

April 2019

# The Isle of the Setting Sun

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hearst\\_documents](https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hearst_documents)

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

---

## Recommended Citation

"The Isle of the Setting Sun" (2019). *James Hearst Documents*. 11.  
[https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hearst\\_documents/11](https://scholarworks.uni.edu/hearst_documents/11)

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the James Hearst Collection at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in James Hearst Documents by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

7

THE ISLE OF THE SETTING SUN

Sailorman, Sailorman, by the dark water,  
Why have you come to this gull-haunted strand,  
To watch the long waves rolling in from the sunset  
And spreading the colors they spread on the sand?

Sailorman, Sailorman, in the green twilight,  
Tell me your tale while the black night air  
Shades out the glory the sun trails behind him  
And impudent stars tease the moon from her lair.

This is the tale he told me,  
There by the flame touched sea.

"We sailed from here for Java coast with cotton goods and rum,  
Sailing, sailing, on a Western sea.  
To get a load of tea and spice and nigger slaves and gum,  
Sailing, sailing, in a rush of sky and sea.

"For thirteen days we raced the waves—the wind was fresh and strong,  
Singing, singing, to a windy melody,  
Till we ran against the setting sun, a land of flame and song,  
Singing, blinding, so bright we could not see.

"The air was filled with madrigals, the sea burned all around,  
Flaming, flaming, a colored melody.  
And on an isle of green and gold our ship was run aground,  
Sinking, sinking, in the Western sea.

"We landed on the island like the Spanish men of old,  
Splashing, dashing, the waves danced merrily.  
We found a white-tiled city whose streets were blue and gold,  
Where only Beauty's word was law and wine and music flow,  
And languorous and slow,  
Seductive maidens go  
With weaving hips and clinging lips and pulsing voices low;  
Wandering, fearing, they met us curiously.

"What drowsy joys we saw and felt, what melodies we heard,  
Laughing, playing, an hour's minstrelsy.  
And a dream that I had always known came swiftly as a bird,  
Sobbing, throbbing, love's own harmony.

"But with the passing of an hour the island's life is done,  
—For it has existed only at the setting of the sun—  
Melting, fading, in the moaning sea.  
And anything exotic there is changed to effervescent air  
And iridescent foam.  
Roaming, roaming, for an eternity.

"And so my love, to save my life, commanded me to go,  
Weeping, weeping, she wept so piteously,  
With trembling lips and troubled face she led me to a secret place,  
Where hidden in a glow  
Of rainbow colors bright,  
Within a dazzling coral cave a ship lay staunch and tight,  
Which had a shadow for a sail, its hull was tinted light!

8

"Into the East with breaking heart I journeyed sad and mute,  
Sailing, sailing, on a moonlit sea.  
And The wind that sweetly filled the sail was the wailing of  
a flute,  
Raising, falling, thin and silvery.

"The phantom ship dissolved in foam. the way to me is lost,  
Rolling, blowing, a waste of wind and sea.  
But I know she stands each night out where the sun-tipped  
waves are tossed,  
Calling, calling, across the Western sea.

Published in HEACOCK'S

for November 1924  
(A monthly journal for the moderatly wicked)