

Iolanthe
Or
The Peer and the Peri

Written by

W.S. Gilbert

Composed by

Arthur Sullivan

*First performed at the Savoy Theatre, London,
25 November 1882*

Iolanthe

or

The Peer and the Peri

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE LORD CHANCELLOR
EARL OF MOUNTARARAT
EARL TOLLOLLER
PRIVATE WILLIS (*of the Grenadier Guards*)
STREPHON (*an Arcadian Shepherd*)
QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES
IOLANTHE (*a Fairy, Strephon's Mother*)

FAIRIES:

CELIA
LEILA
FLETA

PHYLLIS (*an Arcadian Shepherdess and Ward of Chancery*)

Chorus of Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts, Barons, and Fairies.

ACT I

An Arcadian Landscape

ACT II

Palace Yard, Westminster

DATE

Between 1700 and 1882

ACT I

SCENE. – An Arcadian Landscape. A river runs around the back of the stage. A rustic bridge crosses the river.

Enter Fairies, led by LEILA, CELIA, and FLETA. They trip around the stage, singing as they dance.

CHORUS.

Tripping hither, tripping thither,
Nobody knows why or whither;
We must dance and we must sing
Round about our fairy ring!

SOLO – CELIA.

We are dainty little fairies,
Ever singing, ever dancing;
We indulge in our vagaries
In a fashion most entrancing.
If you ask the special function
Of our never-ceasing motion,
We reply, without compunction,
That we haven't any notion!

CHORUS.

No, we haven't any notion!
Tripping hither, etc.

SOLO – LEILA.

If you ask us how we live,
Lovers all essentials give –
We can ride on lovers' sighs,
Warm ourselves in lovers' eyes,
Bathe ourselves in lovers' tears,
Clothe ourselves with lovers' fears,
Arm ourselves with lovers' darts,
Hide ourselves in lovers' hearts.
When you know us, you'll discover
That we almost live on lover!

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CHORUS.

Yes, we live on lover!
Tripping hither, etc.

(At the end of Chorus, all sigh wearily.)

CELIA. Ah, it's all very well, but since our Queen banished Iolanthe, fairy revels have not been what they were!

LEILA. Iolanthe was the life and soul of Fairyland. Why, she wrote all our songs and arranged all our dances! We sing her songs and we trip her measures, but we don't enjoy ourselves!

FLETA. To think that five-and-twenty years have elapsed since she was banished! What could she have done to have deserved so terrible a punishment?

LEILA. Something awful! She married a mortal!

FLETA. Oh! Is it injudicious to marry a mortal?

LEILA. Injudicious? It strikes at the root of the whole fairy system! By our laws, the fairy who marries a mortal dies!

CELIA. But Iolanthe didn't die!

(Enter FAIRY QUEEN.)

QUEEN. No, because your Queen, who loved her with a surpassing love, commuted her sentence to penal servitude for life, on condition that she left her husband and never communicated with him again!

LEILA. That sentence of penal servitude she is now working out, on her head, at the bottom of that stream!

QUEEN. Yes, but when I banished her, I gave her all the pleasant places of the earth to dwell in. I'm sure I never intended that she should go and live at the bottom of a stream! It makes me perfectly wretched to think of the discomfort she must have undergone!

LEILA. Think of the damp! And her chest was always delicate.

QUEEN. And the frogs! Ugh! I never shall enjoy any peace of mind until I know why Iolanthe went to live among the frogs!

FLETA. Then why not summon her and ask her?

QUEEN. Why? Because if I set eyes on her I should forgive her at once!

CELIA. Then why not forgive her? Twenty-five years – it's a long time!

LEILA. Think how we loved her!

QUEEN. Loved her? What was your love to mine? Why, she was invaluable to me! Who taught me to curl myself inside a buttercup? Iolanthe! Who taught me to swing upon a cobweb? Iolanthe! Who taught me to dive into a dewdrop – to nestle in a nutshell – to gambol upon gossamer? Iolanthe!

LEILA. She certainly did surprising things!

FLETA. Oh, give her back to us, great Queen, for your sake if not for ours! *(All kneel in supplication.)*

QUEEN *(irresolute).* Oh, I should be strong, but I am weak! I should be marble, but I am clay! Her punishment has been heavier than I intended. I did not mean that she should live

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among the frogs – and – well, well, it shall be as you wish – it shall be as you wish!

INVOCATION – QUEEN.

Iolanthe!
From thy dark exile thou art summoned!
Come to our call –
Come, come, Iolanthe!
CELIA. Iolanthe!
LEILA. Iolanthe!
ALL. Come to our call, Iolanthe!
Iolanthe, come!

(IOLANTHE rises from the water. She is clad in water-weeds. She approaches the QUEEN with head bent and arms crossed.)

IOLANTHE. With humbled breast
And every hope laid low,
To thy behest,
Offended Queen, I bow!

QUEEN. For a dark sin against our fairy laws
We sent thee into life-long banishment;
But mercy holds her sway within our hearts –
Rise – thou art pardoned!

IOL. Pardoned!
ALL. Pardoned!

(Her weeds fall from her, and she appears clothed as a fairy. The QUEEN places a diamond coronet on her head, and embraces her. The others also embrace her.)

CHORUS.

Welcome to our hearts again,
Iolanthe! Iolanthe!
We have shared thy bitter pain,
Iolanthe! Iolanthe!
Every heart and every hand
In our loving little band
Welcomes thee to Fairyland,
Iolanthe!

QUEEN. And now, tell me, with all the world to choose from, why on earth did you decide to live at the bottom of that stream?

IOL. To be near my son, Strephon.

QUEEN. Bless my heart, I didn't know you had a son.

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IOL. He was born soon after I left my husband by your royal command – but he does not even know of his father’s existence.

FLETA. How old is he?

IOL. Twenty-four.

LEILA. Twenty-four! No one, to look at you, would think you had a son of twenty-four! But that’s one of the advantages of being immortal. We never grow old! Is he pretty?

IOL. He’s extremely pretty, but he’s inclined to be stout.

ALL (*disappointed*). Oh!

QUEEN. I see no objection to stoutness, in moderation.

CELIA. And what is he?

IOL. He’s an Arcadian shepherd – and he loves Phyllis, a Ward in Chancery.

CELIA. A mere shepherd! And he half a fairy!

IOL. He’s a fairy down to the waist – but his legs are mortal.

ALL. Dear me!

QUEEN. I have no reason to suppose that I am more curious than other people, but I confess I should like to see a person who is a fairy down to the waist, but whose legs are mortal.

IOL. Nothing easier, for here he comes!

(Enter STREPHON, singing and dancing and playing on a flageolet. He does not see the Fairies, who retire up stage as he enters.)

SONG – STREPHON.

Good morrow, good mother!
Good mother, good morrow!
By some means or other,
Pray banish your sorrow!
With joy beyond telling
My bosom is swelling,
So join in a measure
Expressive of pleasure,
For I’m to be married today – today –
Yes, I’m to be married today!

CHORUS (*aside*). Yes, he’s to be married today – today –
Yes, he’s to be married today!

IOL. Then the Lord Chancellor has at last given his consent to your marriage with his beautiful ward, Phyllis?

STREPH. Not he, indeed. To all my tearful prayers he answers me, “A shepherd lad is no fit helpmate for a Ward of Chancery.” I stood in court, and there I sang him songs of Arcadee, with flageolet accompaniment – in vain. At first he seemed amused, so did the Bar; but quickly wearying of my song and pipe, bade me get out. A servile usher then, in crumpled bands and rusty bombazine, led me, still singing, into Chancery Lane! I’ll go no more; I’ll marry her to-day, and brave the upshot, be it what it may! (*Sees Fairies.*) But who are these?

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IOL. Oh, Strephon! rejoice with me, my Queen has pardoned me!

STREPH. Pardoned you, mother? This is good news indeed.

IOL. And these ladies are my beloved sisters.

STREPH. Your sisters! Then they are – my aunts!

QUEEN. A pleasant piece of news for your bride on her wedding day!

STREPH. Hush! My bride knows nothing of my fairyhood. I dare not tell her, lest it frighten her. She thinks me mortal, and prefers me so.

LEILA. Your fairyhood doesn't seem to have done you much good.

STREPH. Much good! My dear aunt! It's the curse of my existence! What's the use of being half a fairy? My body can creep through a keyhole, but what's the good of that when my legs are left kicking behind? I can make myself invisible down to the waist, but that's of no use when my legs remain exposed to view! My brain is a fairy brain, but from the waist downwards I'm a gibbering idiot. My upper half is immortal, but my lower half grows older every day, and some day or other must die of old age. What's to become of my upper half when I've buried my lower half I really don't know!

FAIRIES. Poor fellow!

QUEEN. I see your difficulty, but with a fairy brain you should seek an intellectual sphere of action. Let me see. I've a borough or two at my disposal. Would you like to go into Parliament?

IOL. A fairy Member! That would be delightful!

STREPH. I'm afraid I should do no good there – you see, down to the waist, I'm a Tory of the most determined description, but my legs are a couple of confounded Radicals, and, on a division, they'd be sure to take me into the wrong lobby. You see, they're two to one, which is a strong working majority.

QUEEN. Don't let that distress you; you shall be returned as a Liberal-Conservative, and your legs shall be our peculiar care.

STREPH. (*bowing*). I see your Majesty does not do things by halves.

QUEEN. No, we are fairies down to the feet.

ENSEMBLE.

QUEEN.	Fare thee well, attractive stranger.
FAIRIES.	Fare thee well, attractive stranger.
QUEEN.	Shouldst thou be in doubt or danger, Peril or perplexitee, Call us, and we'll come to thee!
FAIRIES.	Aye! Call us, and we'll come to thee! Tripping hither, tripping thither, Nobody knows why or whither; We must now be taking wing To another fairy ring!

(Fairies and QUEEN trip off, IOLANTHE, who takes an affectionate farewell of her son, going off last.)

(Enter PHYLLIS, singing and dancing, and accompanying herself on a flageolet.)

SONG – PHYLLIS.

Good morrow, good lover!
Good lover, good morrow!
I prithee discover,
Steal, purchase, or borrow
Some means of concealing
The care you are feeling,
And join in a measure
Expressive of pleasure,
For we're to be married today – today!
Yes, we're to be married today!

BOTH. Yes, we're to be married, etc.

STREPH. (*embracing her*). My Phyllis! And to-day we are to be made happy for ever.

PHYL. Well, we're to be married.

STREPH. It's the same thing.

PHYL. I suppose it is. But oh, Strephon, I tremble at the step I'm taking! I believe it's penal servitude for life to marry a Ward of Court without the Lord Chancellor's consent! I shall be of age in two years. Don't you think you could wait two years?

STREPH. Two years. Have you ever looked in the glass?

PHYL. No, never.

STREPH. Here, look at that (*showing her a pocket mirror*), and tell me if you think it rational to expect me to wait two years?

PHYL. (*looking at herself*). No. You're quite right – it's asking too much. One must be reasonable.

STREPH. Besides, who knows what will happen in two years? Why, you might fall in love with the Lord Chancellor himself by that time!

PHYL. Yes. He's a clean old gentleman.

STREPH. As it is, half the House of Lords are sighing at your feet.

PHYL. The House of Lords are certainly extremely attentive.

STREPH. Attentive? I should think they were! Why did five-and-twenty Liberal Peers come down to shoot over your grass-plot last autumn? It couldn't have been the sparrows. Why did five-and-twenty Conservative Peers come down to fish your pond? Don't tell me it was the gold-fish! No, no – delays are dangerous, and if we are to marry, the sooner the better.

DUET – STREPHON and PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS. None shall part us from each other,
One in life and death are we:
All in all to one another –
I to thee and thou to me!

BOTH. Thou the tree and I the flower –
Thou the idol; I the throng –
Thou the day and I the hour –

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Thou the singer; I the song!

STREPH.

All in all since that fond meeting
When, in joy, I woke to find
Mine the heart within thee beating,
Mine the love that heart enshrined!

BOTH.

Thou the stream and I the willow –
Thou the sculptor; I the clay –
Thou the Ocean; I the billow –
Thou the sunrise; I the day!

(Exeunt STREPHON and PHYLLIS together.)

(March. Enter Procession of Peers.)

CHORUS.

Loudly let the trumpet bray!
Tantantara!
Proudly bang the sounding brasses!
Tzing! Boom!

As upon its lordly way
This unique procession passes,
Tantantara! Tzing! Boom!

Bow, bow, ye lower middle classes!
Bow, bow, ye tradesmen, bow, ye masses!
Blow the trumpets, bang the brasses!
Tantantara! Tzing! Boom!

We are peers of highest station,
Paragons of legislation,
Pillars of the British nation!
Tantantara! Tzing! Boom!

(Enter the LORD CHANCELLOR, followed by his train-bearer.)

SONG – LORD CHANCELLOR.

The Law is the true embodiment
Of everything that's excellent.
It has no kind of fault or flaw,
And I, my Lords, embody the Law.
The constitutional guardian I
Of pretty young Wards in Chancery,
All very agreeable girls – and none
Are over the age of twenty-one.
A pleasant occupation for
A rather susceptible Chancellor!

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ALL. A pleasant, etc.

But though the compliment implied
Inflates me with legitimate pride,
It nevertheless can't be denied
That it has its inconvenient side.
For I'm not so old, and not so plain,
And I'm quite prepared to marry again,
But there'd be the deuce to pay in the Lords
If I fell in love with one of my Wards!
Which rather tries my temper, for
I'm *such* a susceptible Chancellor!

ALL. Which rather, etc.

And every one who'd marry a Ward
Must come to me for my accord,
And in my court I sit all day,
Giving agreeable girls away,
With one for him – and one for he –
And one for you – and one for ye –
And one for thou – and one for thee –
But never, oh, never a one for me!
Which is exasperating for
A highly susceptible Chancellor!

ALL. Which is, etc.

(*Enter* LORD TOLLOLLER.)

LORD TOLL. And now, my Lords, to the business of the day.

LORD CH. By all means. Phyllis, who is a Ward of Court, has so powerfully affected your Lordships, that you have appealed to me in a body to give her to whichever one of you she may think proper to select, and a noble Lord has just gone to her cottage to request her immediate attendance. It would be idle to deny that I, myself, have the misfortune to be singularly attracted by this young person. My regard for her is rapidly undermining my constitution. Three months ago I was a stout man. I need say no more. If I could reconcile it with my duty, I should unhesitatingly award her to myself, for I can conscientiously say that I know no man who is so well fitted to render her exceptionally happy. (PEERS: Hear, hear!) But such an award would be open to misconstruction, and therefore, at whatever personal inconvenience, I waive my claim.

LORD TOLL. My Lord, I desire, on the part of this House, to express its sincere sympathy with your Lordship's most painful position.

LORD CH. I thank your Lordships. The feelings of a Lord Chancellor who is in love with a Ward of Court are not to be envied. What is his position? Can he give his own consent to his own marriage with his own Ward? Can he marry his own Ward without his own consent? And if he marries his own Ward without his own consent, can he commit himself for

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contempt of his own Court? And if he commit himself for contempt of his own Court, can he appear by counsel before himself, to move for arrest of his own judgement? Ah, my Lords, it is indeed painful to have to sit upon a woosack which is stuffed with such thorns as these!

(Enter LORD MOUNTARARAT.)

LORD MOUNT. My Lord, I have much pleasure in announcing that I have succeeded in inducing the young person to present herself at the Bar of this House.

(Enter PHYLLIS.)

RECITATIVE – PHYLLIS.

My well-loved Lord and Guardian dear,
You summoned me, and I am here!

CHORUS OF PEERS.

Oh, rapture, how beautiful!
How gentle – how dutiful!

SOLO – LORD TOLLOLLER.

Of all the young ladies I know
This pretty young lady's the fairest;
Her lips have the rosiest show,
Her eyes are the richest and rarest.
Her origin's lowly, it's true,
But of birth and position I've plenty;
I've grammar and spelling for two,
And blood and behaviour for twenty!
Her origin's lowly, it's true,
I've grammar and spelling for two;

CHORUS.

Of birth and position he's plenty,
With blood and behaviour for twenty!

SOLO – LORD MOUNTARARAT.

Though the views of the House have diverged
On every conceivable motion,
All questions of Party are merged
In a frenzy of love and devotion;
If you ask us distinctly to say
What Party we claim to belong to,
We reply, without doubt or delay,

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The Party I'm singing this song to!

SOLO – PHYLLIS.

I'm very much pained to refuse,
But I'll stick to my pipes and my tabors;
I can spell all the words that I use,
And my grammar's as good as my neighbours'.
As for birth – I was born like the rest,
My behaviour is rustic but hearty,
And I know where to turn for the best,
When I want a particular Party!

PHYLLIS, LORD TOLL., and LORD MOUNT.

Though my/her station is none of the best,
I suppose I/she was born like the rest;
And I/she know(s) where to look for my/her hearty,
When I/she want(s) a particular Party!

RECITATIVE – PHYLLIS.

Nay, tempt me not.
To rank I'll not be bound;¹
In lowly cot
Alone is virtue found!

CHORUS. No, no; indeed high rank will never hurt you,
The Peerage is not destitute of virtue.

BALLAD – LORD TOLLOLLER.

Spurn not the nobly born
With love affected,
Nor treat with virtuous scorn
The well-connected.
High rank involves no shame –
We boast an equal claim
With him of humble name
To be respected!
Blue blood! blue blood!
When virtuous love is sought
Thy power is naught,
Though dating from the Flood,
Blue blood! Ah, blue blood!

¹ This line is rendered "To wealth I'll not be bound" in all editions of the Vocal Score.

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CHORUS. When virtuous love is sought, etc.

Spare us the bitter pain
Of stern denials,
Nor with low-born disdain
Augment our trials.
Hearts just as pure and fair
May beat in Belgrave Square
As in the lowly air
Of Seven Dials!
Blue blood! blue blood!
Of what avail art thou
To serve us now?
Though dating from the Flood,
Blue blood! Ah, blue blood!

CHORUS. Of what avail art thou, etc.

RECITATIVE – PHYLLIS.

My Lords, it may not be.
With grief my heart is riven!
You waste your time on me,
For ah! my heart is given!

ALL. Given!
PHYL. Yes, given!
ALL. Oh, horror!!!

RECITATIVE – LORD CHANCELLOR.

And who has dared to brave our high displeasure,
And thus defy our definite command?

(Enter STREPHON.)

STREPH. 'Tis I – young Strepheon! mine this priceless treasure!
Against the world I claim my darling's hand!
(PHYLLIS rushes to his arms.)

A shepherd I –
ALL. A shepherd he!
STREPH. Of Arcady –
ALL. Of Arcadee!
STREPH. Betrothed are we!
ALL. Betrothed are they –
STREPH. And mean to be-

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ALL. Espoused today!

ENSEMBLE.

STREPH.

A shepherd I
Of Arcady,
Betrothed are we,
And mean to be
Espoused to-day!

THE OTHERS.

A shepherd he
Of Arcadee,
Betrothed are they,
And mean to be
Espoused today!

DUET – LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER

(aside to each other).

'Neath this blow,
Worse than stab of dagger –
Though we mo-
Mentarily stagger,
In each heart
Proud are we innately –
Let's depart,
Dignified and stately!

ALL. Let's depart,
Dignified and stately!

CHORUS OF PEERS.

Though our hearts she's badly bruising,
In another suitor choosing,
Let's pretend it's most amusing.
Ha! ha! ha! Tan-ta-ra!

(Exeunt all the Peers, marching round stage with much dignity. LORD CHANCELLOR separates PHYLLIS from STREPHON and orders her off. She follows Peers. Manent LORD CHANCELLOR and STREPHON.)

LORD CH. Now, sir, what excuse have you to offer for having disobeyed an order of the Court of Chancery?

STREPH. My Lord, I know no Courts of Chancery; I go by Nature's Acts of Parliament. The bees – the breeze – the seas – the rooks – the brooks – the gales – the vales – the fountains and the mountains cry, "You love this maiden – take her, we command you!" 'Tis writ in heaven by the bright barbèd dart that leaps forth into lurid light from each grim thundercloud. The very rain pours forth her sad and sodden sympathy! When chorused Nature bids me take my love, shall I reply, "Nay, but a certain Chancellor forbids it"? Sir, you are

England's Lord High Chancellor, but are you Chancellor of birds and trees, King of the winds and Prince of thunderclouds?

LORD CH. No. It's a nice point. I don't know that I ever met it before. But my difficulty is that at present there's no evidence before the Court that chorused Nature has interested herself in the matter.

STREPH. No evidence! You have my word for it. I tell you that she bade me take my love.

LORD CH. Ah! But, my good sir, you mustn't tell us what she told you – it's not evidence. Now an affidavit from a thunderstorm, or a few words on oath from a heavy shower, would meet with all the attention they deserve.

STREPH. And have you the heart to apply the prosaic rules of evidence to a case which bubbles over with poetical emotion?

LORD CH. Distinctly. I have always kept my duty strictly before my eyes, and it is to that fact that I owe my advancement to my present distinguished position.

SONG – LORD CHANCELLOR.

When I went to the Bar as a very young man,
(Said I to myself – said I),
I'll work on a new and original plan,
(Said I to myself – said I),
I'll never assume that a rogue or a thief
Is a gentleman worthy implicit belief,
Because his attorney has sent me a brief,
(Said I to myself – said I!).

Ere I go into court I will read my brief through
(Said I to myself – said I),
And I'll never take work I'm unable to do
(Said I to myself-said I),
My learned profession I'll never disgrace
By taking a fee with a grin on my face,
When I haven't been there to attend to the case
(Said I to myself – said I!).

I'll never throw dust in a juryman's eyes
(Said I to myself – said I),
Or hoodwink a judge who is not over-wise
(Said I to myself – said I),
Or assume that the witnesses summoned in force
In Exchequer, Queen's Bench, Common Pleas, or Divorce,
Have perjured themselves as a matter of course
(Said I to myself – said I!).

In other professions in which men engage
(Said I to myself said I),
The Army, the Navy, the Church, and the Stage

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(Said I to myself – said I),
Professional licence, if carried too far,
Your chance of promotion will certainly mar –
And I fancy the rule might apply to the Bar
(Said I to myself – said I!).

(Exit LORD CHANCELLOR.)

(Enter IOLANTHE)

STREPH. Oh, Phyllis, Phyllis! To be taken from you just as I was on the point of making you my own! Oh, it's too much – it's too much!

IOL. (to STREPHON, *who is in tears*). My son in tears – and on his wedding day!

STREPH. My wedding day! Oh, mother, weep with me, for the Law has interposed between us, and the Lord Chancellor has separated us for ever!

IOL. The Lord Chancellor! (*Aside.*) Oh, if he did but know!

STREPH. (*overhearing her*). If he did but know what?

IOL. No matter! The Lord Chancellor has no power over you. Remember you are half a fairy. You can defy him – down to the waist.

STREPH. Yes, but from the waist downwards he can commit me to prison for years! Of what avail is it that my body is free, if my legs are working out seven years' penal servitude?

IOL. True. But take heart – our Queen has promised you her special protection. I'll go to her and lay your peculiar case before her.

STREPH. My beloved mother! How can I repay the debt I owe you?

FINALE – QUARTET.

(*As it commences, the Peers appear at the back, advancing unseen and on tiptoe. LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER lead PHYLLIS between them, who listens in horror to what she hears.*)

STREPH. (to IOLANTHE). When darkly looms the day,
And all is dull and grey,
To chase the gloom away,
On thee I'll call!

PHYL. (*speaking aside to LORD MOUNTARARAT*). What was that?

LORD MOUNT. (*aside to PHYLLIS*).

I think I heard him say,
That on a rainy day,
To while the time away,
On her he'd call!

CHORUS. We think we heard him say, etc.

(PHYLLIS *much agitated at her lover's supposed faithlessness.*)

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IOL. (*to STREPHON*). When tempests wreck thy bark,
And all is drear and dark,
If thou shouldst need an Ark,
I'll give thee one!

PHYL. (*speaking aside to LORD TOLLOLLER*). What was that?

LORD TOLL. (*aside to PHYLLIS*).
I heard the minx remark,
She'd meet him after dark,
Inside St James's Park,
And give him one!

CHORUS. We heard the minx remark, etc.

PHYL. The prospect's very bad.
My heart so sore and sad
Will never more be glad
As summer's sun.

PHYL., IOL., LORD TOLL., STREPH.
The prospect's very/not so bad,
My/Thy heart so sore and sad
May very soon be glad
As summer's sun;
For when the sky is dark
And tempests wreck his/thy/my bark,
If he should /thou shouldst/ I should need an Ark,
She'll /I'll give him/thee/ me one!

PHYL. (*revealing herself*). Ah!

(*IOLANTHE and STREPHON much confused.*)

PHYL. Oh, shameless one, tremble!
Nay, do not endeavour
Thy fault to dissemble,
We part – and for ever!

I worshipped him blindly,
He worships another –
STREPH. Attend to me kindly,
This lady's my mother!

TOLL. This lady's his *what*?

STREPH. This lady's my mother!

TENORS. This lady's his *what*?

BASSES. He says she's his mother!

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(They point derisively to IOLANTHE, laughing heartily at her. She goes for protection to STREPHON.)

(Enter LORD CHANCELLOR. IOLANTHE veils herself.)

LORD CH. What means this mirth unseemly,
That shakes the listening earth?

LORD TOLL. The joke is good extremely,
And justifies our mirth.

LORD MOUNT. This gentleman is seen,
With a maid of seventeen,
A-taking of his *dolce far niente*;
And wonders he'd achieve,
For he asks us to believe
She's his mother – and he's nearly five-and-twenty!

LORD CH. (*sternly*). Recollect yourself, I pray,
And be careful what you say –
As the ancient Romans said, *festina lente*.
For I really do not see
How so young a girl could be
The mother of a man of five-and-twenty.

ALL. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

STREPH. My Lord, of evidence I have no dearth –
She is – has been – my mother from my birth!

BALLAD.

In babyhood
Upon her lap I lay,
With infant food
She moistenèd my clay;
Had she withheld
The succour she supplied,
By hunger quelled,
Your Strephon might have died!

LORD CH. (*much moved*).
Had that refreshment been denied,
Indeed our Strephon might have died!

ALL (*much affected*).
Had that refreshment been denied,

Iolanthe

Indeed our Strephon might have died!

LORD MOUNT.

But as she's not
His mother, it appears,
Why weep these hot
Unnecessary tears?
And by what laws
Should we so joyously
Rejoice, because
Our Strephon did not die?
Oh rather let us pipe our eye
Because our Strephon did not die!

ALL.

That's very true – let's pipe our eye
Because our Strephon did not die!

(All weep. IOLANTHE, who has succeeded in hiding her face from LORD CHANCELLOR, escapes unnoticed.)

PHYL.

Go, traitorous one – for ever we must part:
To one of you, my Lords, I give my heart!

ALL.

Oh, rapture!

STREPH.

Hear me, Phyllis, ere you leave me.

PHYL.

Not a word – you did deceive me.

ALL.

Not a word – you did deceive her.

(Exit STREPHON.)

BALLAD – PHYLLIS.

For riches and rank I do not long –
Their pleasures are false and vain;
I gave up the love of a lordly throng
For the love of a simple swain.
But now that simple swain's untrue,
With sorrowful heart I turn to you –
A heart that's aching,
Quaking, breaking,
As sorrowful hearts are wont to do!

The riches and rank that you befall
Are the only baits you use,
So the richest and rankiest of you all
My sorrowful heart shall choose.
As none are so noble – none so rich
As this couple of lords, I'll find a niche
In my heart that's aching,
Quaking, breaking,

Iolanthe

For one of you two-and I don't care which!

ENSEMBLE.

PHYL. (*to LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER.*)

To you I give my heart so rich!

ALL (*puzzled.*) To which?

PHYL. I do not care!

To you I yield – it is my doom!

ALL. To whom?

PHYL. I'm not aware!

I'm yours for life if you but choose.

ALL. She's whose?

PHYL. That's your affair!

I'll be a countess, shall I not?

ALL. Of what?

PHYL. I do not care!

ALL. Lucky little lady!

Strephon's lot is shady;

Rank, it seems, is vital,

“Countess” is the title,

But of what I'm not aware!

(*Enter STREPHON.*)

STREPH. Can I inactive see my fortune fade?

No, no!

PEERS. Ho, ho!

STREPH. Mighty protectress, hasten to my aid!

(*Enter Fairies, tripping, headed by CELIA, LEILA, and FLETA, and followed by QUEEN.*)

CHORUS OF FAIRIES

Tripping hither, tripping thither.

Nobody knows why or whither;

Why you want us we don't know,

But you've summoned us, and so

Enter all the little fairies

To their usual tripping measure!

To oblige you all our care is –

Tell us, pray, what is your pleasure!

STREPH. The lady of my love has caught me talking to another –

PEERS. Oh, fie! Young Strephon is a rogue!

STREPH. I tell her very plainly that the lady is my mother –

Iolanthe

- PEERS.** Taradiddle, taradiddle, tol lol lay!
STREPH. She won't believe my statement, and declares we must be parted,
Because on a career of double-dealing I have started,
Then gives her hand to one of these, and leaves me broken-hearted –
PEERS. Taradiddle, taradiddle, tol lol lay!
- QUEEN.** Ah, cruel ones, to separate two lovers from each other!²
FAIRIES. Oh, fie! Our Strephon's not a rogue!
QUEEN. You've done him an injustice, for the lady *is* his mother!
FAIRIES. Taradiddle, taradiddle, tol lol lay!
LORD CH. That fable perhaps may serve his turn as well as any other.
(*Aside.*) I didn't see her face, but if they fondled one another,
And she's but seventeen – I don't believe it was his mother!
Taradiddle, taradiddle.
FAIRIES. Tol lol lay!
- LORD TOLL.** I have often had a use
For a thorough-bred excuse
Of a sudden (which is English for “*repentè*”),
But of all I ever heard
This is much the most absurd,
For she's seventeen, and he is five-and-twenty!
- ALL.** Though she is seventeen, and he is four or five-and-twenty!³
Oh, fie! Our Strephon is a rogue!
- LORD MOUNT.** Now, listen, pray to me,
For this paradox will be
Carried, nobody at all *contradicente*.
Her age, upon the date
Of his birth, was *minus* eight,
If she's seventeen, and he is five-and-twenty!
- PEERS and FAIRIES.** If she is seventeen, and he is only five-and-twenty.
- ALL.** To say she is his mother is an utter bit of folly!
Oh, fie! Our Strephon is a rogue!
Perhaps his brain is addled, and it's very melancholy!
Taradiddle, taradiddle, tol lol lay!
I wouldn't say a word that could be reckoned as injurious,
But to find a mother younger than her son is very curious,

² “Ah, cruel ones, to part two faithful lovers from each other!” in *Original Plays* and first edition of the vocal score.

³ This line is modified in later editions of both libretto and score to read: “he is only five-and-twenty”

Iolanthe

And that's a kind of mother that is usually spurious.
Taradiddle, taradiddle, tol lol lay!

LORD CH.

Go away, madam;
I should say, madam,
You display, madam,
Shocking taste.

It is rude, madam,
To intrude, madam,
With your brood, madam,
Brazen-faced!

You come here, madam,
Interfere, madam,
With a peer, madam.
(I am one.)

You're aware, madam,
What you dare, madam,
So take care, madam,
And be gone!

ENSEMBLE

FAIRIES (*to* **QUEEN**).

Let us stay, madam;
I should say, madam,
They display, madam,
Shocking taste.

It is rude, madam,
To allude, madam,
To your brood, madam,
Brazen-faced!

We don't fear, madam,
Any peer, madam,
Though, my dear madam,
This is one.

They will stare, madam,
When aware, madam,
What they dare, madam –
What they've done!

QUEEN (*furious*).

Bearded by these puny mortals!
I will launch from fairy portals

Iolanthe

All the most terrific thunders
In my armoury of wonders!

PHYL. (*aside*). Should they launch terrific wonders,
All would then repent their blunders.
Surely these must be immortals.

ENSEMBLE.

PEERS.
Go away, madam, etc.

FAIRIES.
Let us stay, madam, etc.

(*Exit PHYLLIS.*)

QUEEN. Oh! Chancellor unwary
It's highly necessary
 Your tongue to teach
 Respectful speech –
Your attitude to vary!

Your badinage so airy,
Your manner arbitrary,
 Are out of place
 When face to face
With an influential Fairy.

ALL THE PEERS
 (*aside*). We never knew
We were talking to
 An influential Fairy!

LORD CH. A plague on this vagary,
I'm in a nice quandary!
 Of hasty tone
 With dames unknown
I ought to be more chary;

It seems that she's a fairy
From Andersen's library,
 And I took her for
 The proprietor
Of a Ladies' Seminary!

PEERS. We took her for
The proprietor
 Of a Ladies' Seminary!

QUEEN. When next your Houses do assemble,
 You may tremble!

Iolanthe

- CELIA.** Our wrath, when gentlemen offend us,
Is tremendous!
- LEILA.** They meet, who underrate our calling,
Doom appalling!
- QUEEN.** Take down our sentence as we speak it,
And *he* shall wreak it! (*Indicating STREPHON.*)
- PEERS.** Oh, spare us!
- QUEEN.** Henceforth, Strephon, cast away
Crooks and pipes and ribbons so gay –
Flocks and herds that bleat and low;
Into Parliament you shall go!
- ALL.** Into Parliament he shall go!
Backed by our supreme authority,
He'll command a large majority!
Into Parliament he shall go!
- QUEEN.** In the Parliamentary hive,
Liberal or Conservative –
Whig or Tory – I don't know –
But into Parliament you shall go!
- ALL.** Into Parliament, etc.
- QUEEN** (*speaking through music*).
- Every bill and every measure
That may gratify his pleasure,
Though your fury it arouses,
Shall be passed by both your Houses!
- PEERS.** Oh!
- QUEEN.** You shall sit, if he sees reason,
Through the grouse and salmon season;
- PEERS.** No!
- QUEEN.** He shall end the cherished rights
You enjoy on Friday nights:
- PEERS.** No!

Iolanthe

QUEEN. He shall prick that annual blister,
Marriage with deceased wife's sister:

PEERS. Mercy!

QUEEN. Titles shall ennoble, then,
All the Common Councilmen:

PEERS. Spare us!

QUEEN. Peers shall teem in Christendom,
And a Duke's exalted station
Be attainable by Com-
Petitive Examination!

PEERS. Oh, horror!

FAIRIES and PHYLLIS. Their horror
They can't dissemble
Nor hide the fear that makes them tremble!

ENSEMBLE.

PEERS

Young Strephon is the kind of lout
We do not care a fig about!
We cannot say
What evils may
Result in consequence.

But lordly vengeance will pursue
All kinds of common people who
Oppose our views,
Or boldly choose
To offer us offence.

FAIRIES, PHYLLIS, and STREPHON.

With Strephon for your foe, no doubt,
A fearful prospect opens out,
And who shall say
What evils may
Result in consequence?

A hideous vengeance will pursue
All noblemen who venture to
Oppose his views,
Or boldly choose
To offer him offence.

FAIRIES. 'Twill plunge them into grief and shame;
His kind forbearance they must claim,
If they'd escape
In any shape
A very painful wrench!

PEERS. Your powers we dauntlessly pooh-pooh:
A dire revenge will fall on you.
If you besiege

Iolanthe

Our high *prestige* –

FAIRIES. (The word “*prestige*” is French).

ENSEMBLE.

PEERS.

Your powers we dauntlessly pooh-pooh:
A dire revenge will fall on you.
Young Strephon is the kind of lout
We do not care a fig about!
 We cannot say
 What evils may
Result in consequence.

FAIRIES and QUEEN.

Although our threats you now pooh-pooh,
A dire revenge will fall on you.
With Strephon for your foe, no doubt
A fearful prospect opens out,
 And who shall say
 What evils may
Result in consequence?

PEERS.

Our lordly style
 You shall not quench
With base *canaille*!
 (That word is French.)

FAIRIES.
PEERS.

Distinction ebbs
 Before a herd
Of vulgar *plebs*!

FAIRIES.
PEERS.

 (A Latin word.)
'Twould fill with joy,
 And madness stark
The *οί πολλοί*!

FAIRIES.

 (A Greek remark.)

PEERS.

One Latin word, one Greek remark,
 And one that's French.

FAIRIES.

Your lordly style
 We'll quickly quench
With base *canaille*!
 (That word is French.)

PEERS.
FAIRIES.

Distinction ebbs
 Before a herd
Of vulgar *plebs*!

PEERS.
FAIRIES.

 (A Latin word.)
'Twill fill with joy
 And madness stark
The *οί πολλοί*!

PEERS.

 (A Greek remark.)

FAIRIES.

One Latin word, one Greek remark,
 And one that's French.

Iolanthe

PEERS.

You needn't wait:
Away you fly!
Your threatened hate
We won't defy!

FAIRIES.

We will not wait:
We go sky-high!
Our threatened hate
You won't defy!

(Fairies threaten Peers with their wands. Peers kneel as begging for mercy. PHYLLIS implores STREPHON to relent. He casts her from him, and she falls fainting into the arms of LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER.)

END OF ACT I

Iolanthe

ACT II

SCENE. – *Palace Yard, Westminster. Westminster Hall, L. Clock tower up, R.C. PRIVATE WILLIS discovered on sentry, R. Moonlight.*

SONG – PRIVATE WILLIS.

When all night long a chap remains
On sentry-go, to chase monotony
He exercises of his brains,
That is, assuming that he's got any.
Though never nurtured in the lap
Of luxury, yet I admonish you,
I am an intellectual chap,
And think of things that would astonish you.
I often think it's comical – Fal, lal, la!
How Nature always does contrive – Fal, lal, la!
That every boy and every gal
That's born into the world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative!
Fal, lal, la!

When in that House M.P.'s divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,
They've got to leave that brain outside,
And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to.
But then the prospect of a lot
Of dull M. P.'s in close proximity,
All thinking for themselves, is what
No man can face with equanimity.
Then let's rejoice with loud Fal la – Fal la la!
That Nature always does contrive – Fal lal la!
That every boy and every gal
That's born into the world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative!
Fal lal la!

(Enter Fairies, with CELIA, LEILA, and FLETA. They trip round stage.)

CHORUS OF FAIRIES.

Strephon's a Member of Parliament!
Carries every Bill he chooses.
To his measures all assent –
Showing that fairies have their uses.

Iolanthe

Whigs and Tories
Dim their glories,
Giving an ear to all his stories –
Lords and Commons are both in the blues!
Strephon makes them shake in their shoes!
Shake in their shoes!
Shake in their shoes!
Strephon makes them shake in their shoes!

(Enter Peers from Westminster Hall.)

CHORUS OF PEERS.

Strephon's a Member of Parliament!
Running a-muck of all abuses.
His unqualified assent
Somehow nobody now refuses.
Whigs and Tories
Dim their glories,
Giving an ear to all his stories
Carrying every Bill he may wish:
Here's a pretty kettle of fish!
Kettle of fish!
Kettle of fish!
Here's a pretty kettle of fish!

(Enter LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER from Westminster Hall.)

CELIA. You seem annoyed.

LORD MOUNT. Annoyed! I should think so! Why, this ridiculous *protégé* of yours is playing the deuce with everything! To-night is the second reading of his Bill to throw the Peerage open to Competitive Examination!

LORD TOLL. And he'll carry it, too!

LORD MOUNT. Carry it? Of course he will! He's a Parliamentary Pickford – he carries everything!

LEILA. Yes. If you please, that's our fault!

LORD MOUNT. The deuce it is!

CELIA. Yes; we influence the members, and compel them to vote just as he wishes them to.

LEILA. It's our system. It shortens the debates.

LORD TOLL. Well, but think what it all means. I don't so much mind for myself, but with a House of Peers with no grandfathers worth mentioning, the country must go to the dogs!

LEILA. I suppose it must!

LORD MOUNT. I don't want to say a word against brains – I've a great respect for brains – I often wish I had some myself – but with a House of Peers composed exclusively of people of intellect, what's to become of the House of Commons?

LEILA. I never thought of that!

Iolanthe

LORD MOUNT. This comes of women interfering in politics. It so happens that if there is an institution in Great Britain which is not susceptible of any improvement at all, it is the House of Peers!

SONG – LORD MOUNTARARAT.

When Britain really ruled the waves –
 (In good Queen Bess's time)
The House of Peers made no pretence
To intellectual eminence,
 Or scholarship sublime;
Yet Britain won her proudest bays
In good Queen Bess's glorious days!

CHORUS. Yes, Britain won, etc.

When Wellington thrashed Bonaparte,
 As every child can tell,
The House of Peers, throughout the war,
Did nothing in particular,
 And did it very well:
Yet Britain set the world ablaze
In good King George's glorious days!

CHORUS. Yes, Britain set, etc.

And while the House of Peers withholds
 Its legislative hand,
And noble statesmen do not itch
To interfere with matters which
 They do not understand,
As bright will shine Great Britain's rays
 As in King George's glorious days!

CHORUS. As bright will shine, etc.

LEILA. (*who has been much attracted by the Peers during this song*). Charming persons, are they not?

CELIA. Distinctly. For self-contained dignity, combined with airy condescension, give me a British Representative Peer!

LORD TOLL. Then pray stop this *protégé* of yours before it's too late. Think of the mischief you're doing!

LEILA (*crying*). But we *can't* stop him now. (*Aside to CELIA.*) Aren't they lovely! (*Aloud.*) Oh, why did you go and defy us, you great geese!

DUET – LEILA and CELIA.

LEILA. In vain to us you plead –
 Don't go!

Iolanthe

Your prayers we do not heed –
 Don't go!
 It's true we sigh,
 But don't suppose
 A tearful eye
 Forgiveness shows.
 Oh, no!
We're very cross indeed –
 Yes, very cross,
 Don't go!

FAIRIES. It's true we sigh, etc.

CELIA. Your disrespectful sneers –
 Don't go!
 Call forth indignant tears –
 Don't go!
 You break our laws –
 You are our foe:
 We cry because
 We hate you so!
 You know!
 You very wicked Peers!
 You wicked Peers!
 Don't go!

FAIRIES. You break our laws, etc.

LORDS MOUNT. and TOLL.

 Our disrespectful sneers,
 Ha, ha!
 Call forth indignant tears,
 Ha, ha!
 If that's the case, my dears –

FAIRIES. Don't go!
PEERS. We'll go!

(Exeunt LORD MOUNTARARAT, LORD TOLLOLLER, and Peers. Fairies gaze wistfully after them.)

(Enter FAIRY QUEEN.)

QUEEN. Oh, shame – shame upon you! Is this your fidelity to the laws you are bound to obey? Know ye not that it is death to marry a mortal?

LEILA. Yes, but it's not death to *wish* to marry a mortal!

FLETA. If it were, you'd have to execute us all!

QUEEN. Oh, this is weakness! Subdue it!

CELIA. We know it's weakness, but the weakness is so strong!

LEILA. We are not all as tough as you are!

Iolanthe

QUEEN. Tough! Do you suppose that I am insensible to the effect of manly beauty? Look at that man! (*Referring to Sentry.*) A perfect picture! (*To Sentry.*) Who are you, sir?

WILLIS (*coming to "attention"*). Private Willis, B Company, 1st Grenadier Guards.

QUEEN. You're a very fine fellow, sir.

WILLIS. I am generally admired.

QUEEN. I can quite understand it. (*To Fairies.*) Now here is a man whose physical attributes are simply godlike. That man has a most extraordinary effect upon me. If I yielded to a natural impulse, I should fall down and worship that man. But I mortify this inclination; I wrestle with it, and it lies beneath my feet! That is how I treat my regard for that man!

SONG – FAIRY QUEEN.

Oh, foolish fay,
Think you, because
His brave array
My bosom thaws,
I'd disobey
Our fairy laws?
Because I fly
In realms above,
In tendency
To fall in love,
Resemble I
The amorous dove?
Oh, amorous dove!
Type of Ovidius Naso!
This heart of mine
Is soft as thine,
Although I dare not say so!

(*Aside.*)

CHORUS.

Oh, amorous dove, etc.

On fire that glows
With heat intense
I turn the hose
Of common sense,
And out it goes
At small expense!
We must maintain
Our fairy law;
That is the main
On which to draw –
In that we gain
A Captain Shaw!
Oh, Captain Shaw!
Type of true love kept under!
Could thy Brigade
With cold cascade
Quench my great love, I wonder!

(*Aside.*)

Iolanthe

CHORUS. Oh, Captain Shaw! etc.

(Exeunt Fairies and FAIRY QUEEN, sorrowfully.)

(Enter PHYLLIS.)

PHYL. *(half crying).* I can't think why I'm not in better spirits. I'm engaged to two noblemen at once. That ought to be enough to make any girl happy. But I'm miserable! Don't suppose it's because I care for Strephon, for I hate him! No girl *could* care for a man who goes about with a mother considerably younger than himself!

(Enter LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER.)

LORD MOUNT. Phyllis! My darling!

LORD TOLL. Phyllis! My own!

PHYL. Don't! How dare you? Oh, but perhaps you're the two noblemen I'm engaged to?

LORD MOUNT. I am one of them.

LORD TOLL. I am the other.

PHYL. Oh, then, my darling! *(to LORD MOUNTARARAT).* My own! *(to LORD TOLLOLLER).* Well, have you settled which it's to be?

LORD TOLL. Not altogether. It's a difficult position. It would be hardly delicate to toss up. On the whole we would rather leave it to you.

PHYL. How can it possibly concern me? You are both Earls, and you are both rich, and you are both plain.

LORD MOUNT. So we are. At least I am.

LORD TOLL. So am I.

LORD MOUNT. No, no!

LORD TOLL. I am indeed. Very plain.

LORD MOUNT. Well, well – perhaps you are.

PHYL. There's really nothing to choose between you. If one of you would forgo his title, and distribute his estates among his Irish tenantry, why, then, I should then see a reason for accepting the other.

LORD MOUNT. Tolloller, are you prepared to make this sacrifice?

LORD TOLL. No!

LORD MOUNT. Not even to oblige a lady?

LORD TOLL. No! Not even to oblige a lady.

LORD MOUNT. Then, the only question is, which of us shall give way to the other? Perhaps, on the whole, she would be happier with me. I don't know. I may be wrong.

LORD TOLL. No. I don't know that you are. I really believe she would. But the awkward part of the thing is that if you rob me of the girl of my heart, we must fight, and one of us must die. It's a family tradition that I have sworn to respect. It's a painful position, for I have a very strong regard for you, George.

LORD MOUNT. *(much affected).* My dear Thomas!

LORD TOLL. You are very dear to me, George. We were boys together – at least *I* was. If I were to survive you, my existence would be hopelessly embittered.

LORD MOUNT. Then, my dear Thomas, you must not do it. I say it again and again – if it will have this effect upon you, you must not do it. No, no. If one of us is to destroy the other, let it be me!

LORD TOLL. No, no!

LORD MOUNT. Ah, yes! – by our boyish friendship I implore you!

LORD TOLL. (*much moved*). Well, well, be it so. But, no – no! – I cannot consent to an act which would crush you with unavailing remorse.

LORD MOUNT. But it would not do so. I should be very sad at first – oh, who would not be? – but it would wear off. I like you *very much* – but not, perhaps, as much as you like me.

LORD TOLL. George, you're a noble fellow, but that tell-tale tear betrays you. No, George; you are very fond of me, and I cannot consent to give you a week's uneasiness on my account.

LORD MOUNT. But, dear Thomas, it would not last a week! Remember, you lead the House of Lords! On your demise I shall take your place! Oh, Thomas, it would not last a day!

PHYL. (*coming down*). Now, I do hope you're not going to fight about me, because it's really not worth while.

LORD TOLL. (*looking at her*). Well, I don't believe it is!

LORD MOUNT. Nor I. The sacred ties of Friendship are paramount.

**QUARTET – LORD MOUNTARARAT,
LORD TOLLOLLER, PHYLLIS, and PRIVATE WILLIS.**

LORD TOLL. Though p'r'aps I may incur your blame,
 The things are few
 I would not do
 In Friendship's name!

LORD MOUNT. And I may say I think the same;
 Not even love
 Should rank above
 True Friendship's name!

PHYL. Then free me, pray; be mine the blame;
 Forget your craze
 And go your ways
 In Friendship's name!

ALL. Oh, many a man, in Friendship's name,
 Has yielded fortune, rank, and fame!
 But no one yet, in the world so wide,
 Has yielded up a promised bride!

WILLIS. Accept, O Friendship, all the same,

ALL. This sacrifice to thy dear name!

(*Exeunt LORD MOUNTARARAT and LORD TOLLOLLER, lovingly, in one direction, and PHYLLIS in another. Exit Sentry.*)

Iolanthe

(Enter LORD CHANCELLOR, *very miserable*.)

RECITATIVE – LORD CHANCELLOR.

Love, unrequited, robs me of my rest:
Love, hopeless love, my ardent soul encumbers:
Love, nightmare-like, lies heavy on my chest,
And weaves itself into my midnight slumbers!

SONG – LORD CHANCELLOR.

When you're lying awake with a dismal headache, and repose is taboo'd by anxiety,
I conceive you may use any language you choose to indulge in, without impropriety;
For your brain is on fire – the bedclothes conspire of usual slumber to plunder you:
First your counterpane goes, and uncovers your toes, and your sheet slips demurely from under
you;
Then the blanketing tickles – you feel like mixed pickles – so terribly sharp is the pricking,
And you're hot, and you're cross, and you tumble and toss till there's nothing 'twixt you and the
ticking.
Then the bedclothes all creep to the ground in a heap, and you pick 'em all up in a tangle;
Next your pillow resigns and politely declines to remain at its usual angle!
Well, you get some repose in the form of a doze, with hot eye-balls and head ever aching.
But your slumbering teems with such horrible dreams that you'd very much better be waking;
For you dream you are crossing the Channel, and tossing about in a steamer from Harwich –
Which is something between a large bathing machine and a very small second-class carriage –
And you're giving a treat (penny ice and cold meat) to a party of friends and relations –
They're a ravenous horde – and they all came on board at Sloane Square and South Kensington
Stations.
And bound on that journey you find your attorney (who started that morning from Devon);
He's a bit undersized, and you don't feel surprised when he tells you he's only eleven.
Well, you're driving like mad with this singular lad (by the by, the ship's now a four-wheeler),
And you're playing round games, and he calls you bad names when you tell him that "ties pay
the dealer";
But this you can't stand, so you throw up your hand, and you find you're as cold as an icicle,
In your shirt and your socks (the black silk with gold clocks), crossing Salisbury Plain on a
bicycle:
And he and the crew are on bicycles too – which they've somehow or other invested in –
And he's telling the tars all the *particulars* of a company he's interested in –
It's a scheme of devices, to get at low prices all goods from cough mixtures to cables
(Which tickled the sailors), by treating retailers as though they were all *vegetables* –
You get a good spadesman to plant a small tradesman (first take off his boots with a boot-tree),
And his legs will take root, and his fingers will shoot, and they'll blossom and bud like a
fruit-tree –
From the greengrocer tree you get grapes and green pea, cauliflower, pineapple, and cranberries,
While the pastrycook plant cherry brandy will grant, apple puffs, and three corners, and
Banburys –
The shares are a penny, and ever so many are taken by Rothschild and Baring,
And just as a few are allotted to you, you awake with a shudder despairing –

Iolanthe

You're a regular wreck, with a crick in your neck, and no wonder you snore, for your head's on the floor, and you've needles and pins from your soles to your shins, and your flesh is a-creep, for your left leg's asleep, and you've cramp in your toes, and a fly on your nose, and some fluff in your lung, and a feverish tongue, and a thirst that's intense, and a general sense that you haven't been sleeping in clover;
But the darkness has passed, and it's daylight at last, and the night has been long – ditto, ditto my song – and thank goodness they're both of them over!

(LORD CHANCELLOR *falls exhausted on a seat.*)

(*Enter LORDS MOUNTARARAT and TOLLOLLER.*)

LORD MOUNT. I am much distressed to see your Lordship in this condition.

LORD CH. Ah, my Lords, it is seldom that a Lord Chancellor has reason to envy the position of another, but I am free to confess that I would rather be two Earls engaged to Phyllis than any other half-dozen noblemen upon the face of the globe.

LORD TOLL. (*without enthusiasm*). Yes. It's an enviable position when you're the only one.

LORD MOUNT. Oh yes, no doubt – most enviable. At the same time, seeing you thus, we naturally say to ourselves, "This is very sad. His Lordship is constitutionally as blithe as a bird – he trills upon the bench like a thing of song and gladness. His series of judgements in F sharp minor, given *andante* in six-eight time, are among the most remarkable effects ever produced in a Court of Chancery. He is, perhaps, the only living instance of a judge whose decrees have received the honour of a double *encore*. How can we bring ourselves to do that which will deprive the Court of Chancery of one of its most attractive features?"

LORD CH. I feel the force of your remarks, but I am here in two capacities, and they clash, my Lords, they clash! I deeply grieve to say that in declining to entertain my last application to myself, I presumed to address myself in terms which render it impossible for me ever to apply to myself again. It was a most painful scene, my Lords – most painful!

LORD TOLL. This is what it is to have two capacities! Let us be thankful that we are persons of no capacity whatever.

LORD MOUNT. Come, come. Remember you are a very just and kindly old gentleman, and you need have no hesitation in approaching yourself, so that you do so respectfully and with a proper show of deference.

LORD CH. Do you really think so?

LORD MOUNT. I do.

LORD CH. Well, I will nerve myself to another effort, and, if that fails, I resign myself to my fate!

TRIO – LORD CHANCELLOR, LORDS MOUNTARARAT and TOLLOLLER.

LORD MOUNT. If you go in
 You're sure to win –
 Yours will be the charming maidie:
 Be your law
 The ancient saw,
 "Faint heart never won fair lady!"

ALL. Never, never, never,

Iolanthe

“Faint heart never won fair lady!”
Every journey has an end –
When at the worst affairs will mend –
Dark the dawn when day is nigh –
Hustle your horse and don’t say die!

LORD TOLL. He who shies
At such a prize
Is not worth a maravedi,
Be so kind
To bear in mind –
“Faint heart never won fair lady!”

ALL. Never, never, never,
“Faint heart never won fair lady!”
While the sun shines make your hay –
Where a will is, there’s a way –
Beard the lion in his lair –
None but the brave deserve the fair!

LORD CH. I’ll take heart
And make a start –
Though I fear the prospect’s shady –
Much I’d spend
To gain my end –
“Faint heart never won fair lady!”

ALL. Never, never, never,
“Faint heart never won fair lady!”
Nothing venture, nothing win –
Blood is thick, but water’s thin –
In for a penny, in for a pound –
It’s Love that makes the world go round!

(Dance, and exeunt arm-in-arm together.)

*(Enter STREPHON, in very low spirits.)*⁴

STREPH. I suppose one ought to enjoy oneself in Parliament, when one leads both Parties, as I do! But I’m miserable, poor, broken-hearted fool that I am! Oh Phyllis, Phyllis! –

(Enter PHYLLIS.)

PHYL. Yes.

STREPH. *(surprised).* Phyllis! But I suppose I should say “My Lady.” I have not yet been informed which title your ladyship has pleased to select?

PHYL. I – I haven’t quite decided. You see, I have no *mother* to advise *me*!

STREPH. No. I have.

⁴ On the first night, Strephon had a song at this point. See the Appendix.

Iolanthe

PHYL. Yes; a *young* mother.
STREPH. Not very – a couple of centuries or so.
PHYL. Oh! She wears well.
STREPH. She does. She's a fairy.
PHYL. I beg your pardon – a what?
STREPH. Oh, I've no longer any reason to conceal the fact – she's a fairy.
PHYL. A fairy! Well, but – that would account for a good many things! Then – I suppose *you're* a fairy?
STREPH. I'm half a fairy.
PHYL. Which half?
STREPH. The upper half – down to the waistcoat.
PHYL. Dear me! (*Prodding him with her fingers.*) There is nothing to show it!
STREPH. Don't do that.
PHYL. But why didn't you tell me this before?
STREPH. I thought you would take a dislike to me. But as it's all off, you may as well know the truth – I'm only half a mortal!
PHYL. (*crying*). But I'd rather have half a mortal I do love, than half a dozen I don't!
STREPH. Oh, I think not – go to your half-dozen.
PHYL. (*crying*). It's only two! and I hate 'em! Please forgive me!
STREPH. I don't think I ought to. Besides, all sorts of difficulties will arise. You know, my grandmother looks quite as young as my mother. So do all my aunts.
PHYL. I quite understand. Whenever I see you kissing a very young lady, I shall know it's an elderly relative.
STREPH. You will? Then, Phyllis, I think we shall be very happy! (*Embracing her.*)
PHYL. We won't wait long.
STREPH. No. We might change our minds. We'll get married first.
PHYL. And change our minds afterwards?
STREPH. That's the usual course.

DUET – STREPHON and PHYLLIS.

STREPH.

If we're weak enough to tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I,
Of the feeling I inspire
You may tire
By and by.
For peers with flowing coffers
Press their offers –
That is why
I am sure we should not tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I!

PHYL.

If we're weak enough to tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I,
With a more attractive maiden,

Iolanthe

Jewel-laden,
You may fly.
If by chance we should be parted,
Broken-hearted
I should die –
So I think we will not tarry
Ere we marry,
You and I.

PHYL. But does your mother know you're – I mean, is she aware of our engagement?

(Enter IOLANTHE.)

IOL. She is; and thus she welcomes her daughter-in-law! *(Kisses her.)*

PHYL. She kisses just like other people! But the Lord Chancellor?

STREPH. I forgot him! Mother, none can resist your fairy eloquence; you will go to him and plead for us?

IOL. *(much agitated)*. No, no; impossible!

STREPH. But our happiness – our very lives – depend upon our obtaining his consent!

PHYL. Oh, madam, you cannot refuse to do this!

IOL. You know not what you ask! The Lord Chancellor is – my husband!

STREPH. and PHYL. Your husband!

IOL. My husband and your father! *(Addressing STREPHON, who is much moved.)*

PHYLL. Then our course is plain; on his learning that Strephon is his son, all objection to our marriage will be at once removed!

IOL. No; he must never know! He believes me to have died childless, and, dearly as I love him, I am bound, under penalty of death, not to undeceive him. But see – he comes! Quick – my veil!

(IOLANTHE veils herself. STREPHON and PHYLLIS go off on tiptoe.)

(Enter LORD CHANCELLOR.)

LORD CH. Victory! Victory! Success has crowned my efforts, and I may consider myself engaged to Phyllis! At first I wouldn't hear of it – it was out of the question. But I took heart. I pointed out to myself that I was no stranger to myself; that, in point of fact, I had been personally acquainted with myself for some years. This had its effect. I admitted that I had watched my professional advancement with considerable interest, and I handsomely added that I yielded to no one in admiration for my private and professional virtues. This was a great point gained. I then endeavoured to work upon my feelings. Conceive my joy when I distinctly perceived a tear glistening in my own eye! Eventually, after a severe struggle with myself, I reluctantly – most reluctantly – consented.

(IOLANTHE comes down veiled.)

RECITATIVE – IOLANTHE *(kneeling)*.

My lord, a suppliant at your feet I kneel,
Oh, listen to a mother's fond appeal!

Iolanthe

Hear me to-night! I come in urgent need –
'Tis for my son, young Strephon, that I plead!

BALLAD – IOLANTHE.

He loves! If in the bygone years
Thine eyes have ever shed
Tears – bitter, unavailing tears,
For one untimely dead –
If, in the eventide of life,
Sad thoughts of her arise,
Then let the memory of thy wife
Plead for my boy – he dies!

He dies! If fondly laid aside
In some old cabinet,
Memorials of thy long-dead bride
Lie, dearly treasured yet,
Then let her hallowed bridal dress –
Her little dainty gloves –
Her withered flowers – her faded tress –
Plead for my boy – he loves!

(The LORD CHANCELLOR is moved by this appeal. After a pause.)

LORD CH. It may not be – for so the fates decide!
Learn thou that Phyllis is my promised bride.

IOL. *(in horror).* Thy bride! No! No!

LORD CH. It shall be so!
Those who would separate us woe betide!

IOL. My doom thy lips have spoken –
I plead in vain!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES *(without).* Forbear! Forbear!

IOL. A vow already broken
I break again!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES *(without).* Forbear! Forbear!

IOL. For him – for her – for thee
I yield my life.
Behold – it may not be!
I am thy wife.

CHORUS OF FAIRIES *(without).* Aiaiah! Aiaiah! Willaloo!

LORD CH. *(recognizing her).* Iolanthe! thou livest?

Iolanthe

IOL. Aye!
I live! Now let me die!

(Enter FAIRY QUEEN and Fairies. IOLANTHE kneels to her.)

QUEEN. Once again thy vows are broken:
Thou thyself thy doom hast spoken!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES. Aiaiah! Aiaiah!
Willahalah! Willaloo!
Willahalah! Willaloo!

QUEEN. Bow thy head to Destiny:
Death thy doom, and thou shalt die!

CHORUS OF FAIRIES. Aiaiah! Aiaiah! etc.

(Peers and Sentry enter. The QUEEN raises her spear.)

LEILA. Hold! If Iolanthe must die, so must we all; for, as she has sinned, so have we!

QUEEN. What?

CELIA. We are all fairy duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, viscountesses, and baronesses.

LORD MOUNT. It's our fault. They couldn't help themselves.

QUEEN. It seems they *have* helped themselves, and pretty freely, too! *(After a pause.)* You have all incurred death; but I can't slaughter the whole company! And yet *(unfolding a scroll)* the law is clear – every fairy must die who marries a mortal!

LORD CH. Allow me, as an old Equity draftsman, to make a suggestion. The subtleties of the legal mind are equal to the emergency. The thing is really quite simple – the insertion of a single word will do it. Let it stand that every fairy shall die who doesn't marry a mortal, and there you are, out of your difficulty at once!

QUEEN. We like your humour. Very well! *(Altering the MS. in pencil.)* Private Willis!

SENTRY *(coming forward).* Ma'am!

QUEEN. To save my life, it is necessary that I marry at once. How should you like to be a fairy guardsman?

SENTRY. Well, ma'am, I don't think much of the British soldier who wouldn't inconvenience himself to save a female in distress.

QUEEN. You are a brave fellow. You're a fairy from this moment. *(Wings spring from Sentry's shoulders.)* And you, my Lords, how say you, will you join our ranks?

(Fairies kneel to Peers and implore them to do so.)

(PHYLLIS and STREPHON enter.)

LORD MOUNT. *(to LORD TOLLOLLER).* Well, now that the Peers are to be recruited entirely from persons of intelligence, I really don't see what use *we* are, down here, do you, Tolloller?

Iolanthe

LORD TOLL. None whatever.

QUEEN. Good! (*Wings spring from shoulders of Peers.*) Then away we go to Fairyland.

FINALE.

PHYL.

Soon as we may,
Off and away!
We'll commence our journey airy –
Happy are we –
As you can see,
Every one is now a fairy!

IOL., QUEEN, and PHYL.

Every, every, every,
Every one is now a fairy!
Though as a general rule we know
Two strings go to every bow,
Make up your minds that grief 'twill bring
If you've two beaux to every string.

ALL.

Though as a general rule, etc.

LORDCH.

Up in the sky,
Ever so high,
Pleasures come in endless series;
We will arrange
Happy exchange –
House of Peers for House of Peris!

LORD CH., LORDS TOL. & MOUNT.

Peris, Peris, Peris,
House of Peers for House of Peris!

Up in the air, sky-high, sky-high,
Free from Wards in Chancery,
I/He will be surely happier, for
I'm/He's such a susceptible Chancellor.

ALL.

Up in the air, etc.

CURTAIN

Appendix

RECIT. – STREPHON.

My bill has now been read a second time:
His ready vote no member now refuses;
In verity I wield a pow'r sublime,
And one that I can turn to mighty uses!
What joy to carry, in the very teeth
Of ministry, cross-bench and opposition,
Some rather urgent measures quite beneath
The ken of Patriot and Politician!

SONG

Fold your flapping wings,
Soaring legislature!
Stoop to little things,
Stoop to human nature!
Never need to roam,
Members patriotic,
Let's begin at home
Crime is no exotic!
Bitter is your bane
Terrible your trials,
Dingy Drury Lane!
Soapless Seven Dials!

Take a tipsy lout,
Gathered from the gutter.
Hustle him about,
Strap him to a shutter.
What am I but he,
Washed at hours stated,
Fed on filagree,
Clothed and educated?
He's a mark of scorn,
I might be another,
If I had been born
Of a tipsy mother.

Take a wretched thief,
Through the city sneaking.
Pocket handkerchief
Ever, ever seeking.
What is he but I
Robbed of all my chances,
Picking pockets by
Force of circumstances?

Iolanthe
I might be as bad,
 As unlucky, rather,
If I'd only had
 Fagin for a father!