanest here. Good day to you.

*Exit LUTIN.*

ETH. (*following him angrily, is restrained by SELENE.*)  
The fellow's crazed – heed not his rhapsodies,  
Thou dost not credit him?

SEL. And if I do,  
What matters it? Be all he says thou art,  
And I will worship thee for being so;  
Thou art my faith – whate'er my Ethais does  
Is ever hallowed by his doing it;  
Thy moral law is mine – for thou art mine:  
Rob, and I'll scoff at honour; kill – I'll kill;  
Be perjured, and I'll swear by perjury;  
Aye, be thou false to me, and I'll proclaim  
That man forsworn who loves but one alone!



*The Wicked World*

My soul is thine – whate'er thy faith may be,  
I'll be its herald; if thou hast no faith,  
I'll be the high priest of thine unbelief!  
Thy wisdom's mine; thy folly's thine –

ETH. Hush! Hush!

Why this is madness!

SEL. Yes, for this is love!

SELENE *kneels at ETHAIS' feet.*

ACT II

SCENE – *Same as Act I.*

DARINE, ZAYDA, LEILA, LOCRINE, *other Fairies*, and NEODIE *discovered anxiously watching the entrance to SELENE'S bower.*

DAR. Still, still Selene watches Ethais!  
For six long hours has she detained the knight  
Within the dark recesses of her bower,  
Under pretence that his unhappy wound  
Demands her unremitting watchfulness!  
(*indignantly*) This, fairies, is our queen! – the sinless soul  
To whose immaculate pre-eminence  
We pure and perfect maidens of the air  
Accord our voluntary reverence!

ZAY. Her conduct is an outrage on her sex!  
Was it for *this* that we proposed to her  
That we should bring these mortals to our land?  
Is *this* the way to teach this erring man  
The moral beauties of a spotless life?  
To teach him truths that now he wots not of?  
Surely this knight might well have learnt on earth  
Such moral truths as *she* is teaching him.

*Enter SELENE from bower, DARINE retires up.*

LEI. At last she comes! (*to SELENE*) We are well pleased to find  
That, after such a lengthy vigil, thou  
Canst tear thyself away from Ethais!

SEL. Yes, dearest sister, he is calmer now.  
(*to ZAY.*) Oh! this has been a fearful night for him;  
Not for one moment have I left his side!

ZAY. Poor Ethais! Believe us, sister dear,  
He has our heartfelt pity.

SEL. All night long

*The Wicked World*

He tossed and raved in wild delirium;  
Shouting for arms, and, as it seemed to me,  
Fighting his fight with Phyllon o'er again.  
At length, as morning broke, he fell asleep,  
And slept in peace till half an hour ago.  
I watched him through the long and troubled night.  
Fanning the fever from his throbbing brow,  
Till he awoke. At first he gazed on me  
In silent wonderment; then, suddenly  
Seizing my hand, he pressed it to his lips,  
And swore that I had saved him from the grave –  
Mark that – the grave! I – I had saved his life!  
He told me that he loved me – loved me well;  
That I was fairer than the maids of earth –  
That I had holy angel-eyes, that rained  
A gentle pity on his stubborn heart –  
(He called it stubborn, for he knew it not);  
That I was fairer, in his worldly eyes,  
Than all the maids on earth or in the clouds!

*DARINE, who has listened with intense anxiety to this speech, goes off silently, but in an agony of grief.*

ZAY. (*spitefully*) Could any words more eloquently show  
The recklessness of his delirium?

SEL. (*surprised*) Nay, he was conscious then.

NEO. (*very kindly*) Of course he was!

No doubt, Selene, thou hast gained his love.  
Be happy in it, dearest sister; but  
In thy proud triumph, love, pray recollect  
He had not seen *us*!

ZAY. Thou hast wisely done  
To, keep him from *our* sight. Cage thou thy bird,  
Or he may fly to fairer homes than thine.

SEL. (*amazed*) What mean you, sisters? Nay, turn not away –  
What have I done?

LOC. (*very spitefully*) Indeed we do not know;  
But, lest we should affect his love for thee,  
We will at once withdraw.

*Exit LOCRINE, bowing ironically.*

LEI. (*with freezing politeness*) Good day to you!

NEO. Good day!

ZAY. Good day. Remember – cage thy bird! (*Exeunt.*)

SEL. How strangely are my sisters changed to me!

*The Wicked World*

Have I done wrong? No, no, I'm sure of that.  
The knight was sorely stricken – he had died  
But for my willing care. Oh! earthly love,  
Thou mighty minister of good or ill,  
Is it for good or ill that thou art here?  
Art thou an element of happiness,  
Or an unwieldy talisman that I,  
In heedlessness, have turned against myself?  
“He had not seen *them*,” – so my sister spake  
Yes, truly, there are fairer forms than mine.  
He shall *not* see them! Oh! I am unjust.  
Hath he not told me that I have his love?  
There is no treachery in those brave eyes;  
There is no falsehood in that gallant heart!  
But still – he had *not* seen them. Oh, for shame!  
Can love and doubt reign ever side by side?  
No, Ethais, love is the death of doubt.  
I love thee, Ethais, and doubt thee not!  
Still it were better that he saw but me.

*ETHAIS has entered unperceived from bower and over heard the last three lines. He is very pale and weak, and his arm is in a sling.*

ETH. Selene, I am weak – give me thine hand.

SEL. My love, thou shouldst not yet have left thy couch!  
Come – thou hast need of rest.

ETH. No, let me stay,  
The air revives me – I am strong again.  
And so, thou trustest me?

SEL. In truth I do! (*Sits by his side.*)  
Although I cannot tell thee whence proceeds  
This strange, irrational belief in thee –  
Thee, whom I hardly know.

ETH. Is that so strange?  
I see no marvel!

SEL. Nay, my love, reflect,  
I am a woman, and thou art a man;  
Well, thou art comely – so, in truth, am I;  
We meet and love each other – that's to say,  
I am prepared to give up all I have,  
My home, my very fairyhood, for thee;  
Thou to surrender riches, honour, life,  
To please the fleeting fancies of my will.  
And why?  
Because I see in thee, or thou in me,  
Astounding virtue, brilliant intellect,



*The Wicked World*

And when by slow procession, step by step,  
He sees in it the *waking* from a dream,  
His heavy heart stands still – he dies a death,  
A momentary death – to wake again  
Into a furious life of hot revenge;  
His hand against all men; his maddened tongue  
Calling down curses on his cheated self;  
On him who stole her love, on all but her  
Who has called down this crowning curse on him!  
To find *her* love a lie, *her* kiss a jest,  
*Her* cherished bywords a cold mockery –  
Oh, there are words  
For other agonies, but none for this!

SEL. And thou hast suffered this?

ETH. (*bitterly*) I have indeed!

SEL. And how long does this bitter anguish last?

ETH. Well, in a very serious case, all night!

Next day a fairer face, a nobler form,  
A purer heart, a gentler maidenhood,  
Will set him dreaming as he dreamt before  
Until the time for waking comes again;  
And so the round of love runs through our lives!

SEL. But these are earthly maidens, Ethais –

My love is purer than a mortal's love.

ETH. Thine is no mortal love if it be pure.

SEL. (*horrificed*) Then, mortal Ethais, what love is thine?

ETH. (*taken aback*) I spake of women – men are otherwise.

SEL. Man's love is pure, invariably?

ETH. Pure

Pure as thine own!

SEL. Poor, trusting, cheated souls!

*Exeunt together into bower. Enter DARINE, who has overheard the last few lines.*

DAR. She leads him willingly into her bower!  
Oh! I could curse the eyes that meet his eyes,  
The hand that touches his hand, and the lips  
That press his lips! And why? I cannot tell!  
Some unknown fury rages in my soul,  
A mean and miserable hate of all, (*Enter PHYLLON unobserved.*)  
Who interpose between my love and me!  
What devil doth possess me?

PHY. Jealousy!

DAR. Perhaps – what matters how the fiend is called?

PHY. But wherefore art thou jealous? Tell me, now,  
Have I done ought to cause this jealousy?

*The Wicked World*

DAR. Thou! Dost *thou* love me?  
PHY. Love thee? Tenderly!  
I love all pretty girls, on principle.  
DAR. But is thy love an all-possessing love?  
Mad, reckless, unrestrained, infuriate,  
Holding thy heart within its iron grasp,  
And pressing passion from its very core?  
PHY. (*surprised*) Oh, yes!  
DAR. Alas! poor stricken, love-sick knight!  
Phyllon, my love is such a love as thine,  
But it is not for thee! Oh, nerve thyself,  
I have ill tidings for thee, gentle knight!  
I love thee not!  
PHY. Indeed?  
DAR. Is it not strange?  
PHY. Most unaccountable.  
DAR. (*disappointed*) But tell me, now,  
Art thou not sorely vexed?  
PHY. (*quietly*) Unspeakably.  
DAR. But thou'lt forgive me? Tell me, Phyllon, now,  
That I am pardoned!  
PHY. That, indeed, thou art.  
DAR. (*hurt*) Phyllon, hadst thou despised *my* proffered love,  
I'd not have pardoned *thee*!  
PHY. No, women don't.  
DAR. (*impatiently*) But dost thou understand? I love thee not.  
I, whom thou lovest, Phyllon, love thee not –  
Nay, more, I love another – Ethais!  
Thou hast a rival, and a favoured one.  
Dost thou not hear me?  
PHY. (*surprised*) Yes; I'm deeply pained.  
DAR. (*delighted*) Thou art?  
PHY. Of course. What wouldst thou have me do?  
DAR. Do? Hurl thyself headlong to yonder earth,  
And end at once a life of agony!  
PHY. Why should I?  
DAR. Why? Because I love thee not!  
Why if *I* loved and found my love despised,  
The universe should ring with my laments;  
And were I mortal, Phyllon, as thou art,  
I would destroy myself!  
PHY. Ha! ha! If all  
Heartbroken lovers took that course, the world  
Would be depopulated in a week!  
And so thou lovest Ethais?  
DAR. (*enthusiastically*) I do!

*The Wicked World*

PHY. But still (I may be wrong) it seems to me  
He's taken with Selene –

DAR. (*furiously*) Name her not!  
He feigns a love he does not feel, because  
She is our queen. He dares not anger her!

PHY. But art thou sure of this ?

DAR. (*bitterly*) Oh! I am I sure!  
Look in these eyes – they do not burn for *thee*;  
Behold this form – that *thou* shalt never clasp –  
Gaze on these lips – *thou* shalt not press them, sir!  
And tell me, now, that Ethais loves me not!  
Oh! had I but the power to heal his wound,  
And free him from her hated company!

PHY. Were Lutin here, he would assist thy plan.

DAR. Lutin?

PHY. His henchman, and a cunning leech;  
He has a charm – a potent talisman –  
A panacea that will heal all wounds;  
Fetch him, and Ethais is healed again.

DAR. (*aside*) The gods have heard me!  
(*aloud, suddenly*) Oh; insensate knight,  
Thou counsellest me how to gain his love;  
And yet thou lovest me?

PHY. Oh, pardon me,  
That was ten minutes since – an age ago! (*Exit.*)

DAR. Here comes the miserable, mincing jade,  
With a fair speech upon her lying lips,  
To meet the sister whom her base-born arts  
Have robbed of more than life! Oh, hypocrite!

*Enter SELENE from bower.*

SEL. Darine!

DAR. (*changing her manner*) My sister – my beloved one,  
Why, thou art sad; thine eyes are dim with tears!  
Say, what hath brought thee grief?

SEL. (*with great joy*) Darine, my own.  
Thou dost not shun me, then?

DAR. (*aside*) Oh, hypocrite!  
(*aloud*) Shun thee, my own Selene? No – not I!

SEL. Bless thee for that! I feared to meet thy face,  
For all my loved companions turned from me  
With scornful jest and bitter mockery.  
Thou – thou – Darine, alone art true to me!

DAR. True to Selene while Selene breathes!  
Come – tell me all thy woes.

*The Wicked World*

SEL. My Ethais –  
He whom I love so fondly – he is ill,  
And I am powerless to heal his wound.  
Darine, my love may die!

DAR. What can be done?  
Oh, I would give my fairyhood to save  
The man thou lovest so – my dearly loved!  
But stay, the counterpart of Lutin is  
At once his henchman and his cunning leech;  
Lutin has left our sphere, (*plucking rose from tree*) cast this to earth, (*giving it*)  
And summon mortal Lutin to his aid.  
He hath a charm to heal thy lover's wound.

SEL. Kind Heaven reward thee for thy ready wit,  
My sister, thou hast saved both him and me!  
My darling sister! (*embracing her*)

DAR. (*aside*) Oh, thou hypocrite!

SEL. Fair rose, I name thee Lutin, go to earth,  
And hither send the mortal counterpart  
Of him whose name thou hast, and may the gods  
Prosper thy mission! Kiss me, dear Darine, (*kissing her*)  
For thou hast saved my Ethais for me!

*Exit SELENE.*

DAR. No, not for thee, good sister, for myself!

*Exit DARINE. Hurried music. Enter MORTAL LUTIN over edge of precipice, staggering on the stage as if violently impelled from below.*

LUT. What ho! help! help! Where am I? Not on earth  
For I remember that a friendly cloud  
Enveloped me, and whirled me through the air,  
Just as my fair, but able-bodied, wife,  
Began to lay my staff about my ears! (*Enter NEODIE, LEILA, LOCRINE, and others.*)  
Can this be death, and has she killed me? (*Sees them.*)  
Well, if I *be* dead, and if this *be* the place  
In which I'm doomed to expiate my sins,  
Taking my sins all round, I'm bound to say  
It might have been considerably worse!

LOC. (*approaching him with great delight*)  
Why, this is Lutin's mortal counterpart!

NEO. How quaint! How gloriously rugged!

LEI. Yes!  
Such character and such expression!

ALL. (*admiring him*) Yes!

LUT. By some mistake my soul has missed its way,



*The Wicked World*

And slipped into Mahomet's Paradise!

NEO. No, this is fairyland. See, there's the earth  
From which we summoned thee. These are the clouds.  
Thou art not angry with us?

LUT. Angry? No!  
I'm very well up here!

LOC. Then thou shalt stay!

NEO. Oh, tell me, are there many men on earth  
As fair and pleasant to the eye as thou?

LUT. Not many, though I have met one or two  
Who run me pretty close.

NEO. Tell us their names.

LUT. Well, let me see, Sir Phyllon has been thought  
A personable man; then Ethais  
*He's* fairly well.

NEO. But these are *handsome* men –  
We love thee for thy rugged homely face;  
Oh, we are sated with mere comeliness,  
We have so much of that up here! (*rises*) I love  
A homely face!

LUT. I quite agree with you.  
What do a dozen handsome men imply?  
A dozen faces cast in the same mould,  
A dozen mouths all lip for lip the same,  
A dozen noses all of equal length?  
But take twelve plain men, and the element  
Of picturesque variety steps in,  
You get at once unlooked-for hill and dale –  
Odd curves and unexpected points of light,  
Pleasant surprises – quaintly broken lines;  
All very pleasant, whether seen upon  
The face of nature or the face of man.

*Enter ZAYDA.*

LOC. But stay – thou shouldst be faint, for lack of food!

NEO. Nay, let me minister unto his wants!

ZAY. Then go, beloved sisters, gather fruits,  
And bring them here to him. Such frugal fare  
Will have a daintier flavour than its own  
When served by such fair hands! (*kissing them*)

*Exeunt LOCRINE, NEODIE, and others.*

ZAY. (*suddenly*) We are alone!  
One word of caution – shun my sisters all!

*The Wicked World*

LUT. Are all those lovely girls your sisters?

ZAY. Yes;

Rejoice that they are not thine own.

LUT. I do.

I very much prefer them as they are!

You're a fine family.

ZAY. Fair to the eye;

But take good heed – they are not what they seem.

Lochrine, the fair, the beautiful Lochrine,

Is the embodiment of avarice!

She seeks your gold.

LUT. I'm much obliged to her!

I'll give her half she finds and thank her too!

ZAY. Darine is vain beyond comparison;

Neodie is much older than she looks;

Camilla hath defective intellect;

Ena's a bitter shrew; Colombe's a thief;

And, last and worst of all – I blush to own,

Our queen Selene hath a tongue that stabs –

A traitor-tongue, that serves no better end

Than wag a woman's character away!

LUT. I've stumbled into pretty company!

It seems you fairies have your faults!

ZAY. Alas!

All but myself. *My soul is in my face;*

I – only I – am what I seem to be;

I – only I – am worthy to be loved.

*(confidentially)* If thou wilt love me I will dower thee

With wealth untold, long years and happy life,

Thou gallant churl – thou highly polished boor –

Thou pleasant knave – thou strange epitome

Of all that's rugged, quaint and picturesque!

LUT. You don't take long in coming to the point.

ZAY. Forgive my clumsy and ill-chosen words;

We gentle, simple fairies never loved

Until today.

LUT. And when you *do* begin,

You fairies make up for the time you've lost!

*The Fairies enter with fruit. He sits up. They group about him.*

NEO. Hast thou a wife?

LUT. Well, yes – that is – down there –

Up here I am a bachelor – as yet.

ZAY. *(offended)* As yet! Be good enough to recollect

That we are good, and pure, and maidenly –

*The Wicked World*

So prithee guard that errant tongue of thine.

LOC. And does she love thee?

LUT. Humph – we *do* fall out –

We did today.

NEO. And how came that about? (*All anxious to know.*)

LUT. Why thus – to tell the truth – between ourselves –

There was a lady in the case.

ZAY. (*apart, much shocked*) Hush – hush –

Confine thyself to matters that relate

To thine own sex. Thy master, Ethais –

He fought with Phyllon – what was that about? (*crossing to LUTIN*)

LUT. Oh, it's the old, old story!

LOC. Tell it,

LUT. Well,

There was a lady in the case!

ZAY. Then, stop –

Go on to something else – Where wast thou born?

LUT. Why, in Bulgaria – some years ago

(*whispering*) There was a lady in *that* case!

ZAY. (*severely*) It seems

There is a lady, sir, in every case.

LUT. In all those cases they *do* interfere!

*Enter DARINE unobserved.*

LOC. And, Lutin, is thy wife as fair as thou?

LUT. I thought her pretty till I looked on thee.

ZAY. Her hair?

LUT. Is bright – but not as bright as thine.

LOC. Her figure?

LUT. Neat and graceful of its kind,

But lacks thy pleasant plumpness. Then, besides,

She has a long loud tongue, and uses it –

A stout and heavy hand – and uses that;

And large expressive eyes – and uses *them*!

ZAY. And does she know that thou art here with us?

LUT. No – that's the joke! No – that's the best of it!

The gods forbid she ever should know *that*!

She is so plaguey jealous!

LOC. Is she so?

How is the lady called ?

LUT. Her name's Darine.

DAR. (*coming forward*) So I have found thee, Lutin.

LUT. (*aghast*) Can it be

My wife!

ZAY. Thy wife? This is Darine!

*The Wicked World*

LUT. I know!  
(*They detain him.*) Be quiet – don't – oblige me – let me go!  
Do not suppose, my love, that these bold girls  
Are friends of mine.  
DAR. Come, I would speak with thee –  
LUT. Allow me to explain.  
DAR. Attend to me.  
Say, dost thou love thy master, Ethais?  
LUT. My master? Yes, most surely!  
DAR. (*earnestly*) So do I!  
Madly, unreasonably, recklessly. (LUTIN *much taken aback.*)  
Love him with all the passion of a heart  
That love has never kindled till today!  
Thou, only thou, canst help me, noble sir.  
The gods, the gods have sent thee to my aid!  
LUT. Have they? In doing so the gods have not  
Displayed their usual talent for intrigue.  
Oh, thou abandoned woman!  
DAR. Hear me, sir!  
My Ethais is wounded in the arm.  
Thou hast a remedy of wondrous power,  
A charmèd remedy. Give it to me,  
That I may work his cure.  
LUT. Upon my soul,  
Cure *him* for *thee*! This is a cool request!  
DAR. But why not heal thy master's wound?  
LUT. Because,  
Under the circumstances, I prefer  
My master wounded to my master well,  
For when he's well, he's very well indeed!  
(*aside*) But stay – here is an essence that will drown  
His soul in sleep till I awaken him. (*taking bottle from pocket*)  
Shall I? I will! He'll be much safer so!  
(*aoud*) There, take the charm, and heal thy Ethais!  
DAR. A thousand thanks! Now he indeed is mine!  
LUT. Oh! this is inconceivable! Come here, (*Fairies advance.*)  
D' ye see these maidens, madam? Hitherto  
Thou hast been jealous, but without good cause;  
But now I'll give thee cause for jealousy;  
I'll pass my time with them – d' ye hear? with them –  
They're very pleasant, unaffected girls;  
I like them very much, and they like me –  
I'll play the very devil with their hearts,  
And let them play the very deuce with mine!  
DAR. Do so; I'll not detain thee from thy loves –  
See how impatiently they wait for thee;

*The Wicked World*

Go – while the happy hours away with them.

LUT. Is this thy jealousy, abandoned girl?

DAR. (*surprised*) Jealous of thee? Good sir, I love thee not!

LUT. You don't!

DAR. No, no – I love Sir Ethais;  
And when I've healed his wound, sheer gratitude  
Will wake *his* soul to love!

LUT. If he drinks that  
Sheer gratitude won't wake him. After all (*looking at Fairies who are endeavouring  
to persuade him to accompany them*)

Six pretty Zaydas to one Ethais –  
He fast asleep, and they all wide awake,  
Egad, I've six to one the best of that!

*Exeunt LUTIN and Fairies.*

DAR. He comes! At last I shall behold my love! (*Enter ETHAIS from bower.*)  
(*tenderly*) How fares Sir Ethais?

ETH. Why grievously.  
I am no leech, and cannot dress my wound,  
I'm sick and faint from pain and loss of blood.

DAR. (*aside*) How shall I work my end? I have a plan!  
Oh, powers of impudence, defend me now!  
(*aloud*) Sir Ethais, if Phyllon's words be true,  
Thy wound is but a scratch.

ETH. A scratch, forsooth!  
The devil's nails could hardly scratch so deep.

DAR. He says – I don't believe him – but he *says*  
That thou hast magnified its character,  
Because thou fearest to renew the fight.  
He *says* thou art a coward!

ETH. (*furiously*) By my blood,  
He shall atone for that! Did he say this  
To thee?

DAR. Ay, sir, to me – a minute since.

ETH. Oh, Phyllon! Coward? Why, a dozen times  
We two have fought our battles side by side;  
And I'm to quail and blanch, forsooth, because  
We two, at last, are fighting face to face?  
Oh, curses on the wound! Were Lutin here,  
My sword-arm soon would be in gear again.

DAR. Lutin *is* here.

ETH. (*amazed*) Here? Lutin ?

DAR. Yes. Behold! (*Shows flask.*)  
I have obtained this precious charm from him.  
Now, knight, to prove thy mettle!

*The Wicked World*

ETH. (*furiously*) Give it me –  
Give me the flask!

DAR. One moment, Ethais.  
This flask is precious, and it hath a price.

ETH. Name thou thy price, and I will give it thee.  
Take money, jewels, armour, all I have,  
So that thou leavest me one trusty sword!

DAR. No, Ethais, I do not want thy wealth,  
I want thy love – yes, Ethais, thy love;  
That priceless love that thou hast lavished on  
My worthless sister.

ETH. On Selene?

DAR. Yes,  
Thou lovest her – and dost thou think that I  
Will save thy life for her?

ETH. Selene? Bah!  
True, she is fair. Well, thou art also fair.  
What does it matter – her fair face or thine?  
What matters either face – or hers or thine –  
When weighed against this outrage on my fame?

DAR. Give me this ring, and thou shalt have the charm.

ETH. 'Tis thine. And now, Sir Phyllon, take good heed!

*Enter SELENE from bower.*

SEL. Darine! Thou here, alone with Ethais!  
No, no. I will not doubt –

DAR. Doubt whom thou wilt!  
Thou hypocrite! thou shameless hypocrite!  
Thou wretched victim of thine own designs!

SEL. Darine, what dost thou mean?

*Enter Fairies.*

DAR. Doubt all of us,  
For we are false to thee as thou to us.  
I am as thou hast made me, hypocrite!

SEL. Thou art to me as thou hast ever been,  
Most dearly loved of all these dearly loved.

DAR. Away! Thou art the source of all our ill  
For though we counselled thee to do the deed  
That brought this blight upon our innocence,  
'Twas but a test, and thou hast bent to it!

ZAY. Oh, miserable woman, get thee hence!  
Thou art no queen of ours!

LOC. Away with her!

*The Wicked World*

Down with the traitress queen!

SELENE *turns from one to another – all turn away from her.*

SEL. So let it be.  
Yes, thou hast rightly said – I had a trust.  
I have forsaken it. Through my default,  
The taint of earth has fallen on our land.  
Mine was the sin – be mine the punishment,  
Well-loved Darine, take thou this diadem:  
Wear it more worthily than I. (*Places her coronet on Darine.*)

Behold

How royally it rests upon her brow!  
My gentle sisterhood, behold your queen! (*Fairies bow.*)  
Let her fair face and form, untainted yet  
By the iniquity of my default,  
Recall the loved Darine of yesterday –  
The gentle, loving, maidenly Darine –  
Who would have been that loved Darine today,  
But for my erring deed. Oh, shame on me!  
Thou art as I have made thee. Who am I  
That I should judge my sister? I am loved;  
But had I lost that love, should I have borne  
My loss more patiently than thou? Alas!  
Thou, I, and all, are now as mortals are.

DAR. *So may I fall if I forsake my trust.*  
Thy punishment is just. Thou wast a queen –  
What art thou now?

SEL. I have a kingdom yet!  
I have a kingdom here – in Ethais' heart.  
A kingdom? Nay, a world – my world – my world!  
A world where all is pure, and good, and brave;  
A world of noble thought and noble deed;  
A world of brave and gentle chivalry;  
A very goodly and right gallant world; –  
This is my kingdom – for I am its queen!

DAR. Thou art no queen of his, for he is mine.  
Aye, by the token that thou gavest him, (*Shows ring.*)  
Thou fond and foolish maiden!

SEL. (*looking at it*) No, no, no!  
It is a counterfeit – no, no, Darine!  
The punishments of Heaven are merciful.

*Takes ETHAIS' hand to kiss it; she sees that the ring is not there.*

Oh, Ethais!

Is that the ring with which I plighted thee?

ETH. Aye, that's the bauble. I have naught to say.

*The Wicked World*

SEL. (*to DAR.*) It fell from him – where didst thou find it, speak?

ETH. I sold it for a charm that I might have  
An arm to flog a lying cur withal;  
A traitor devil, whose false breath had blurred  
My knightly honour, dearer to my heart  
Than any love of woman – hers or thine!  
I had no choice – my honour was at stake.

SEL. Thine honour! Thou dost well to speak of that.  
Can devils take the face and form of gods?  
Are truth and treachery so near akin  
That one can wear the other's countenance?  
Are all men such as thou? Or art thou not  
Of thine accursed race the most accursed?  
Why, honourable sir, thou art a knight  
That wars with womankind! Thy panoply  
A goodly form, smooth tongue, and fair false face.  
Thy shield a lie; thy weapon an embrace;  
The emblem of thy skill a broken heart!  
Thine is a gallant calling, Ethais –  
Thou manly knight – thou soul of chivalry –  
Thou most discreet and prudent warrior! (*He approaches her.*)  
Away, and touch me not! My nature's gone.  
May Heaven rain down her fury on thy soul!  
May every fibre in that perjured heart  
Quiver with love for one who loves thee not!  
May thine untrammelled soul at last be caught,  
And fixed and chained and riveted to one  
Who, with the love of heaven upon her lips,  
Carries the hate of hell within her heart!  
Thou phantom of the truth – thou mimic god –  
Thou traitor to thine own unhappy soul –  
Thou base apostate to the lovely faith,  
That thou hast preached with such false eloquence,  
I am thine enemy! (*to her sisters*) Look on your work,  
My gentle sisters. (*They look in horror.*) Are ye not content?  
Behold! I am a devil, like yourselves!

ACT III

SCENE – *Same as Acts I and II.*

LUTIN *is discovered sitting, in deep dejection. ZAYDA is at his feet trying to arouse him. ETHAIS is lying insensible at entrance to bower, covered with a mantle.*

ZAY. Come, Lutin, speak to me – for hours in vain  
I've sought to wean thee from thine inner self;



*The Wicked World*

I've sung in vain to thee – thou wilt not sing –

LUT. I cannot sing.

ZAY. Or dance?

LUT. I do not dance.

ZAY. Then let us float on yonder silver stream, (*They rise.*)

Or plunge headlong into its mossy depths,  
And wander, hand in hand, from grot to grot;  
Or, if thou wilt, I'll whirl thee through the air,  
And light with thee on yon tall pinnacle.  
Come, Lutin – take my hand, and we'll away!

LUT. Don't be ridiculous! I do not fly!  
You're very good – you mean it well, I know –  
But I've no taste for such alarming joys.  
I can't help thinking of my lost Darine,  
*She* was so much too good for me, and now  
*I* am so much too good for her!

ZAY. Alas!

Dost thou love *her*?

LUT. I can't help loving her.

ZAY. Dismiss the worthless creature from thy thoughts  
I know her well – she don't deserve thy love!  
She always was a very wicked girl.

LUT. Wicked? The best of women!

ZAY. (*maliciously*) So she *seemed*.

LUT. She had her faults, I know.

ZAY. She hath a soul

In which hypocrisy, intemperance,  
Hate, envy, vanity, untruthfulness  
Run riot at their will!

LUT. (*astonished*) You don't say so?  
I'd no idea of this – (*weeping*)

ZAY. As for her crimes –

LUT. Tell me the worst at once!

ZAY. The worst? No, that  
Would be *too* cruel – but – bigamy's the best!

LUT. What! Bigamy! Has she *two* husbands, then?

ZAY. Two? Half a dozen!

LUT. What!

ZAY. Why even now

She seeks to add a seventh to her list!  
Sir Ethais –

LUT. Ah, there I've thwarted her.

(*Enter DARINE, who goes to ETHAIS. She overhears what follows.*)

I have a potion that will heal his wounds;  
She begged it of me, but I cheated her,  
And put into her hands a sleeping draught.

*The Wicked World*

By this time he's as helpless as the dead,  
And she may shout until she wakes the dead,  
Before she wakes him!

DARINE *comes forward. Exit ZAYDA, in terror.*

DAR. (*down*) Why, thou envious churl –  
Thou wanton trifler with the purest fire  
That ever burnt in love-sick woman's breast,  
Why hast thou done this thing?

LUT. She does not quail  
Beneath her injured Lutin's outraged eye, (*She goes up to ETHAIS.*)  
But calmly asks him why he's done this thing!

DAR. Say, is he dead? Come – answer quickly!

LUT. Well,  
He's dead to all intents and purposes.

DAR. How has he injured thee?

LUT. He hasn't as yet;  
And I'll take care he don't!

DAR. Oh, misery!  
In half an hour my brothers will be here:  
In half an hour he must return to earth! (*Referring to ETHAIS.*)  
Awake, insensate knight – arouse thee, dolt!  
I – I, Darine, am waiting here for thee.  
Dost thou not hear me? Ethais, awake!

LUT. Oh – shout away!

DAR. Oh! I will be revenged!  
(*to LUTIN*) I know not why thou wagest bitter war  
Against my unoffending happiness;  
But I will thwart thy schemes. Sir Phyllon comes! (*Enter PHYLLON.*)  
Come hither, Phyllon – come to me, fair knight!  
Say, dost thou love me still?

PHY. Indeed I do!

DAR. (*to LUTIN*) Thou hearest him – he *loves* me!

(*to PHYLLON*) Tenderly?

PHY. Most tenderly! (*embracing her*)

DAR. He loves *most* tenderly!

*He is awake!*

LUT. Yes, much too wide awake!  
Disreputable woman, let him be!  
Unhand this lady!

DAR. Why, thou selfish knave,  
May I love nobody on earth but *thee*?

LUT. Of course you may not!

DAR. Go, sir, get thee gone!  
There are fair maids enough awaiting thee;

*The Wicked World*

I do not interfere 'twixt thee and them.

LUT. Well no, to do you justice, you do *not*!

I do not want them. I'm a married man!

What married man cares twopence for intrigues

At which his wife connives?

PHY. Is this thy wife?

LUT. I blush to say she is!

DAR. (*amazed*) I am thy wife!

Oh, monstrous! Stay, there has been some mistake,

Some dreadful error! See I've found a clue!

No doubt I am her fairy prototype,

In face resembling her, but that is all.

LUT. Then thou art *not* my wife ?

DAR. Not I, indeed! (LUTIN *kisses her.*)

I am a fairy. Be thou reassured;

Thy wife is on the earth (*kisses her again*) – Give me the charm

To cure my Ethais, and sit thee down, (*He gives it to her.*)

And I will send for Zayda and Loocrine,

And thou shall talk of love to both of them.

*Lut.* Well no – upon the whole – I'd rather not.

(DARINE *administers the potion to ETHAIS, who gradually revives.*)

I have reformed, Darine, and had I not,

I don't think I could talk to them of love

With all the eloquence the theme deserves,

In the distracting company of one,

Who, if she's not in point of fact my wife,

Is so uncomfortably like my wife,

That she may be my wife for aught I know;

And more than that, I can't stand tamely by

And notice with uninterested gaze

A lady, who's so very like my wife,

Hanging on everybody's neck but mine.

Don't send for Zayda – I'm a married man! (*Exit.*)

DAR. He wakes! He lives – my own, own Ethais!

ETH. (*awaking*) Why – where am I? Have I then been asleep?

DAR. Indeed thou hast! See, thou must soon return

To yonder earth – I've much to say to thee.

ETH. But how came I to sleep? I recollect!

Thou gavest me a potion, and I – (*Sees PHYLLON.*) Ha! (*Flies at his throat.*)

So I'm a cur, Sir Liar, and my wound

Is but a scratch which I have magnified

That I might shun the terrors of thy sword!

PHY. Hands off, thou drunken madman! Set me free.

I never said these things!

ETH. Thou craven cur,

Dost thou then fear to reap before my face

*The Wicked World*

The crop that thou hast sown behind my back?  
Thy life shall pay for this!

PHY. (*contemptuously*) I am not wont  
To weigh the words I speak to such as thou.  
No need to taint *thine* honour with a lie.  
Why, Ethais, the truth is black enough;  
I know thee as a brawling tavern bully,  
A hollow friend – a cruel unsparing foe –  
A reckless perjurer – a reprobate –  
The curse of woman and the scourge of man! (*Shaking him off.*)  
Is not the *truth* enough, that I should grudge  
The one brute-virtue of thy satyr-soul –  
The instinct courage of a hungry dog!

ETH. (*with suppressed fury*) I'll place these charges to the long account  
That I've to settle when we go below!

(*to DAR.*) Didst thou not tell me he had said these things?

DAR. I did, indeed!

PHY. And by what warrant, pray?

DAR. It was an artifice to gain thy love. (*to ETHAIS*)  
Has man monopoly of lover's lies?

Forgive me, Phyllon –

PHY. Bah! Release my hand,  
Thou shameless woman – I have done with thee. (*Exit.*)

DAR. Oh Ethais, be not enraged with me –  
Think of my love –

ETH. The devil take thy love –  
I'll none of it! Begone! See hither comes  
The woman that thy bitter lie hath wronged.  
Hast thou the heart to stand before her?

DAR. No! (*Exit.*)

*Enter SELENE from bower.*

SEL. Thou here? and with Darine!

ETH. Stay, hear me out!  
It's true I've trifled with thy love, but then  
Thy love is not as mortal woman's love.  
I did not know that it would move thee thus!

SEL. Thou didst not know!  
Art thou so dull that thou canst understand  
No pain that is not wreaked upon *thy* frame?  
Hast thou no knowledge of the form of woe  
That comes of cheated hopes and trampled hearts?  
To find *thy* love a lie, *thy* kiss a jest,  
The byewords of *thy* love a mockery?  
Oh, there are words

*The Wicked World*

For other agonies, but none for this!

ETH. Nay, hear me! I have wronged thee bitterly –  
I will atone for all!

SEL.               Thou shalt atone;  
I'll be the curse of thy remaining years!  
Harkye, Sir Knight, I'll yield my fairyhood  
That I may go to yonder earth, and join  
The whispering sisterhood of hidden hate.  
The busy band who bear within their lips  
The deadliest weapon of earth's armoury:  
A blighting tongue – a woman's blighting tongue!  
I will so deftly wield this talisman  
To twist and turn and torture good to ill,  
That were it in thee to amend thy ways,  
Turn anchorite, and yield to holy deeds  
Of peace and prayer, goodwill and charity,  
Thy holiness should seem an infamy,  
Thy peace a war, thy charity a theft,  
Thy calm a fury, and thy prayer a curse!

ETH. Stay thine unholy tongue – go thou to earth,  
And learn that that which thou hast undergone  
All women undergo.

SEL.               Am I as they?  
I am immortal. Can a few brief years  
Of bitter shame and bitter sorrow weigh  
Against an immortality of woe?  
A mortal's love is framed to last a life,  
But my love to outlive eternity!  
Blind mortal, as Eternity to Time –  
So is my wrong to theirs!

*Enter LOCHRINE.*

LOC.               Selene, see,  
Through the far distant air, with rapid flight,  
Our absent brothers wing their way to us; (*Enter ZAYDA and LUTIN.*)  
These mortals must return to their own earth!

LUT. Now, by my head, but this is welcome news!

ZAY. (*horrified*) Return to earth? No, Lutin; no, not yet.  
Life without Lutin! what can that be worth?

LUT. I cannot tell you, for I never tried. (*Enter DARINE and PHYLLON  
struggling.*)

Nay, seek not to detain me; I have had  
Enough of fairy love – I seek my wife.

PHY. Come, Ethais; to earth, to earth again!

DAR. (*releasing him*) Aye, go, and take thy fellow man with thee.

*The Wicked World*

(LUTIN and PHYLLON descend.)

We want but this to crown our misery!

ETHAIS, *about to follow him, is detained by* SELENE.

SEL. (*suddenly*) No! no! Thou shalt not go, thou shalt not go!  
My hope – my shattered hope; but still my hope!  
My love – my blighted love; but still my love!  
My life – my ruined life; but still my life!  
Forgive me, Ethais : thou hast withdrawn  
The very core and substance of thy love.  
No matter! give me but the empty husk,  
And it will stay the famine of my heart.  
I'll work and toil for thee – I'll be thy slave,  
Thine humble, silent, and submissive slave;  
I'll come but at thy beck – I will not speak  
But at thy word – my Ethais! my love!  
(*furiously*) Nay, but I'll hold thee back! I have the strength  
Of fifty women! See, thou canst not go! (*with passionate triumph*)  
Nay, but I'll *wrest* thy love away from thee,  
And fetter it in bondage to my heart.  
I will be one with thee; I'll cling to thee,  
And thou *shalt* take me to that world of thine.

ETH. Take *thee* to earth? I love the earth too well  
To curse it with another termagant.  
We have enough of them! Release me, fool!  
Man hath no appetite for proffered love!  
Away from me, I go to that good world  
Where women are not devils till they die!

*Throws off* SELENE, *who falls senseless. He leaps through cloud, and descends. As*  
ETHAIS *disappears, the fairies, who have grouped themselves about the stage in*  
*attitudes of despair, gradually seem, to wake as from a dream.*

SEL. Where am I? Zayda! Neodie! Darine!  
Oh, sisters, I am waking from a dream  
A fearful dream – a dream of evil thoughts,  
Of mortal passion and of mortal hate,  
I thought that Ethais and Phyllon too  
Had gone to mid-earth –

ZAY. Nay, it was no dream,  
A sad and sorrowful reality!  
Yes, we have suffered much – but, Heaven be praised,  
These mortal souls have gone to their own earth,  
And taken with them the bad influence  
That spread like an infection through our ranks.

*The Wicked World*

See! we are as we were! (*embracing her*)

SEL. Darine! Darine!

My well-beloved sister – speak to me!

DAR. I dare not speak to thee – I have no words –  
I am ashamed.

SEL. Oh, sister, let that shame  
Sit heavily on all – for all have sinned.  
Oh, let us lay this lesson to our hearts;  
Let us achieve our work with humbled souls,  
Free from the folly of self-righteousness.  
Behold, is there so wide a gulf between  
The humbled wretch who, being tempted, falls,  
And that good man who rears an honoured head  
Because temptation hath not come to him?  
Shall we, from our enforced security,  
Deal mercilessly with poor mortal man,  
Who struggles, single-handed, to defend  
The demon-leaguered fortress of his soul  
Shall we not rather (seeing how we fell)  
Give double honour to the champion, who  
Throughout his mortal peril, holds his own,  
E'en though  
His walls be somewhat battered in the fight?  
Oh let us lay this lesson to our hearts!

*Enter LUTIN, followed by ETHAIS and PHYLLON, as fairies.*

LUT. Your brothers have returned.

SEL. (*embracing ETHAIS*) My Ethais!

ETH. Selene – sisters all – rejoice with us,  
We bear the promise of a priceless gift,  
A source of new and endless happiness! (*All eager to know.*)  
Take every radiant blessing that adorns  
Our happy land, and all will pale before  
The lustre of this precious privilege.  
It is – that we may love as mortals love!

SEL. (*eagerly*) No, no – not that – no Ethais – not that!  
It is a deadly snare – beware of it!  
Such love is for mankind, and not for us;  
It is the very essence of the earth,  
A mortal emblem, bringing in its train  
The direst passions of its antitype.  
No, Ethais – we will not have this love;  
Let us glide through our immortality  
Upon the placid lake of sister-love,  
Nor tempt the angry billows of a sea,

*The Wicked World*

Which, though it carry us to unknown lands,  
Is so beset with rocks and hidden shoals,  
That we may perish ere our vessel reach  
The unsafe haven of its distant shore.  
No, Ethais – we will not have this love!