



Penguin Island

by Anatole France (1844-1924)
translated by A.W. Evans

An acute satire, written in the style of a sprawling 19th century history book, *Penguin Island* is about a fictitious island of great auks that exists off the northern coast of Europe. A wayward Christian missionary monk accidentally lands on the island and sees the great auks as a sort of Greek pre-Christian pagan society. Partly blind, he mistakes the animals for people and baptizes them. This mistake causes a problem for The Lord who normally only allows people to be baptized, so he resolves it by converting the great auks to people and giving them a soul. Thus begins the great auk history and from there forward the history mirrors that of France. From the Dark Ages, when the Germanic tribes incessantly fought among one another for territory; to the heroic rise of Charlemagne ("Draco the Great") and conflicts with Viking raiders ("porpoises"); to the Renaissance, and up to the modern era with motor cars, and even a future time in which a thriving high-tech civilization is destroyed by a campaign of terrorist bombings -- and everything starts again in an endless cycle. (*Wikipedia*)



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Total running time: 9:04:31
Read by Michael Sirois

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