

## **Iolanthe; or, The Peer and the Peri**

[Comic opera, in two acts; text by Gilbert. First produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, November 25, 1882.]

### PERSONAGES.

Lord Chancellor. Earl of Mountararat. Earl Tollaller. Private Willis, of the Grenadier Guards. Strephon, an Arcadian shepherd. Iolanthe, a fairy, Strephon's mother. Queen of the fairies. Celia, } Leila, } Fleta, }  
fairies. Phyllis, an Arcadian shepherdess and ward in Chancery.

[Dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts, barons, and fairies]

The scene is laid in Arcady and at Westminster; time, between 1700 and 1882.

The first act of "Iolanthe" opens in Arcady. Iolanthe, a fairy, having offended her Queen by marrying a mortal, has been banished for life; but in the opening scene, after twenty years of exile, she is pardoned. She tells the Queen of her marriage, and her son Strephon, half a fairy and half a shepherd, who is engaged to Phyllis, a shepherdess, and ward in Chancery. At this point Strephon enters, and informs his mother that the Lord Chancellor will not permit him to marry Phyllis, but he will do so in spite of him. He curses his fairyhood, but the Queen says she has a borough at her disposal, and will return him to Parliament as a Liberal-Conservative. In the next scene Strephon meets Phyllis and pleads against delay in marriage, since the Lord Chancellor himself may marry her, and many of the lords are attentive to her. Meanwhile the lords meet to decide which one of them shall have Phyllis, the Lord Chancellor waiving his claim, as it might lay his decision open to misconstruction. Phyllis is summoned before them, but is deaf to all entreaties, and declares she is in love with Strephon, who has just entered. The peers march out in a dignified manner, while the Lord Chancellor separates Phyllis and Strephon and

orders her away. He then refuses Strephon his suit, whereupon the latter invokes the aid of his fairy mother, who promises to lay the case before her Queen. In the finale the peers are seen leading Phyllis, who overhears something said by Strephon and Iolanthe which induces her to believe he is faithless, and she denounces him. He replies that Iolanthe is his mother, but cannot convince her. She charges him with deceit, and offers her hand to any one of the peers. He then appeals to the Queen, who threatens vengeance upon the peers and declares that Strephon shall go into Parliament. The peers beg her for mercy, and Phyllis implores Strephon to relent, but he casts her from him.

The second act opens at Westminster. Strephon is in Parliament and carrying things with a high hand. Phyllis is engaged to two of the lords and cannot decide between them, nor can they settle the matter satisfactorily. Whereupon the Lord Chancellor decides to press his own suit for her hand. Strephon finally proves his birth to Phyllis and explains away all her fears. Iolanthe then acknowledges that the Lord Chancellor is her husband and pleads with him in Strephon's behalf. When she makes this confession, she is condemned to death for breaking her fairy vow. Thereupon all the fairies confess that they have married peers. As it is impracticable to kill them all, the Queen hunts up a husband, and finds one in Private Willis, the sentry in the palace yard. All the husbands join the fairies, and thus matters are straightened out.

The music of "Iolanthe" is peculiarly refined and fanciful, and abounds in taking numbers. The best of these are Strephon's song, "Good Morrow"; the delightful duet between Strephon and Phyllis, "None shall part us from each other," one of the most felicitous of the composer's lighter compositions; the Lord Chancellor's song, "When I went to the Bar"; Strephon's charming ballad, "In Babyhood upon her Lap I lay"; Private Willis's song, "When all Night long a Chap remains"; the patter song of the Lord Chancellor, "When you're lying awake with a Dismal Headache"; the duet of Strephon and Phyllis, "If

we're weak enough to tarry"; and Iolanthe's pretty ballad, "He loves! if  
in the Bygone Years."