

Princess Ida; or, Castle Adamant

[Comic opera, in three acts; text by Gilbert. First produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, January 5, 1884.]

PERSONAGES.

King Hildebrand. Hilarion, his son. Cyril, } Florian, } Hilarion's friends. King Gama. Avac, } Guron, } Scynthus, } Gama's sons. Princess Ida, Gama's daughter. Lady Blanche, Professor of Abstract Science. Lady Psyche, Professor of Humanities. Melissa, Lady Blanche's daughter. Sacharissa, } Chloe, } Ada, } girl graduates.

[Soldiers, courtiers, girl graduates, "daughters of the plough," etc.]

The scene is laid at King Hildebrand's palace and Castle Adamant; time, the present.

"Princess Ida" is the least effective of the Sullivan operas. Its libretto is also the least effective of the Gilbert stories set to the former's music. At the time it was written the composer was depressed by a severe family affliction, and at the same time had met the misfortune of losing all his savings through the failure of those to whom he had intrusted them. It may have been also that the labored and heavy style of the story had something to do with the dry and somewhat forced style of the music, as well as its lack of the brightness and fancy which are so apparent in "Pinafore" and "Patience."

The first act opens at King Hildebrand's palace, where the courtiers are watching for the arrival of King Gama and his daughter, the Princess Ida, who has been promised in marriage to Hilarion, Hildebrand's son. When Gama finally comes, Ida is not with him, and he explains to the enraged Hildebrand that she is at Castle Adamant, one of his country houses, where she is president of a woman's university. Gama and his three sons, Avac, Guron, and Scynthus, are

seized and held as hostages for her appearance, and in the mean time Hilarion, and his two friends, Cyril and Florian, determine to go to Castle Adamant and see if they cannot make some impression upon the Princess.

The second act opens at Castle Adamant, and discloses the pupils of the university in discourse with Lady Psyche, the Professor of Humanities, and Lady Blanche, Professor of Abstract Science, who is ambitious to get control of the institution. Hilarion and his two friends scale the wall and get into the grounds, and finding some academic robes they disguise themselves as girls. They first meet the Princess and explain to her that they wish to enter the university, to which she gives her consent upon their subscription to the rules. They sign with enthusiasm, especially when they discover that there is one which requires them to give the fulness of their love to the hundred maidens of the university. Shortly afterwards they encounter Lady Psyche, who recognizes Florian as her brother. They tell their secret to her. Melissa, the daughter of Lady Blanche, overhears them, and is in raptures at her first sight of men. She discloses to her mother what she has discovered, but urges her not to speak of it, for if Hilarion is successful in his suit she (the Lady Blanche) may succeed to the presidency. At the luncheon, however, the Princess discovers she is entertaining three men and flees from the spot. In crossing a bridge she falls into the river, but is rescued by Hilarion. Her anger is not appeased by his gallantry, and she orders the arrest of the three. As they are marched off, there is a tumult outside. Hildebrand, with an armed force and with his four hostages, has arrived, and gives the Princess until the morrow afternoon to release Hilarion and become his bride.

The last act opens with the preparations of the Princess and her pupils to defend themselves, but one after the other their courage deserts them. Gama proposes that his three sons shall be pitted against Hilarion and his two friends, and if the latter are defeated the Princess shall be free. In the contest Gama's sons are defeated, whereupon the

Princess at once resigns and accepts Hilarion. The Lady Psyche falls to Cyril, and the delighted Melissa to Florian, and it is to be presumed the presidency of the Woman's College falls to Lady Blanche.

As has already been intimated, the music as a whole is labored, but there are some numbers that are fully up to the Sullivan standard; among them Hilarion's ballad, "Ida was a twelvemonth old"; Gama's characteristic song, "If you give me your Attention," and the trio of Gama's sons, "For a Month to dwell," in the first act: the Princess's long aria, "At this my Call"; Lady Blanche's song, "Come, Mighty Must"; Lady Psyche's sarcastic evolution song, "A Lady Fair of Lineage High"; Cyril's song, "Would you know the Kind of Maid"; and Hilarion's song, "Whom thou hast chained must wear his Chain," in the second act: and the Princess's song, "I built upon a Rock"; Gama's song, "Whene'er I spoke Sarcastic Joke"; the soldiers' chorus, "When Anger spreads his Wing"; and the finale, "With Joy abiding," in the third act.