

# If I Were King

## IF I WERE KING

### *SOME PRESS OPINIONS*

**The Times:**—A novel of exceptional distinction: the scenes are fresh and vivid; the movement quick and natural; and, above all, the phrasing has almost a classical richness and carefulness of verbal selection. It is seldom that the style of a romantic novel brings it so near to literature.

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**The Standard:**—A tender and stirring romance, studded with several exquisite little poems.

**The Globe:** Those who propose to visit the St. James's may be advised to read the romance before they go; those who have already seen the play should hasten to read the romance, for it will fix the drama in their memory. Mr. McCarthy has been content to tell a stirring tale in an unassuming way, with no more elaboration than was absolutely necessary. It will carry easily to the end all those who abandon themselves to the glamour of the opening pages. The work is clever both in conception and in execution.

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# If I Were King

V. 100

By

Justin Huntly McCarthy

*With Four Illustrations*



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"Yonder she-thing in the man's habit is Huguette du Hamel, a wild wench whom men call the Abbess." (Page 2-1)

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If I were king—ah love, if I were king!  
What tributary nations would I bring  
To stoop before your sceptre and to swear  
Allegiance to your lips and eyes and hair.  
Beneath your feet what treasures I would fling:—  
The stars should be your pearls upon a string,  
The world a ruby for your finger ring,  
And you should have the sun and moon to wear  
If I were king.

Let these wild dreams and wilder words take wing,  
Deep in the woods I hear a shepherd sing  
A simple ballad to a sylvan air,  
Of love that ever finds your face more fair.  
I could not give you any godlier thing  
If I were king.

## CHAPTER I IN THE FIRCONA TAVERN

**I**N the dark main room of the Fircone Tavern the warm June air seemed to have lost all its delicacy, like a degraded angel. It was sodden through and through, as with the lees of wine; it was stained and shamed with the smells of hams and cheeses; it was thick and heavy as if with the breaths of all the rogues and all the vagabonds that had haunted the hostelry from its evil dawn. Such guttering lights and glimmering flames as lit the place—for there was a small fire on the wide hearth in spite of the fine weather—peopled the gloom with fantastic quivering shadows as of lean fingers that unfolded themselves to filch, or clenched themselves to stab in the back. But its patrons seemed to like the place well enough in spite of its miasma, and Master Robin Turgis, the fat landlord, drowsy with his own wine and dripping from the heat, surveyed them complacently, and wallowed as it were in the rattle