

Side #11

Ida
Sacharissa
Chloe
Ada
Psyche

PRINCESS IDA – ACT III

PRIN. I like your spirit, girls! We have to meet
Stern bearded warriors in fight to-day;
Wear naught but what is necessary to
Preserve your dignity before their eyes,
And give your limbs full play.

BLAN. One moment, ma'am,
Here is a paradox we should not pass
Without inquiry. We are prone to say
'This thing is Needful – that, Superfluous' –
Yet they invariably co-exist!
We find the Needful comprehended in
The circle of the grand Superfluous,
Yet the Superfluous cannot be bought
Unless you're amply furnished with the Needful.
These singular considerations are –

PRIN. Superfluous, yet not Needful – so you see
The terms may independently exist.
(*To Ladies*) Women of Adamant, we have to show
That Woman, educated to the task,
Can meet Man, face to face, on his own ground,
And beat him there. Now, let us set to work;
Where is our lady surgeon?

SACH. Madam, here!

PRIN. We shall require your skill to heal the wounds
Of those that fall.

SACH. (*alarmed*) What, heal the wounded?

PRIN. Yes!

SACH. And cut off real live legs and arms?

PRIN. Of course!

SACH. I wouldn't do it for a thousand pounds!

PRIN. Why, how is this? Are you faint-hearted, girl?
You've often cut them off in theory!

SACH. In theory I'll cut them off again
With pleasure, and as often as you like,
But not in practice.

PRIN. Coward! Get you hence,
I've craft enough for that, and courage too,
I'll do your work! My fusiliers, advance!
Why, you are armed with axes! Gilded toys!
Where are your rifles, pray?

CHLOE. Why, please you, ma'am,
We left them in the armoury, for fear
That in the heat and turmoil of the fight,
They might go off!

Away, away – I'll meet these men alone
Since all my women have deserted me!

Exeunt all but PRINCESS, singing refrain of 'Please you, do not hurt us', pianissimo.

PRIN. So fail my cherished plans – so fails my faith –
 And with it hope, and all that comes of hope!