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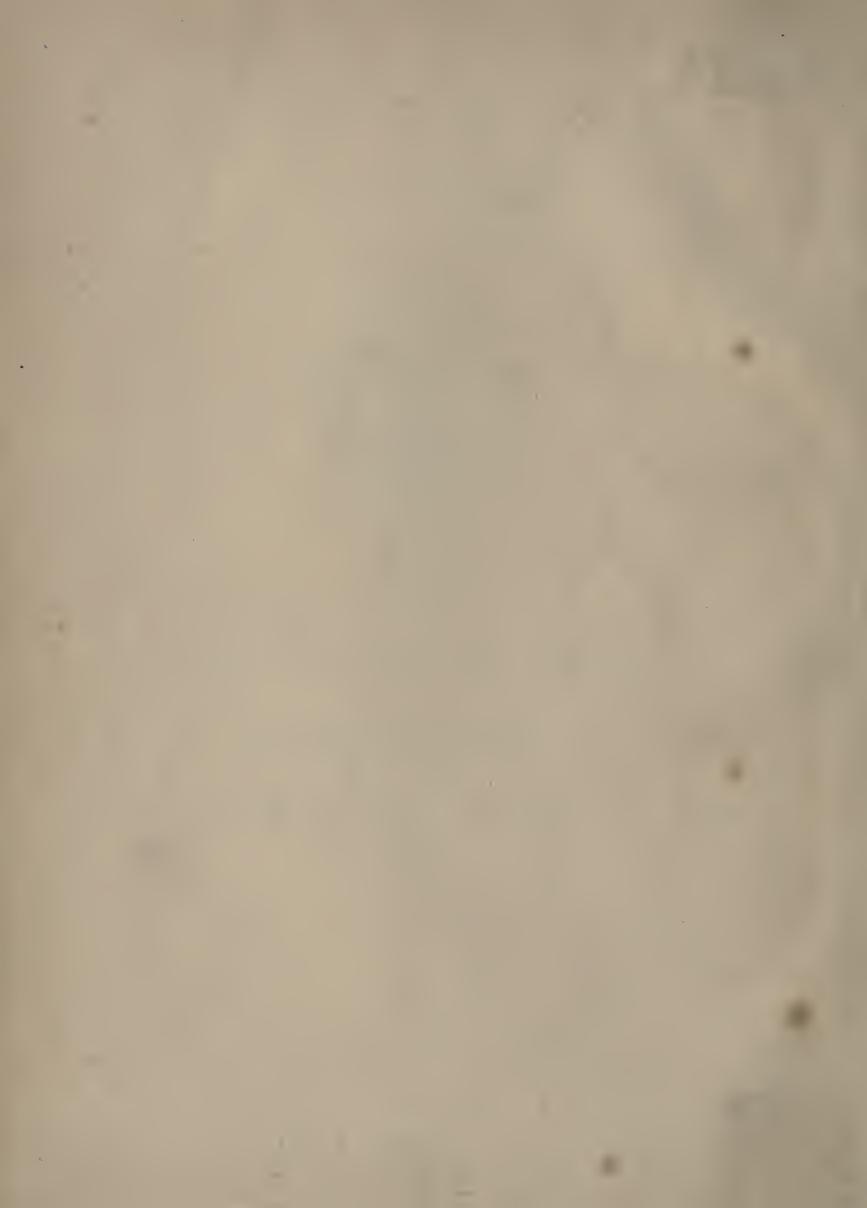
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KING RENÉ'S DAUGHTER.

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KING RENÉ'S DAUGHTER:

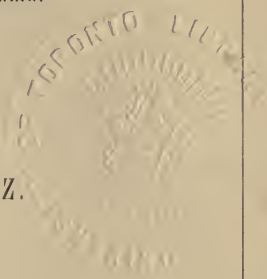
A Danish Lyrical Drama.

BY

HENRIK HERTZ.

TRANSLATED BY

THEODORE MARTIN.



393186
3.6.41

LONDON:

WM. S. ORR AND CO., AMEN CORNER.

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PT
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THIS Translation was prepared upwards of two years ago, with the view of being produced on the English Stage. The part of IOLANTHE, one of the most exquisite creations of modern poetry, seemed to be peculiarly adapted to the genius of Miss HELEN FAUCIT. It was accepted and studied by that lady, the alterations required by the exigencies of the Stage were made, and the piece was on the point of being produced by her in Dublin last season, when circumstances occasioned its temporary postponement. The recent production of the piece at the Strand Theatre took place with Miss FAUCIT's permission; and it has afforded the most gratifying proof, that there is no want of either inclination or power in an English audience to appreciate a Drama which owes its effect solely to the simplicity of its structure, the ideal beauty of its central character, and the atmosphere of poetry and old romance by which it is pervaded.

LONDON, 20th December, 1849.



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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

KING RENÉ, of Provence.

IOLANTHE, his daughter.

COUNT TRISTAN of Vaudemont.

SIR GEOFFREY of Orange.

SIR ALMERIK.

EBN JAHIA, a Moorish Physician.

BERTRAND.

MARTHA, his wife.

(The scene lies in Provence, in a valley of Vaucluse, and lasts from mid-day to sun-set. Time—The middle of the 15th century.)

To the left (of the actor) stands a house of one story, covered with ivy and roses,—its windows shaded by verandahs. A garden runs backwards from the house, in which the vegetation displays a tropical luxuriance. Some date-palms in the foreground. At the end of the garden is seen a wall of rock, overgrown with brushwood, and in it a door so covered with moss and stones, that it is only perceptible when open. Behind this wall lofty mountains stretch into the distance.

KING RENÉ'S DAUGHTER.

FIRST SCENE.

BERTRAND. *Immediately afterwards, SIR ALMERIK. Then MARTHA.*

BERTRAND (*entering from the house*).

It was the bell! Some message from the king!

(*Crosses the stage to the rock, and opens the concealed door. Returns immediately with Sir Almerik, but keeps him standing at the entrance.*)

Sir Almerik! You here! Stand back! Nay, not a step!

No stranger enters here.

ALMERIK.

I must and will.

BERTRAND.

No, not a foot, by heav'n's! You have deceived me.

Hearing the bell, and with it, too, the sign,

I felt assured that it must be Raoul.

ALMERIK.

The king has sent me hither in his stead.

See here this letter, and his royal ring.

BERTRAND.

His ring? 'Tis so. A letter! By your leave? (Reads.)

“Frankly confide in Almerik, and give him

“Whatever information he desires.”

—This changes matters quite. Frown not, my lord,

For if you know the secret of this place,

Then you must know that prudence is my duty.

ALMERIK (*advancing with Bertrand to the front of the stage*).

I know the place's secret? Save the mark!

I find myself here to my own surprise,

And all I see augments my wonderment.

A very paradise amid the waste!

Read me this mystery.

BERTRAND.

How! from the king

Did you not learn it?

ALMERIK.

Nay, not I!

BERTRAND.

So, so!

If he was silent, I must needs be dumb.

ALMERIK.

Nay, nay, you jest!

BERTRAND.

I never jested less.

MARTHA (*appearing at the door of the house*).

Sir Almerik?

BERTRAND.

He brings King René's ring,

And knows the sign to gain admittance here.
But nothing more. He must at once begone.

ALMERIK.

Begone, when the king sends me?

BERTRAND.

Ay, although he did.

MARTHA.

Stay, Bertrand, stay! (*To ALMERIK.*) What is your message, sir?

ALMERIK.

I was to say, that in an hour the king
Would come with his physician, Ebn Jahia.

MARTHA.

The very famous Moor, I know him well—

ALMERIK.

Comes with the king, and you were to make sure—
These were his words—that all things were prepared
As the leech ordered you.

BERTRAND.

'Tis well, 'tis well!

The king may trust to us. Some hours ago
Was Ebn Jahia here.

MARTHA.

And yet, Sir Knight,
His Majesty imparted nothing more?

ALMERIK.

He was in haste, and full, meseem'd, of thought.
The Moor, this Ebn Jahia, had arrived,
Raoul was ill, and secretly the king

Call'd me aside. "I can depend on you,"
 He said, "and in your secrecy confide!
 Follow the messenger, who will conduct you,
 And then fulfil your charge."

MARTHA.

And this was all

Was told you by the king?

ALMERIK.

Not all, and yet

What more he spake was wrapp'd in mystery.
 He mused awhile, then, hesitating, said,
 "Look you; I count on your fidelity;
 You'll find my daughter, where you are to go."
 Then all at once he suddenly broke off,
 Penn'd in keen haste the letter which I brought,
 And bade me go.

MARTHA.

The letter?

BERTRAND.

Ah, yes! The letter!

MARTHA (*takes and reads the letter*).

'Tis the king's hand. How can you doubt his tale?

BERTRAND.

No, you are right, I had forgot the letter.

ALMERIK.

Then by the letter you may gather, how
 The king desires, that from your lips I learn
 What things soe'er 'tis needful I should know.
 Who is this daughter that he told me of?
 Margaret is now in Britain, and Iolanthe—

MARTHA.

Is here.

ALMERIK.

Here? Iolanthe is in Spain,
Rear'd in a convent since her infancy.

MARTHA.

Not so, Sir Knight; she's here, and has been ever.

ALMERIK.

How! Here? I prithee, Bertrand, tell me all!

BERTRAND.

You oft, no doubt, have heard of the dispute
About Lorraine, that raged so long between
Our king and Vaudemont.

ALMERIK.

I know it well.

Yet is that ancient quarrel now forgot.
The terms of peace, by Burgundy arranged,
Secure—as rumour gives the story out—
King René's daughter's hand in marriage to
The son of Count Antonio Vaudemont.
This daughter, Iolanthe, was a child,
When this alliance was determined on.

BERTRAND.

'Twas even as you say; but, good Sir Knight,
The compact scarce was settled, when, by fire,
The palace was consumed at dead of night,
And Iolanthe—then a one year's babe—
Had all but perish'd in the flames. To save
Her life one course, and one alone, was left;
We from the chamber window let her down,

And caught her safe on cushions as she fell.
 Yet, or through fear or injury from the fall,
 Suffice to say, the child had lost her sight.

ALMERIK.

Had lost her sight?

MARTHA.

Ay, even so, my lord.

Imagine our distress—her sire's despair.
 Alas! a child so gentle and so sweet,
 And of her sight bereft—how sad, how hard!
 The hope, that with her life was intertwined,
 Extinguished, and the old and bitter feud
 About Lorraine renewed—ay, and renewed
 Too sure, alas! more fiercely than of old.
 For the Count Vaudemont will never brook
 His son should have a blind girl for his mate.
 He will believe, and hence his wrath will fire,
 A cheat was practised on him, and that she
 Was blind before the trace was ratified.

ALMERIK.

Surmise to him most probable. But the king,
 What did he in this strait?

BERTRAND.

At first he veiled

In studious silence, that the child was blind,
 Which none had e'er discovered from her looks;
 But soon from Cordova he summoned hither
 The very famed physician, Ebn Jahia,
 Whose skill is counted nigh miraculous,

Who came and tried all sorts of remedies.
With sagest counsel, too, he showed us how
To rear her up in tender fosterage ;
And, last of all, he in the stars perused
Her horoscope.

ALMERIK.

And there ?

BERTRAND.

Found hope for us,
That Iolanthe should regain her sight,
When in her sixteenth year. That time is come,
And Ebn Jahia now is with the king.
He orders remedies which we apply,
Yet what their purpose I have never known ;
The hour, he says, hath even now arrived.
Heaven grant it may be so !

ALMERIK.

But Iolanthe !
How heavily her fate must weigh her down !

MARTHA.

She has no thought herself that she is blind.

ALMERIK.

No thought that she is blind ! You surely jest !

MARTHA.

Ah no, Sir Knight ! you very soon may learn,
That all which I have told you now is true.
But let me earnestly beseech you, sir,
When you converse with Iolanthe, still
Tog uard your lips with most religious care,

That so no syllable shall cross their bounds,
 Which to the eye bears slightest reference.
 This is the strict injunction laid on all
 Who come within these precincts. Nothing name
 Which through the power of vision must be known ;
 Speak not before her of the light of day,
 Nor of the moonbeams in the placid night,
 Nor of its thousand stars. Alas ! no stars
 Illume the lasting night wherein she dwells !

ALMERIK.

And have you kept subservience to this rule ?

BERTRAND.

We school'd ourselves from her most tender years,
 When there was little danger had we failed.

ALMERIK.

With what intent has it been hid from her,
 That she is blind ? Who will'd it should be so ?

MARTHA.

We know not whether 'twas the king's resolve,
 Or whether Ebn Jahia so advised ;
 Yet I can easily explain the cause.
 A coronet shall one day deck her brows,
 As you are 'ware ; so does her future hold
 A brilliant promise forth, should all go well.
 But it is feared, the consciousness of blindness
 Might settle deep into her tender soul,
 Untune her spirit, and from her senses take
 Their equipoise, and that clear cheerfulness,

Which are a throne's most beauteous ornaments.
This consciousness 'tis purposed to avert.

ALMERIK.

This is the reason, then, why she lives here,
Secluded from the world and all who might
Betray to her the secret of her loss?

BERTRAND.

Tis even so. This valley, lock'd within
The heart of yonder mountains of Vacluse,
Is from the eye of all intruders safe.
You know, it is King René's chief delight
To tend and cultivate his plants and flowers.
Thus all you see was by himself arranged,
And with the trees and shrubs his daughter grew.
Here knows she every spot,—unerringly
Can find her way about without a guide.
Nor has her education been o'erlook'd.
She weaves, spins, tends her garden-plots, and is
For ever occupied, and ever cheerful.
Songs makes she too, and sings at leisure hours.

ALMERIK.

Makes songs!

BERTRAND.

Ay, she makes songs. The king himself
Taught her the cunning of the troubadours;
And ne'er a master of them all need blush
To own the verses which her fancy weaves.

ALMERIK.

All this I can explain and understand;

Yet how she ne'er suspects her blindness, I
Can scarce conceive. No! this must be delusion.

MARTHA.

Such it appears to you, whose eyesight serves
As a sure guide to every step you take.
Involuntarily you turn your gaze
Towards every sound that stirs. Even in the dark,
The accustomed light with fancied gleam deceives you;
But he, who from his earliest infancy,
From birth, mayhap, hath lack'd the power of sight,
How shall he deem his fellow-creatures see?
What's sight to him? What can he comprehend,
Of all that wondrous power that's in the eye?
Yet, as with ease we master by its aid
All that surrounds us, so the blind do hold
Hearing, touch, feeling, the air's soft impress,
And other means innumerable, at command,
Which are to us incomprehensible.
—This shall yourself observe, as I have said,
Before you have been long with Iolanthe.

ALMERIK.

Now, by the mass, I long to see this wonder.
—Yet one thing more, that puzzles me, explain.
She lives alone with you, apart from all;
Is this secluded valley all her world?

BERTRAND.

You err to think, that Iolanthe is
So lonely, so forlorn. Behind these mountains
Lies, as you know, the convent of St. Clara;

And oftentimes the abbess and the nuns
Come here to visit her; her father, too,
Brings with him stranger guests from time to time.

ALMERIK.

And so she lacks for nought, and is content,
If but some stranger on occasion come?
Of all the wealth the world to us presents,
Of all its glories, she surmiseth nought?
Does she not question you?

MARTHA.

That is a point,
On which 'tis not so easy to reply.
It may be, she suppresses many a thought.
She knows there is an entrance to this vale,
Hears the bell sound when any one arrives,
Brightens to hear it, and in silence waits,
With ear intent. Yet doth she never ask,
Where is the entrance, whitherward it leads;
For she has heard that there are many things
She must not ask, but leave to years to teach.
So 'tis with children. Speak to them of God,
Of power omnipotent, of another life,
And mark how they will listen, opening wide
Their little eyes in wonder, as some doubt—
A passing shade—is painted on their looks;
And then, at last, with touching faith, accept
For truth the things they may not comprehend.
So now for Iolanthe the whole world
Is one vast mystery, which she oft would pierce.

Then will her father or the abbess say,
 "Rest thee content, my child : thou art too young,
 Some future time thou'lt comprehend it all."
 In this she piously confides ; nor dreams
 She wants the eyes' clear sight, to compass all
 The splendours of this goodly universe.
 —May it not be, sir, while we darkly muse
 Upon our life's mysterious destinies,
 That we in blindness walk, like Iolanthe,
 Unconscious that true vision is not ours ?
 Yet is that faith our hope's abiding star.

ALMERIK.

In this, good Martha, hast thou truly spoken.
 But tell me, where is Iolanthe now ?

BERTRAND.

She sleeps.

ALMERIK.

How ! Sleeps ? And now ?

BERTRAND.

For just one hour,

By the physician's order every day.
 Yet 'tis no soft and natural sleep ; indeed
 I'm puzzled sorely what to think of it.
 By strange and uncouth words, and singular signs,
 Does Ebn Jahia charm her to repose ;
 Then doth he place upon her breast a stone,
 A talisman or amulet, belike,
 And only when he has removed the gem,

Does she awake again. I will confess,
This troubles me.

ALMERIK.

Yet may we strongly trust

In Ebn Jahia's skill.

BERTRAND.

There lies my hope.

(The bell rings.)

MARTHA.

Bertrand, the bell!

BERTRAND.

Nay, then, it is the king.

(Exit through the concealed door.)

ALMERIK.

Comes the king often hither?

MARTHA.

Yes, when he

Has fixed his quarters at the neighbouring palace,
We see him frequently. At times, however,
Whole months will pass without his coming here.

ALMERIK.

Knows Iolanthe, then, it is the king?

MARTHA.

No, she doth not, and that is well remembered.
She has no thought of that. She calls him father,
We others call him Raymbaud,—such the name
Of one that was a famous troubadour.

ALMERIK.

Break off! The King!

SCENE SECOND.

KING RENÉ, EBN JAHIA, and BERTRAND, *enter through the concealed door.* ALMERIK, MARTHA.

RENÉ.

Martha, I bring thee here

Good Ebn Jahia. As I learn, he hath
Been here to-day already once before.
How goes it now?

MARTHA.

Even to a wish, my liege.

RENÉ.

All that the leech enjoin'd thou hast fulfilled?
Neglected nothing? Has Iolanthe lain
With eyes close bandaged every night?

MARTHA.

She has.

RENÉ (*to EBN JAHIA*).

That was a perilous venture. It is strange
She bears it. Yet the chance was fortunate,
That the bee stung her on the temple lately.
This served us for a plausible pretext.
Ah! sure the little bee deceived itself.
In this fair world, that's tended by her care,
Where, like a flower, she grows amidst her flowers,
The insect, dazzled by the flagrant bloom,
Deemed that it nestled in a rose's bud.
Forgive me! It is sinful thus to speak

Of mine own child. But now no more of this.
Thou long'st to see the fruitage of thy skill.
Go, then, to Iolanthe. Bertrand! Martha!
Follow him in, perchance he may require you.

(EBN JAHIA *exit into the house, followed by BERTRAND
and MARTHA.*)

Now, Almerik, tell me, wert thou not amazed,
To see this valley so serene and still?
Was it not so? A little paradise?

ALMERIK.

Indeed it is!

RENÉ.

Oh, had it been my fate,
Here in the midst of all that most I love,
Of beauty, science, art, to spend my days,
How gladly, then, had I foregone, for ever,
Naples, Lorraine, and this long, bitter strife
With Vaudemont!

ALMERIK.

This strife is now heal'd up,
And you expect Count Tristan here ere long.
Then all shall end in peace.

RENÉ.

I hope it may,
And this my hope has daily gained in strength.
I told you—did I not?—that I expected
Geoffrey of Orange. He resided long
At Tristan's castle. The Count's teacher he
In minstrelsy, and poetry and song.

The youthful Count, so Geoffrey tells me, owns
 A happy turn for poesy—a sense
 Refined and gentle, with a mind of rare
 Endowment and capacity of thought.
 He sang to me a Sirventese, writ
 By Tristan, nobly felt, and couch'd in words
 Of a rare beauty. This I needs must own,
 Though he be minded hostilely to me,
 And would with grasping hand usurp Lorraine.
 —But hush! I hear a voice.

(Goes to the house and looks in at the door).

See, Ebn Jahia

Has waken'd her! Slowly her eyes she raises;
 She speaks; yet speaks as in a dream, while he
 Looks down observantly into her eyes.
 Now doth he lay the amulet once more
 Upon her bosom—and she sleeps again.

ALMERIK.

How singular!

RENÉ.

Most singular! This Moor
 Possesses powers that fill me with alarm.
 He comes. Now leave us, Almerik! Yet stay!
 Hence to the palace. Here I must remain.
 Soon as a letter comes from Tristan, haste
 And bring it here to me.

ALMERIK.

Adieu, my liege.

(Exit, as EBN JAHIA enters from the house.)

RENÉ.

My Ebn Jahia, com'st thou like the dove,
That bears the olive-branch? Thou lookest grave,
And, as thine art, unfathomable all.
How shall I construe what thy looks import?

EBN JAHIA.

I have the strongest hopes, my noble liege.

RENÉ.

Is't so? Oh, thou'rt an angel sent from heaven!
Thy dusky visage, like that royal Moor's,
Who knelt beside our great Redeemer's cradle,
Heralds the star, shall cheer my night of gloom.
Say, Jahia, say, whereon thy hope is based?
What is thy counsel, what thy purpose? Speak!
'Tis written in a book, which late I read,
That oftentimes an unsound eye is cured
By application of the surgeon's knife.
This thou wilt never try, my Ebn Jahia;
Thou know'st the eye is a most noble part,
And canst not gain such mastery o'er thyself,
As to approach my Iolanthe's eyes
With instrument of steel. Nay, thou must dread
To mar the beauty of their azure depths,
That dark, deep fount, which still, though sadden'd o'er,
Wells forth such glorious radiance. Oh, her eyes,
How is it possible, that night should brood
On two fair orbs of such transcendant sheen?

EBN JAHIA.

Nay, be at ease! You need not fear for this.
 'Twould aid us little, should I have recourse
 To instruments.

RENÉ.

What is thy purpose, then?

EBN JAHIA.

Your pardon good, my lord! My treatment is
 A mystery, like all my leech's craft;
 It scarce would serve my purpose to divulge it.
 'Tis not the fruitage of a moment's growth,
 No, but the slow result of wakeful years,
 Shaped—step by step conducted to one point,
 Whereat, so speed it Heaven, it shall succeed,
 Ay, and succeed it must, this very day,
 Or fail for ever.

RENÉ.

How! This very day?

EBN JAHIA.

Soon as the sun has sunk beneath the hills,
 And a soft twilight spreads along the vale,
 Such as her eyes, still to the light unused,
 May bear with safety, I will test my plan.

RENÉ.

Ah, Ebn Jahia, prithee, not to-day!
 From day to day, from hour to hour, have I,
 With restless eagerness, look'd onwards for
 This moment—and alas! now it hath come,
 My heart grows faint, and wishes it away.

—Think what I peril! When the sun goes down,
My fairest hope, perchance, goes down with it.
Thou'rt wrapt in thought. Art thou content to pause?

EBN JAHIA.

I will not wait.

RENÉ.

Then tell me, dost thou fear?

Art thou not certain of the issue? Thou
Didst put to question yonder silent stars,
From which thy potent art can wring response.
What was their answer, tell me, Ebn Jahia?
The horoscope—was't happy?

EBN JAHIA.

Yes, it was.

I told you so already. Yet the stars
Inclinant, non necessitant. They influence
The fortunes of mankind, yet do they not
Rule nature's laws with absolute control.
Rest thee at ease: I have no fear for this.
—Another hindrance menaces my skill.

RENÉ.

A hindrance?

EBN JAHIA.

One, my liege, I apprehend,
Which you will find it hard to obviate.
Iolanthe, ere I bend me to my task,
Must comprehend what she till now has lack'd—
Must learn this very day that she is blind.

RENÉ.

No, Ebn Jahia, no, this cannot be!

EBN JAHIA.

It must be, or my skill is powerless.

RENÉ.

No, no! oh, never! never! Thou wilt not
 Constrain me to this monstrous cruelty?
 And strip her all at once, with sudden wrench,
 Of that unconsciousness, has been her blessing;
 Not slowly, by degrees, but all at once,
 Force on her tender soul this fearful truth?
 And if the cure should fail us after all?
 Hast thou forgot, how we, year after year,
 With care almost incredible, have watch'd
 To keep from her this melancholy truth?
 This course thysclf suggested—showing me
 The difficult road, which I was bound to follow.
 Now, wilt thou raze the fabric thou hast reared?
 Say, wherefore, wherefore?

EBN JAHIA.

I will tell you wherefore,

So please you lend a favouring ear the while.
 You deem, belike, our sense of vision rests
 Within the eye; yet is it but a means.
 From the soul's depths the power of vision flows,
 And those fine nerves, that on the eye converge,
 From the brain's secret workshop emanate.
 Iolanthe must be conscious of her state—
 Her inward eye must first be opened, ere

The light can pour upon the outward sense.
A want must be developed in her soul ;
A feeling that anticipates the light,—
A craving sense—for know, my noble liege,
That nothing e'er is on mankind bestowed,
Unless for it he feel necessity.
Deep in his soul a yearning must arise
For a contentment, which it strives to win.
Let me, for you, exemplar take from what
Your studies make familiar. That fair art—
That joyous science of sweet poesy,
Which is so widely famed throughout Provence,—
Mankind receive it by the Muses' favour.
Is it not so? But how? Do all receive it?
No; only he within whose bosom dwelt,
As in a dream, a bright poetic world ;
And who hath yearn'd for it with quenchless love.

RENÉ.

I'll not contest with thee, good Ebn Jahia !
I may not cope with thee in lore profound.
Yet pity's voice speaks loudly in my heart,
And drowns thy arguments with mightier tones.
I cannot do it! No, it may not be.

EBN JAHIA.

E'en as you will. I only can advise,
And if you will not trust to my advice,
Then I am useless here. So, fare ye well !
Hence to the convent I! There you will find me,
If your resolve shall alter. Yet, bethink you ;

Sink but the sun behind yon mountain tops,
My utmost skill cannot again avail.

(Exit through the concealed door.)

RENÉ.

Oh, dreadful strait! and I so dearly bought
A hope, which yet so soon may be undone!
Shall I destroy at once her cheerful mood,
Convert it into comfortless despair,
And see her youth grow pale by slow degrees,
Wither and die in mournful consciousness?
No! This is Jahia's obstinacy merely;
He yet shall yield. I will not rest, until
He hears me, and submits to my desire.

(Exit after EBN JAHIA, as MARTHA and BERTRAND enter.)

MARTHA.

The king gone hence, and, as it seemed, in wrath,
And Ebn Jahia nowhere to be seen!
What has occurred?

BERTRAND.

Indeed, heav'n only knows!

Yet am I ill at ease, as matters stand:
And Ebn Jahia, I do fear me much,
Will fail us at the last.

MARTHA.

Nay, think ye so?

BERTRAND.

Heaven grant that I be wrong! Yet like I not
The dark and moody nature of the man;
And, to be frank with you, I feel a dread

Of one endow'd with such mysterious pow'r.
There lies the child upon her couch, as though
Life were extinct; one motion of his hand,
And sleep, as if by magic, seals her eyes.
This is not—cannot come to good!

MARTHA.

Content thee,
Nor thus torment thyself with causeless fears.
Thou knowest well, that when her sleep is o'er,
And from her breast the amulet removed,
She beams afresh in bright and blooming health.
Is it not marvellous, how this strange sleep
Strengthens her more, much more, than sleep at night,
Gives vigour, and enlivens every sense?
Yea, ev'n her eyes, as I have noted oft,
Are deepen'd in their lustre when she wakes,
As though the rays of light had found a way
Into their orbs, while she lay slumbering:
This is, I trust, a favourable sign.

BERTRAND.

Well, well, thou may'st be right; and time will show!—
Let us away! Much yet is to be done
Among our people yonder in the field.
We may withdraw from Iolanthe now:
She sleeps, and cannot wake till our return.

(Exeunt behind the house.)

THIRD SCENE.

TRISTAN of *Vaudemont*, GEOFFREY of *Orange*, each with a cithern slung upon his shoulder.

GEOFFREY (*stopping in front of the concealed door*).
Look to your steps! 'Tis dark as midnight here!

TRISTAN.

Push onward! Stay! Here is a door!

GEOFFREY.

A door?

TRISTAN.

Patience! A bolt—it yields! What do I see? (*Both enter.*)

GEOFFREY.

Heavens! What a gust of exquisite perfume!

TRISTAN.

A garden—here! shrined in the mountain waste!
What beauty, too, what order! Only look!

GEOFFREY.

I am amazed.

TRISTAN.

What man is he, that owns
This witching spot? You know the country well,
And dwell hard by.

GEOFFREY.

Indeed, I cannot say.

Of such a paradise I never dream'd.
A garden of the tropics—studded o'er
With all rare flowers! Behold the lofty palms!

TRISTAN.

The mansion rising through—how beautiful!
Half-hid with ivy and the clambering rose!
—And yet its inmates?

GEOFFREY.

Not a soul see I.

I could be sworn, this paradise arose
In some fair summer night, when Dian gave
One golden hour to her Endymion,
Veiling beneath these rocks their fearful joys!
But its inhabitants have taken flight.

TRISTAN.

Nay, here be many signs of human hands,
Fair, I'll be sworn, and gentle. Here, see here
Fresh footmarks on the pathway!

GEOFFREY.

You are right.

A tiny foot and dainty! Let us on!
By following this we scarce can go amiss.
Observe, it leads right onwards to the house!

TRISTAN.

No, let us wait till somebody appears.
We should be most discourteous. Bad enough,
That we have come thus far without consent!

GEOFFREY.

Well, as you please. So our luck fails us not,
I'll tax my courtesy, and wait in patience,

For, in good sooth, luck hath been ours indeed,
Hath it not, Tristan? See, how things have fallen—
As near the convent idly on we stroll'd,
Whiling the time with interchange of song,
I chanced to spy King René passing near,
Wrapt in close talk with the Cordovan leech.
To 'scape his glance, you drag me after you,
And, hurrying on o'er rock and wilderness,
Here, at the mountain's base, we chance upon
Yon secret passage, craftily contrived.
Following it up, awhile we grope about
In darkness, and, in short, have landed here.
—But tell me now, what motive prompted you,
So to avoid the king? To meet him, 'twas,
That you came here. You urged me to attend
Upon you at the interview to-morrow;
And you—'tis known familiarly to all—
You have been long affianced to his daughter.

TRISTAN.

Affianced! Yes, they say so. Yet was I
Scarce nine years old, when I was thus betrothed.
My father made the terms with Burgundy,
When we a truce concluded with the king.
But, Geoffrey, now I'm grown to riper years;
And as this contract, in the full career
Of victory, wrong'd and robb'd me of my rights,
So on this marriage look I now with hate.
Unwillingly I came; unwillingly
In this vile business I am like to move.

GEOFFREY.

I grieve to hear it, for King René's sake.
For many a day, I know, his joy has been
The goodly promise of these nuptial ties.

TRISTAN.

Goodly to him they may be, I believe.
—Know you his daughter ?

GEOFFREY.

No, she has been rear'd

In some far Spanish convent, and came home
Here to her father, but to meet with you.
—But let us, friend, bethink us where we are !
We forced our way in, and it must be own'd
The spot is charming. But the question now,
Is, can we quite as easily retire ?

TRISTAN.

Nay, never fear.

GEOFFREY.

Would you not, then, find out
Whether this mansion hath inhabitants ?
Assail the door ! Shall I, then ?

TRISTAN.

Nay, let me !

In case some demon lord it in this place.
'Tis just, the danger first should light on me,
Whose charge it was, that lured you on to it.

(Knocks at the door.)

No—no one comes !

GEOFFREY.

Try if the door will open.

TRISTAN.

It gives not way.

GEOFFREY.

Press harder—it will yield!

TRISTAN.

So be it, then! (*Opens the door.*) Heavens, Geoffrey, what a form!

GEOFFREY.

Some spirit?

TRISTAN.

How! A spirit? Yes, methinks—

One of the radiant ministers of light!

Look!

GEOFFREY (*looking in*).

A fair girl upon a dainty couch!

Surely she sleeps!

TRISTAN.

She sleeps. Her breathing heaves

Her bosom gently—gently sinks it down.

See now, a smile is hovering on her lips,

As though she dreamt of our bewilderment.

GEOFFREY.

I pray you, Tristan, let us fly from hence.

This witching vision doth disturb my soul,

Too witching all, and all too beautiful.

This is some wizard's castle—let us away!

Come! Mystic serpents threaten us, I know.
—Tristan, where are you rapt? All heavenly powers!
He's charm'd already! Rooted to the earth,
He stands, and stares on her. Oh, Tristan, come!

TRISTAN.

Speak softly, Geoffrey, for a breath might wake her!
Speak softly! 'Twere a sin to break the calm,
The holy stillness, which her slumber sheds
On every thing around!

GEOFFREY.

O, hear me, hear me!

TRISTAN.

Hush! Not a word, I say! This place is holy!

*(Kneels bending forward with outstretched arms
towards the open door.)*

Oh, be not angry, that with eyes profane
I have intruded on thy resting-place!

GEOFFREY.

Rise up! I tremble for you. You are caught
In an enchanter's spell. The vision is
Some cheating phantom. Follow me!

TRISTAN.

I cannot.

GEOFFREY.

Then do not kneel there like a marble block!
Tush, be a man! If hence you will not fly,
At least command your spirits! Let us learn,
Who this fair creature is. Awake her!

TRISTAN.

No!

That were a sin!

GEOFFREY.

If you will not, I will. (*Enters.*)

TRISTAN.

Audacious man! He calls to her—hark, hark!
How now—he clasps her hand——

GEOFFREY (*rushing out*).

Away, away!

She cannot wake. Her senses are enthral'd
By some dark demon's necromantic spells.
Oh, come! I quake for fear. We've rudely broke
Into a holy place, will be our death.

TRISTAN.

A holy place! You name it well. But it
Imports not death, but life. Well, well, no matter!
Come, let us quit this consecrated ground,
Which wrongly we intruded on. She sleeps.
It is unchivalrous to tarry——

GEOFFREY.

Come!

TRISTAN.

Yet stay! I'll grant myself one little look,
One moment by her side, to scan her face,
Then follow you anon.

(Enters.)

GEOFFREY.

See there, he kneels!

Upon her hand imprints one gentle kiss.
How he surveys her! There—he hath unclasp'd
A ribbon from her neck, and bears it off.
Now, Heav'n be praised, he comes to me again.

TRISTAN (*returns*).

Now have I graven deeply on my heart
Her beauteous form. It cannot vanish now.
Ay, let us hence, and dread this witchery!
Yet did I vow to seek this spot again,
And, if I err'd not, with a gracious smile
She heard my vow, and bless'd it in her dreams.
See, Geoffrey, I have ta'en this ornament,
A gem of price, that lay upon her breast.
Like Jesse's son, who from the sleeping Saul
Took of his robe a fragment, for a sign
That in his hands the monarch's life had been,
So may this jewel likewise testify
That I was here, and that my life was placed
Within her hand, even while she lay in sleep.
Come, Geoffrey!

*(Retires with GEOFFREY towards the concealed door, as
IOLANTHE appears at the door of the house.)*

FOURTH SCENE.

TRISTAN. GEOFFREY. IOLANTHE.

(Notwithstanding IOLANTHE'S blindness, all her movements are unconstrained and decided. Only now and then a listening attitude, with a slight motion of the hand, as though she were feeling before her, betrays the want of sight. Her eyes are open, but frequently bent downwards, and with little motion in them.)

IOLANTHE *(at the door)*.

Martha! Bertrand!

TRISTAN.

Ha! 'tis she!

IOLANTHE.

Sure, some one spoke? *(advances.)* Who's there?

TRISTAN.

A stranger, who

Implores forgiveness, that he rudely broke
Your's and this place's sanctified repose.

IOLANTHE.

Give me thy hand! Thou never hast been here!
Nor do I even know thy voice. Didst speak
With Bertrand or with Martha on the way?

TRISTAN.

I spoke with no one. Accident alone
Hath led me hither.

GEOFFREY (*aside to TRISTAN*).

Ask about Bertrand!

IOLANTHE (*listening*).

And whom hast thou brought with thee?

TRISTAN.

'Tis my friend,

A troubadour and knight, who dwells hard by.

IOLANTHE.

You both are truly welcome. Will you not
Go in with me? 'Tis cool and fresher there.GEOFFREY (*quickly*).Nay, so you please, we'll tarry where we are.
(*Aside to TRISTAN.*) 'Tis safer so, methinks!IOLANTHE (*still holding TRISTAN's hand*).

Thy hand is warm—

I feel the pulse's throb. Hath not the heat
Oppressed thee by the way? Art thou not thirsty?
Wait, and I'll bring thee forth a cup of wine. (*Goes into the house.*)

TRISTAN.

Oh! what a lovely being! What dignity,
What gracious gentleness in every feature:
And her sweet voice!

GEOFFREY.

A wondrous voice, indeed!

That fascinates the heart at unawares,
And binds it utterly in softest thrall!

Of noble birth she is, beyond all question ;
 Yet—some precaution cannot be amiss.
 Drink not the wine, dear Tristan, when it comes.

TRISTAN.

I would drink death, if from her hand, with joy !
 (*IOLANTHE comes back with a flagon and cup.*)

IOLANTHE.

Here is the wine my father always drinks.
 It is too strong for me : but will you taste it ?
 (*Fills the cup and presents it to TRISTAN.*)

TRISTAN (*as he drinks*).

This to thy happiness, thou lovely maid !

IOLANTHE.

Give now thy friend the cup, if he desire it.
 I will go gather fruit for you—some dates
 And grapes, or any other fruit you will.
 (*Plucks fruit, and places it in a basket, which
 she has taken from the table.*)

TRISTAN (*giving GEOFFREY the cup*).

There, Geoffrey, drink !

GEOFFREY.

Have you felt nothing strange,
 No lassitude—no—— ?

TRISTAN.

Nothing. Never fear !

GEOFFREY.

It is wine, then ? (*Drinks.*) Right Malvoisie, by heav'ns !

No better drinks King René's self, I trow. (*Drinks again.*)
 Ha, what a wine! Where we such nectar find,
 In sooth, no demon can have mastery!

IOLANTHE (*rejoins them*).

Here I have fruits, so please you taste of them.
 I'll place them on the table.

GEOFFREY.

Beauteous lady,

Already you so truly have refresh'd us,
 And in this cup have minister'd a wine
 So rare, and so delicious, we might deem,
 And with best cause, our entertainment came
 From some most wealthy, ay, and noble house.
 Beauty and wine the loadstars are of song.
 Then lend a friendly ear unto my words,
 Which, lightly woven into a lay, unfold
 At once our homage and our gratitude.

(*Sings, accompanying himself on his cithern.*)

The eagle we tell
 By his sweep full well,
 As proudly afar in the clouds he soars,
 And the nightingale,
 By the trilling wail
 Her throa in the dewy May-time pours.

By valour and skill,
 And a temperate will,
 The knight approveth his worth to all;

And deftly to sing,
 With sweet minstrelling,
 Makes troubadour honour'd in bower and hall.
 (*Changes the measure.*)

But when amid gentles and ladies gay,
 His echoing harp he raises,
 And seeks by the flow of his tuneful lay
 To win him their guerdons, their praises ;
 And when with the goblet the foot-page fine
 His carol hath cheerly greeted,
 Full soon doth he note by the noble wine,
 'Neath a noble roof he's seated.

IOLANTHE.

Thy song is beautiful, and doth bespeak
 A cunning high and rare.

TRISTAN.

My friend is famed
 Among Provence's younger troubadours.

IOLANTHE (*to TRISTAN*).

Art thou, too, gifted with the power of song ?

TRISTAN.

Ah, I am but a novice ; yet, methinks,
 Your gentleness doth make me bold to sing.
 Then pray you for the deed accept the will.

(*Sings, preluding each verse with a few notes
 of the cithern.*)

I came where the echoing city lay,
 And over the mountains I took my way,
 Weary and darkling, by rock and by lea ;

When a valley burst suddenly on my sight,
Basking and beaming in sunshine bright,
And gemm'd with all beautiful flowers that be.

Here all was still. No sweet bird's note
On my listening ear in the silence smote,
No sound, or of man or of life arose ;
And, as in some temple's most sacred hall,
In this vale of enchantment fair seem'd all
To be lull'd for aye in a charm'd repose.

A door flew wide, and a form of light
Beam'd, like a star, on my wondering sight ;
Like a dewy rosebud, oppress'd with sleep,
Which a wizard's wand had over it thrown,
Didst thou seem to me, thou lovely one,
And all things anear thee a hush did keep.

The zephyr dreams on thy pearly cheek,
The flame on the hearth burns faint and weak,
The palm-trees drowsily droop their crest ;
For all things have life through thee alone,
For all things will only be thine own,
And close their eyelids when thine do rest.

Thou didst awake, and a soul of life,
Through air, and through flower and grove, grew rife,
As though a sunbeam their sleep had broke !
Oh, gentle rose, take to thy heart,
As the homage pure of my faltering art,
The lay which thy beauty to being woke !

IOLANTHE.

(To TRISTAN after a pause, in which she stands absorbed, with her hand upon her forehead).

Lend me the cithern.

(After precluding upon the instrument, she sings, accompanying herself with occasional chords.)

Highly be honour'd
The stranger guest,
Who comes with a blithesome
And cordial heart,—
Brings us a treasure,
Of story and measure,
And fills us with silent and wondering pleasure!

Yet higher than all
Be honour to him,
The guest who doth bring us
Song link'd to the lyre,
Who living thoughts, woven
In melody, pours,
And on wingèd words freely and joyously soars!

With the minstrel enters
An influence holy
Under our portals;
While that he singeth,
Listens the air,
Hush'd are the flowerets,
And, lowly inclining,
Stay their sweet breathing to list to the strain.

You, O ye strangers,
You who came hither
With harp and with song,
With me dividing
Your souls' inspiration,
You do I thank !
Ah ! I so feeble,
I could not fathom
All that you sang.
Novel and strange,
Strange as yourselves,
It swept me along, the light wingèd song.

Here in the valley,
Deep in the thicket,
Oftentimes nestleth
A stranger bird ;
And in the evening,
Dream-like and still,
Her song from the leaves doth the nightingale trill.

No one can teach me
To sweep the guitar,
Till it throbs like her song.
No one can give me
Her rapturous strain,
That lifted my soul on its pinions, again.

Whence, O ye strangers,
Cometh your song ?

Say, is its home there,
 Where, as I deem,
 Fond aspirations,
 Yearning and sighs,
 In the slumberous silence of evening arise ?

Say, have the airy
 Tenants of ether
 Taught you their strains ?
 Strains so enchanting,
 Flowing so wildly ;
 Strains that have freighted
 My dreams with delight ;
 Strains full of story,
 Life-like and clear,
 Strains that gave glory
 To all that is near !

GEOFFREY.

What lofty poesy !

TRISTAN (*to IOLANTHE*).
 To the nightingale

You have compared our song. Oh were I but
 The meanest, tiniest of yonder birds,
 That build their nests anigh your dwelling-place,
 And evermore might list the lovely strains
 That do inspire your breast !

GEOFFREY.

Oh, noble lady,
 There is one question—pray you pardon it !

Which musing wonder forces to my lips.
You live here from the world cut off, and none
Of all the knights and ladies of Provence,
Your rare perfections e'er have heard or known.
What line so blest can claim you for its child,
And who your father ?

IOLANTHE.

How ! not know my father ?

That gives me wonder ; for none e'er come here
Who know not him.

GEOFFREY.

I pray you, what his name ?

IOLANTHE.

The rest do call him Raymbaud.

GEOFFREY.

Raymbaud ? Raymbaud ?

Is he a knight ?

IOLANTHE.

A knight ?

GEOFFREY.

Or warrior ?

Wears he a helm, and shield, and golden spurs ?
What his pursuits ?

IOLANTHE.

That have I ne'er inquired.

GEOFFREY.

Why are you pent up here so close ?

IOLANTHE (*surprised*).

So close ?

GEOFFREY.

Ay, close and lonely ?

IOLANTHE.

Lonely I am not.

There you do much mistake.

GEOFFREY.

Yet no one's here ?

IOLANTHE.

No, no one's here. You're right ; I cannot guess

How this should be. I never am alone.

But only wait, and I will summon Bertrand.

He will be truly glad that you are come. (*Exit into the house.*)

GEOFFREY.

Now 'twill be seen who is this valley's lord.

Yet can I not subdue the rising thought,

That some dark mystery is here on foot,

Which he that owns this valley will be loath

That we should pry into. You cannot fail

To note, how cunningly yon door is covered

With moss, and stones, and branches, that, when closed,

It scarce may be distinguished from the rock.

Take my advice and tarry near the door.

I will but wait till some one comes, and then

Betake me straightway to the mountain pass,

To keep the entrance clear for our escape.

Some of your people I may chance to meet.

Should aught appear amiss, I will return
Upon the moment. Do you hear me, Tristan ?

TRISTAN.

Ay, ay! Go, go! There!

GEOFFREY.

Is your heart enchain'd ?
Has this young beauty quite enchanted you ?

TRISTAN.

No, I am ill at ease. My head's confused.
I almost think this tranquil valley is
That goal for which I've panted all my days ;
That here at length my restless soaring pride
Shall find its true repose.

GEOFFREY (*gravely*).

I prithee, friend,
Remember, that King René waits for you.

TRISTAN.

What is King René or his hopes to me ?
What ! For a province, which by law and right
Is truly mine, by our good swords achieved,
Shall I, in my youth's holiday, be chain'd
To his daughter—to a girl whom no one knows—
Whom no one e'er hath seen—whilst I——

GEOFFREY.

You rave.

This fit will pass. But now you are bewitch'd.
Stifle this feverish passion in your breast.

TRISTAN.

Could I do that, I were bewitch'd indeed.

GEOFFREY.

Hush! hush! Some one approaches.

(IOLANTHE returns from the house.)

IOLANTHE.

Are you here?

GEOFFREY.

Wilt lead us to the master of the house?

IOLANTHE.

Alas! they are all gone, and no one came
In answer to my call. They have forsook me.

TRISTAN.

But they will come again.

IOLANTHE.

Yes; thou art right—

They have gone forth, I warrant, to the vintage.
I, too, at times go with them. But, when not,
There still is some one with me.

GEOFFREY *(to TRISTAN)*.

You stay here?

TRISTAN.

I will.

GEOFFREY.

So be it, while I go watch the pass.

(Exit, bowing to IOLANTHE, who does not return the salutation.)

IOLANTHE (*listening*).

Goes thy friend hence ?

TRISTAN.

He will return anon.

Your pardon now—let me atone a fault
I have committed ; but oh, chide me not !
As you lay sleeping, from your breast I took
An ornament, as a memorial token.
'Tis here !

IOLANTHE.

Where, where ? (*TRISTAN gives her the amulet.*)
An ornament—and mine ?

TRISTAN.

Yes ; I conjecture so.

IOLANTHE.

It is not mine ;
But I will ask of Martha. (*Lays the amulet on the table.*)

TRISTAN.

In its stead,
Pray give me one of yonder blushing roses,
That rear their petals, fairest 'mongst all flow'rs,
As though they were the counterfeit of thee !

IOLANTHE.

A rose ? Oh, willingly ! (*Plucks and gives him a white rose.*)

TRISTAN.

Ah, it is white !
Give me the red one, that is fair as thou !

IOLANTHE.

What meanest thou—a red one?

TRISTAN (*pointing*).

One of these.

IOLANTHE.

Take it thyself!

TRISTAN.

No; let me keep the rose,
Which thou hast chosen, which thy fair hand has gather'd.
And in good sooth I do applaud thy choice.
For the white rose, within whose calyx sleeps
A faint and trembling ruddiness, betypes
The dream-like beauty of this garden fair.
Give me another rose—a white one, too—
Then with the twin flow'rs will I deck my cap,
And wear them as thy colours evermore.

IOLANTHE (*plucks and gives him a red rose*).

Here is a rose; meanest thou one like this?

TRISTAN (*starts*).

I ask'd thee for a white rose.

IOLANTHE.

Well, and this?

TRISTAN.

Why this?—(*Aside*) What thought comes o'er me? (*Aloud*) Nay,
then, tell me (*holds up the two roses, along with another which he
has himself gathered*)

How many roses have I in my hand?

IOLANTHE (*stretches out her hand towards them*).

Give me them, then.

TRISTAN.

Nay, tell me without touching.

IOLANTHE.

How can I so?

TRISTAN (*aside*).

Alas! alas! she's blind!

(*Aloud, and with a faltering voice*) Nay, I am sure you know.

IOLANTHE.

No; you mistake.

If I would know how anything is shaped,
Or what its number, I must touch it first.
Is not this clear?

TRISTAN (*confused*).

Yes, certainly; you're right.

And yet sometimes——

IOLANTHE.

Well, well?—sometimes?—speak, speak!

TRISTAN.

I think there are—that there are certain things,
Which we distinguish by their hues alone,
As various kinds of flowers, and various stuffs.

IOLANTHE.

Thou mean'st by this their character, their form;
Is it not so?

TRISTAN.

Nay, not exactly that.

IOLANTHE.

Is it so hard, then, to distinguish flowers?
Are not the roses round, and soft, and fine,
Round to the feeling, as the zephyr's breath,
And soft and glowing as a summer's eve?
Are gilliflowers like roses? No, their scent
Bedizzies, like the wine I gave to thee.
And then a cactus—are its arrowy points
Not stinging, like the wind, when frosts are keen?

TRISTAN (*aside*).

Amazement! (*Aloud*) Have they never told thee, then,
That objects, things, can be distinguish'd, though
Placed at a distance,—with the aid—of sight?

IOLANTHE.

At distance? Yes! I by his twittering know
The little bird that sits upon the roof,
And, in like fashion, all men by their voice.
The sprightly steed whereon I daily ride,
I know him in the distance by his pace,
And by his neigh. Yet—with the help of sight?
They told me not of that. An instrument
Fashion'd by art, or but a tool, perhaps?
I do not know this sight. Canst teach me, then,
Its use and purpose?

TRISTAN (*aside*).

O almighty powers!
She does not know or dream that she is blind.

IOLANTHE (*after a pause*).

Whence art thou? Thou dost use so many words,
I find impossible to understand,
And in thy converse, too, there is so much
For me quite new and strange! Say, is the vale
Which is thy home so very different
From this of ours? Then stay, if stay thou canst,
And teach me all that I am wanting in.

TRISTAN.

No, O thou sweet and gracious lady, no!
I cannot teach what thou art wanting in.

IOLANTHE.

Didst thou but choose, I do believe thou couldst.
They tell me I am tractable and apt.
Many, who erewhile have been here, have taught me
Now this, now that, which readily I learn'd.
Make but the trial. I am very sure
Thou hat'st me not. Thy tones are mild and gentle.
Thou wilt not say me "nay," when I entreat.
Oh, speak! I'm all attention when thou speakest.

TRISTAN.

Alas! attention here will stead thee little.
Yet—tell me one thing. Thou hast surely learn'd,
That of thy lovely frame there is no part
Without its purpose, or without its use.
Thy hand and fingers serve to grasp at much,
Thy foot, so tiny as it is, with ease

Transports thee wheresoe'er thy wishes point ;
 The sound of words, the tone, doth pierce the soul
 Through the ear's small and tortuous avenues ;
 The stream of language gushes from thy lips ;
 Within thy breast abides the delicate breath,
 Which heaves, unlogg'd with care, and sinks again.

IOLANTHE.

All this I've noted well. Prithee, go on.

TRISTAN.

Then tell me, to what end dost thou suppose
 Omnipotence hath gifted thee with eyes ?
 Of what avail to thee are those twin stars,
 That sparkle with such wondrous brilliancy,
 They scorn to grasp the common light of day ?

IOLANTHE (*touches her eyes, then muses for a little*).

You ask of what avail—how can you ask ?
 And yet, I ne'er have given the matter thought.
 My eyes! my eyes! 'Tis easy to perceive.
 At eve, when I am weary, slumber first
 Droops heavy on my eyes, and thence it spreads
 O'er all my body, with no thought of mine,
 As feeling vibrates from each finger's tip.
 Thus then I know my eyes avail me much.
 And hast not thou experience had enough,
 Wherein thine eyes can minister to thee ?
 Only the other morn, as I was planting
 A little rosebush here, a nimble snake

Leapt out and bit me in the finger ; then
With the sharp pain I wept. Another time,
When I had pined for many tedious days,
Because my father was detain'd from home,
I wept for very gladness when he came !
Through tears I gave my bursting heart relief,
And at mine eyes it found a gushing vent.
Then never ask me, unto what avail
Omnipotence hath gifted me with eyes.
Through them, when I am weary, comes repose ;
Through them my sorrow's lighten'd ; and through them
My joy is raised to rapture.

TRISTAN.

Oh, forgive me !

The question was most foolish ; for in thee
Is such an inward radiancy of soul,
Thou hast no need of that which by the light
We through the eye discern. Say, shall I deem,
That thou of some unheard-of race art sprung,
Richly endow'd with other powers than we ?
Thou livest lonely here—this valley, too,
Seems conjured forth by magic 'mongst the hills.
Hast thou come hither from the golden East,
With Peris in thy train ?—Or art thou one
Of Brahma's daughters, and from Ind hast been
Transported hither by a sorcerer ?
O beautiful unknown ! If thou be'st sprung
Of mortal men, who call the earth their mother,
Be thou to life's so transitory joys

Susceptible as I, and deign'd to look
 With favour on a knight's devoted love!
 Hear this his vow! No woman shall efface
 (Stand she in birth and beauty ne'er so high)
 The image thou hast stamp'd upon my soul!

IOLANTHE (*after a pause*).

Thy words are laden with a wondrous power.
 Say, from what master didst thou learn the art,
 To charm, by words, which yet are mysteries?
 Meseem'd as though I trod some path alone,
 Which I had never trod before; and yet
 All seems to me—all, all that thou hast said—
 So godlike, so enchanting! Oh, speak on—
 Yet no, speak not! Rather let me in thought
 Linger along the words which thou hast spoken,
 That mingled pain and rapture in my soul!

Enter GEOFFREY hurriedly.

GEOFFREY.

I see men at a distance coming hither!
 Do not forget that we are here alone.

TRISTAN (*to IOLANTHE*).

Now, noble maiden, must I take my leave.

IOLANTHE.

Ah! no, no! Wherefore wilt thou go?

TRISTAN.

I'll come

Again, and soon—to-day I'll come again.

Wilt thou permit me, with thy hand to mark
How high I am, that, when we next shall meet,
Thou may'st distinguish me?

IOLANTHE.

What need of that?

I know that few resemble thee in height.
Thy utterance comes to me as from above,
Like all that's high and inconceivable.
And know I not thy tone? Like as thou speakest
None speak beside. No voice, no melody
I've known in nature, or in instrument,
Doth own a resonance so lovely, sweet,
So winning, full, and gracious as thy voice.
Trust me, I'll know thee well amidst them all!

TRISTAN.

Then fare thee well, until we meet once more!

IOLANTHE.

There—take my hand. Farewell! Thou'lt come again—
Again, and soon?—Thou know'st I wait for thee!

TRISTAN (*kneels and kisses her hand*).

Oh, never doubt that I will come again.
My heart impels me hither. Though I go,
Still of my thoughts the better half remains;
And whatsoever is left to me of life
Yearns back to thee with evermore unrest.
Farewell!

(*Exit through the concealed door, following GEOFFREY, who
has retired during the last speech.*)

IOLANTHE.

Hark! there he goes! Among the hills,
 From which so oft the stranger's foot resounds,
 Now echoes his light step. Oh, hush, hush, hush!
 I hear it now no more.—Yes; there again!
 But now,—'tis gone!—Will he indeed return?
 If he, too, like so many guests before,
 Should come but this one time! Oh! no, no, no!
 Did he not promise me, and pledge his vow,
 He would come back to-day? The dews are falling;
 Already eve draws on.—Ah, no!—to-day
 He cannot come.—Perhaps to-morrow, then?
 But now it is so lonely here.

FIFTH SCENE.

IOLANTHE, MARTHA, *afterwards* KING RENÉ *and* EBN JAHIA, *then*
 ALMERIK.

MARTHA.—(*enters from behind the house, and advances rapidly, on
 seeing IOLANTHE.*)

Dear child!

Great heav'n! How come you thus awake, and here?

IOLANTHE.

Oh, Martha, come to me! Where have you been?

MARTHA.

Afield among the servants. But explain—
 Who—who awoke you?

IOLANTHE.

Of myself I woke.

MARTHA.

How! Of yourself?

IOLANTHE.

No otherwise know I.

But list—as yet you know not—Here have been
Strange guests!

MARTHA.

You mock me! Who were they?

IOLANTHE.

Two strangers whom I did not know at all,
And who, besides, were never here before.
It was such pity you had gone away!

MARTHA.

You dream, my child. Two strangers? Whence and how?
It cannot be!

IOLANTHE.

Whence did the strangers come?

I ask'd not that; for you have charged me oft,
That I with questionings should not torment
Our visitors.

MARTHA.

Who were they, then, my child?

IOLANTHE.

Indeed, I do not know.

MARTHA.

Were you alone, then ?

IOLANTHE,

I call'd on you, but yet you heard me not.

MARTHA (*aside*).

Heavens! Was it possible?—(*Aloud*) Say on, my child!

IOLANTHE.

Ah, Martha, none e'er came to us before,
Like these two strangers—like, at least, to one.
It cannot surely be, but that he comes
From some fair land of marvel, different quite
From this our land. For potent was his speech,
Yet gentle and affectionate as thine.

(KING RENÉ and EBN JAHIA enter unobserved through the concealed door, and remain listening in the back-ground.)

He gave me greeting with a song. Oh, Martha!
A song that teem'd with meanings marvellous;
It charm'd the tears into mine eyes, although
I scarcely fathom'd half of what it meant.

MARTHA.

Be calm, my love!—(*Aside*). What am I doom'd to hear?
(*Aloud*) But tell me, pray, of what he spoke with thee?

IOLANTHE.

Of much—oh much! to me both new and strange;
Knowledge had he of many, many things,
Whereof before I never heard. He said—
Yet I, alack! could comprehend him not—

He said, we could distinguish many things
With—with the help of sight.

MARTHA (*aside*).

Oh, God!

IOLANTHE.

Dost thou

Know what he meant by this?

MARTHA (*observes the KING and EBN JAHIA*).

Great heaven! the King!

RENÉ (*advances*).

My child!

IOLANTHE (*falling on his neck*).

My own beloved father, art thou here?

RENÉ.

Thy tutor, Ebn Jahia, comes with me.

IOLANTHE.

He too! Where is he? Let me give you welcome!

(EBN JAHIA *gives her his hand*.)

RENÉ (*takes MARTHA aside, while EBN JAHIA converses with*

IOLANTHE).

What has occurred?

MARTHA.

Oh God! I do not know.

In full reliance, that she could not wake,

Till she was waken'd up, we left the house

While she lay sleeping. But the while—so she

Maintains, although 'tis scarcely possible,
Some stranger has been here, and talk'd with her.

RENÉ.

Imprudent haste! When I went after him,
I did not mark to close the door behind me.
Well, Martha, and this stranger?

MARTHA.

He has spoken,
So far as I can gather from the maze,
Wherein she still doth wander—of her blindness.

RENÉ.

How! Of her blindness! Well, 'tis heaven's decree,
That she beforehand should be made aware!
So be it! (*Beckons to EBN JAHIA*) Ebn Jahia, hast thou heard?

EBN JAHIA.

This accident was fortunate indeed.
A stranger woke her. Here upon the table
I found the amulet. Yet what she heard
Of her condition, is but dark to her.
I must require that she be fully told,
As you agreed.

RENÉ.

My resolution's taken. (*approaches IOLANTHE*).
Lend me thine ear attentively, my child!
No longer may't be hidden, that thy life
Hath reached a climax, that will task thy firmness.

Wilt thou with patience hear me? Patiently,
If unexpected sorrow wound thy soul,
Learn to endure this sorrow?

IOLANTHE.

Father, say on!

It will be less severe, if from thy lips
It come to me.

RENÉ.

Then listen, Iolanthe.

I know not what the stranger said to thee;
Yet I surmise, he told thee—what with care
We have till now conceal'd—that to thy soul
There lacks one potent instrument, to grasp
The world that round thee lies; and this is true!
For what thou lackest is the gift of sight.

IOLANTHE.

Ev'n so; and yet I understood him not.

RENÉ.

Then learn from me: There is a certain power,
Which men do call the light. Like wind and storm,
It doth descend unto us from above,
And, like to these, with swiftness uncontroll'd,
The objects, which it touches, gain a new
Significance, and a peculiar stamp,
And oftentimes with warmth 'tis closely blent.
'Tis through the eye it finds its way to us,
And by the power of seeing it we gain
A true perception of the universe,

As it went forth from the Creator's hand,
And apprehend His wisdom and His goodness.
What thou by slow degrees and toilsome pain,
Hast, until now, been forced to guess, the eye
Gives us to see and recognise with ease,
By its consistence and peculiar form.
(*With emotion*) Early thine eye the power of vision lost,
And this fair frame of earth, this radiant realm,
To thee, my darling child, was early closed—
And all our care could scantily supply
The loss, which thou in infancy sustain'd :
All we could do was, from thee still to ward
The shock and burden of intrusive cares,
And hide from thee their bitter origin.

IOLANTHE.

Ah, father! These are wondrous words—to me
Incomprehensible. The universe,
How it came forth from the Creator's hand,
Knew I not that? Was this shut up from me?
How canst thou say so? My Creator, have I
Not recognised Him in the universe?
Hath not the roaring blast, the zephyr's breath—
Hath not the warmth, that circles everywhere,
The earth's so fit arrangement, and its power
To nurture plants with blossom and with fruits—
Hath not stone, metal, and the flowing streams,
The choir of sweet birds' voices, shown me well
The great Creator in the universe?
And have I not by thee, ev'n as by all

That's dear to me, been taught to comprehend
 What our Creator with the world design'd ?
 Even I am an expression of His will.
 Where'er I turn—in nature, in the speech
 Of others, in the depths of mine own being,
 In thoughts that spring from thoughts, an endless chain,
 In all, to me the self-same voice resounds,
 And of His glory loudly testifies.

RENÉ (*aside to EBN JAHIA*).

Ah, Ebn Jahia, this so lovely faith,
 We have destroy'd it!

IOLANTHE.

Explain one thing to me!
 I with my eyes, it seems, should grasp the world.
 Yon stranger, too, who lately was with me,
 And whose strange words are stamp'd so deeply here,
 He spoke of sight. What is it, then, to see?
 Can I, O father, see his voice, which touch'd
 My soul with joy and sadness? Can I see
 With these mine eyes the nightingale's thick note,
 Whereon I've mused so oft, and vainly striven
 To follow it in thought away, away?—
 Or is her song a flower, whose fragrant breath
 I know, but not its root, and stem, and leaves?

RENÉ.

Oh, my dear child, each of thy questions fills
 My soul with agony. Trust, love, to me,
 And leave it to a happier time, to show

What now to thee must be inexplicable.
 One thing, however, know. I have a hope,
 The hope, which hath sustain'd me until now,
 That yet thy sight may be restored to thee :
 That thy dear eyes may open once again
 To the glad sunbeams ; and oh, grant it, Heav'n !
 Thy noble friend and tutor, Ebn Jahia,
 With his rare leech-craft hath been long preparing
 The favourable hour to test our hopes.
 Now is it come, my own, my darling child !
 Confide in him. Go with him to the house.
 Martha shall wait upon thee.—At the first
 Thou'lt sink into a slumber—and from that
 If so it be heaven's gracious will—aroused—

(Is stifled with emotion.)

IOLANTHE.

What ails thee, father ? Wherefore shakes thy hand ?
 My own dear father, joy'st thou not, that now
 The hour has come, thou'st panted for so long ?
 Thou fearest it will prove unfortunate.
 Yet even then shall I not be, as ever,
 Thy child, thine own dear child—thy child, who joys
 To be so dear—joys in her happy lot—
 Let me go in, then——

RENÉ.

Oh, my child, my child !

IOLANTHE.

Nay, do not fear ! For what my sage kind master

Has ponder'd well, will prosper, I am sure.
It feels to me, as though ev'n now I knew
The singular power which thou hast call'd the light,
And it had found its way to me already.

Ah, while that wondrous stranger was beside me,
A feeling quiver'd through me, which I ne'er
Had known before, and every word he spoke
Resounded like an echo in my soul,

With new and unimagined melodies.

—Didst thou not say, the power of light is swift,
And gives significance to what it touches?

That it is also closely blent with warmth—
With the heart's warmth? Oh, I know it is.

If what thou call'st the light consist in this,
Then a forewarning tells me, it will be

Reveal'd to me to-day. Yet on one point
Thou dost mistake. 'Tis not the eye that sees;

Here, close beside the heart, our vision lies;
Here is it seated in remembrance sweet,

A reflex of the light that pierced my soul,
The light I go with bounding hope to meet!

(Exit into the house with MARTHA.)

RENÉ *(to EBN JAHIA, who is about to follow).*

Stay, Ebn Jahia! Canst understand all this?

Where is the stranger, who intruded thus
Upon her bosom's peace? How to myself

Can I explain these passion-laden words?

What thinkest thou?

EBN JAHIA.

Not easily explain'd
Is the full climax of a woman's mood,
And this, I own, goes counter to my plans.

RENÉ.

Explain thyself!

EBN JAHIA.

Suppose her thoughts are bent
To rest upon this stranger—then, 'twould seem,
That he controls her, and I strongly doubt
A happy issue to my art. And yet
In this conjuncture two desires may meet,
Which, blent in intimate communion, may
Strive to one end with like intensity.
In this hope I may rest—but only feebly.

(Exit into the house.)

RENÉ.

Who could it be, was here? Unless Bertrand
Should chance to know——

Enter ALMERIK through the concealed door.

My Almerik! Thou here?

ALMERIK.

I bring a letter for my liege.

RENÉ.

From Tristan? *(Breaks open the seal.)*

It is from him. What do I see? Come hither!

He breaks with me. He wishes to undo
Our solemn contract.

ALMERIK.

How! Undo the contract?

RENÉ (*reading*).

Amazement! He admits him in the wrong,
And leaves to me to dictate the amends;
Yet—he repudiates my daughter's hand.

ALMERIK.

Matchless audacity!

RENÉ.

Ah, Almerik,

This is the fate that dogs me evermore.
An evil portent this, I fear me much,
For what this hour may bring. These nuptials,
Whereon I had the fairest visions rear'd,
Unconsciously were wedded with the hope,
That Iolanthe should regain her sight.
One hope is gone—a little time may see
The other crush'd. Yet no! I will not stoop
To foolish fond lamentings! Let that come,
Which heaven in wisdom hath ordain'd for us!
Who brought the letter?

ALMERIK.

One of Geoffrey's people,
Who said, that Tristan now was lodged with him.

RENÉ.

With Geoffrey? Well, there still, perchance, is hope.
Perchance he may—But yet—What noise is that?
The clash of arms resounding from the pass!

ALMERIK (*approaches the door*).

They force an entrance——

RENÉ.

Force? Injurious knaves!

ALMERIK.

A handful of our people——

RENÉ.

Out with your sword!
They shall not flout King René unchastised.

 SIXTH SCENE.

KING RENÉ, ALMERIK, TRISTAN *in complete armour, with his train.*
Afterwards GEOFFREY, with his train.

(*During the progress of this scene, the evening red spreads over the valley
and the distant hills, and remains so till the close of the piece.*)

TRISTAN.

Give back! The force, that sought to keep the pass,
Has yielded to our arms. Do you surrender!

RENÉ.

How now! What man art thou, whose ruffian hands
With shock of arms doth desecrate this ground?
Stand, or my wrath shall strike thee to the dust!

TRISTAN.

Husband thy words, old man. I have no fears.
I do believe, this place is in the thrall
Of some unholy and malignant power,
Which keeps thee trembling, but gives nerve to me.
If that thou be'st a sorcerer, and dost hope
For aid from magic spells, despair thy charm.
For know, the pope did consecrate this sword;
This scarf was woven, too, by holy hands
Within the Mary Convent at Avignon,
And, 'neath this mail of proof, abides the will
To quell thee, as Saint George the dragon quell'd.

RENÉ.

Deluded man, what motive brings thee here?

TRISTAN.

Reply to me! Art thou this valley's lord?

RENÉ.

Truly I am this valley's lord, I own—
Nor ends my title there. But who art thou?

Enter GEOFFREY, with his train.

GEOFFREY.

What do I see? King René!—(*kneels*) noble king!

TRISTAN.

What's here! — King René!

RENÉ.

Geoffrey, thou in league

With one that is thy monarch's foe?

GEOFFREY.

Your pardon!

He posted on before. I came too late.

RENÉ (*to TRISTAN*).

Yet tell me, who art thou?

TRISTAN.

My name is Tristan

Of Vaudemont; a name you well do know.

RENÉ.

How, Tristan? (*To GEOFFREY*.) Is this true?

GEOFFREY.

'Tis as he says.

RENÉ (*musings*).

And so 'twas you belike, as I conclude,

Were here to-day already?

TRISTAN.

Yes, my liege,
Chance, not presumption, led me to this place.
I did not dream that you were ruler here.

RENÉ.

But say, what motive brings you back again ?

TRISTAN.

You know it.

RENÉ.

Nay, I know it not. Explain.

TRISTAN.

Can this be so ? Within this blooming vale,
Where all is marvellous, there lives conceal'd,
And its most foremost wonder, a fair girl,
Whose praise not all Provence's troubadours
Could chant in measures equal to her worth.

RENÉ.

And this fair girl, you say ? Continue, sir !

TRISTAN.

Upon my soul such impress deep hath wrought,
That I am bound her slave for evermore.

RENÉ.

And know you who she is ?

TRISTAN.

No. Yet there's proof
Upon her countenance, and in her words,
Of high degree, and inborn nobleness.

RENÉ.

And have you noted not, that nature, who
In all things else hath been so bountiful,
Left her one flaw?

TRISTAN.

Ah yes, alas! she's blind!
Yet there doth flow within her soul a light,
That makes all luminous, which else were dark!

RENÉ.

And though you are aware that she is blind——

TRISTAN.

Yet, at her feet with rapture would I lay
The golden circle of my earldom down.

RENÉ.

Now by the holy image in Clairvaux,
You are the rarest marvel of our vale!
You press in here with weapons in your hand,
To bear off that, which hath for years been yours,
Yet which you now insultingly contemn.

TRISTAN.

How so, my liege ?

RENÉ.

Know then, that this fair girl,
Who took your heart a prisoner, is my daughter.

TRISTAN.

Your daughter, she ?

RENÉ.

My daughter, my young count :
The same whom you, as this your letter bears,
Can in no wise consent to take for bride ;
The same who raised in you dislike so strong,
That, but to 'scape from her, you were content
To quit your claims for ever to Lorraine !
The same, moreover, whom you so have charm'd,
That I might almost doubt, if the poor girl
So lightly would abandon you.

TRISTAN.

My liege,
Thou wilt not mock me with so wild a joy.

RENÉ.

'Tis e'en as I have said.

TRISTAN.

But why was she—

RENÉ.

Shut up within this vale? Of that anon.
 You little deem, my lord, that you are come
 At a momentous crisis. Iolanthe,
 My darling child, perchance, e'en while we talk,
 Sinks into darkest night for evermore,
 Or wakes to taste the glorious light of day.

TRISTAN.

What sayest thou, my liege?

RENÉ.

This very hour
 Has the physician, Ebn Jahia, chosen
 To see, if possibly—(*approaches the house*)—But hush! methinks
 There is a stir within. Keep silence, all!
 She speaks. Oh, Tristan, hear! Iolanthe speaks!
 Ah, are these sounds of pleasure or of wail,
 That murmur o'er my darling angel's lips?
 —But some one comes.

SEVENTH SCENE.

*To the others enter BERTRAND, afterwards MARTHA, IOLANTHE, and
 EBN JAHIA.*

RENÉ (*to BERTRAND, who enters from the house*).

Quick, Bertrand, quick and tell me,
 How goes on all within?

BERTRAND.

Alas ! I know not.

She has awaked, and it is nearly over ;
But I ran forth in terror.

Enter MARTHA hastily.

MARTHA.

She can see !

RENÉ.

How, Martha, see ?

TRISTAN.

Oh, grant it, Heaven !

MARTHA.

Hush, hush !

She's coming forth.

Enter EBN JAHIA, leading IOLANTHE by the hand.

(He beckons to the others to retire.)

IOLANTHE.

Where art thou leading me ?

Oh, God, where am I ? Support me—oh, support me !

EBN JAHIA.

Calm thee, my child !

IOLANTHE.

Support me—oh, stand still !

I ne'er was here before—what shall I do
 In this strange place? Oh, what is that? Support me!
 It comes so close on me, it gives me pain.

EBN JAHIA.

Iolanthe! Calm thee! Look upon the earth!
 That still hath been to thee thy truest friend,
 And now, too, greets thee with a cordial smile.
 —This is the garden thou hast ever tended.

IOLANTHE.

My garden—mine? Alas, I know it not.
 The plants are terrible to see—take care!
 They're falling on us!

EBN JAHIA.

Cease your fears, my child.
 These stately trees are the date-palms, whose leaves
 And fruit to thee have been long known.

IOLANTHE.

Ah no!

Indeed, I know them not!

(Raises her eyes towards the sky.)

This radiance too,
 That everywhere surrounds me—yon great vault,
 That arches there above us—oh, how high!
 What is it? Is it God? Is it his spirit,
 Which, as you said, pervades the universe?

EBN JAHIA.

Yon radiance is the radiance of the light.
God is in it, like as he is in all.
Yon blue profound, that fills yon airy vault,
It is the heaven, where, as we do believe,
God hath set up His glorious dwelling-place.
Kneel down, my child! and raise your hands on high,
To heaven's o'erarching vault—to God—and pray!

IOLANTHE.

Ah, teach me then to pray to him as I ought.
No one hath ever told me, how I should
Pray to this Deity who rules the world!

EBN JAHIA.

Then kneel thee down, my darling child, and say,
"Mysterious Being, who to me hast spoken,
When darkness veil'd mine eyes, teach me to seek Thee,
In Thy light's beams, that do illumine this world;
Still, in the world, teach me to cling to Thee!"

IOLANTHE (*kneels*).

Mysterious Being, who to me hast spoken,
When darkness veil'd mine eyes, teach me to seek Thee,
In Thy light's beams, that do illumine this world;
Still, in the world, teach me to cling to Thee!
—Yes, He hath heard me. I can feel He hath,
And on me pours the comfort of His peace.

He is the only one that speaks to me,
Invisible and kindly, as before.

EBN JAHIA.

Arise, arise, my child, and look around.

IOLANTHE.

Say what are these, that bear such noble forms!

EBN JAHIA.

Thou know'st them all.

IOLANTHE.

Ah, no, I can know nothing.

RENÉ (*approaching IOLANTHE*).

Look on me, Iolanthe—me, thy father!

IOLANTHE (*embracing him*).

My father! Oh, my God! Thou art my father!
I know thee now—thy voice, thy clasping hand.
Stay here! Be my protector, be my guide!
I am so strange here in this world of light.
They've taken all that I possess'd away—
All that in old time was thy daughter's joy.

RENÉ.

I have cull'd out a guide for thee, my child.

IOLANTHE.

Whom mean'st thou?

RENÉ (*pointing to TRISTAN*).

See, he stands expecting thee.

IOLANTHE.

The stranger yonder? Is he one of those
Bright cherubim, thou once didst tell me of?
Is he the angel of the light come down?

RENÉ.

Thou knowest him—hast spoken with him. Think!

IOLANTHE.

With him—with him? (*Holds her hands before her eyes.*) Father, I
understand.

In yonder glorious form must surely dwell
The voice, that late I heard—gentle, yet strong,
The one sole voice that lives in nature's round.
(*To TRISTAN, who advances towards her*) Oh, but one word of what
thou said'st before!

TRISTAN.

Oh, sweet and gracious lady!

IOLANTHE.

List, oh, list!

With these dear words the light's benignant rays
Found out a way to me; and these sweet words
With my heart's warmth are intimately blent.

TRISTAN (*embraces her*).

Iolanthe! Dearest!

RENÉ.

Blessings on you both
From God, whose wondrous works we all revere!

(Curtain drops.)

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