

IN THE CLOUDS;

A GLIMPSE OF UTOPIA.

A Fairy Extrabaganza.

BY

GILBERT À BECKETT

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Ali Baba; Lending a Hand; Terrible Hymen; Glitter; Diamonds and Hearts; Red Hands; The Babes in the Wood; Face to Face; The Two Harlequins; An Utter Perversion of the Brigand; Charles II., or something like History; Christabel; Last of the Legends;

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IN THE CLOUDS.

First performed at the Alexandra Theatre (under the management of Madame St. Claire), on Monday, December 8th, 1873.

Characters.

POLYDOR (<i>a wandering Prince</i>)	...	MADAME ST. CLAIRE.
ZYGOS (<i>a limited Monarch</i>)	...	Mr. E. DANVERS.
GLYCYS (<i>Public Satisfaction</i>)	...	Mr. J. BAKER.
MYTHOS (<i>Public Protector</i>)	...	Mr. J. W. TURNER.
HYPNOS (<i>Public Recreator</i>)	...	Mr. L. CHAMBERLAYNE.
CYON (<i>a Page</i>)	Miss COSTIN.
A SOLDIER	Mr. C. MORELLI.
EUMENIDE (<i>the Queen</i>)	...	Miss M. DAVIS.
CHRYSEA (<i>a Lady of the Court</i>)	...	Miss M. K. NOTT.
CELIANTE (<i>a Princess</i>)	...	Miss ALICE BARTH.

Pages, Courtiers, &c., &c.

IN THE CLOUDS.

SCENE.—*The Terrace and Grounds of "A Castle in the Air."* In extreme distance, a lovely blue landscape of sea shore, broken with calm quiet bays, mingling in the more immediate foreground with rich woods and the park adjacent to the castle gardens; on the R., entrance to the castle, indicated by a fanciful gothic gateway; L., a clump of noble trees; L. C., an ivy-grown gothic well, surmounted by antique iron work, pulley, wheel, and rope; the whole suggesting a well preserved and ornamental ruin. General aspect of the scene that of a beautiful bright earthly spot, slightly idealised.

On the rising of the curtain, are discovered asleep GLYCYS, MYTHOS, and HYPNOS—Music—after a few bars, the following

CHORUS.

Dream, dream, life is real,
Meat is dear, though earth is fair;
Seek then your ideal,
In our Castle in the Air.

At the conclusion of Chorus, enter POLYDOR, preceded by PAGE, who is bowing and showing him the way.

PAGE. These are the castle grounds, my lord. This, (*pointing to gate*) the palace of the king!

POLY. And these?

PAGE. Oh, they're the Government. They're often thus.

POLY. Asleep, and this Utopia! Dear me, I thought to find all perfect here. The land of "bright dreams realised." And these, three ministers!—

PAGE. *Have realised their brightest dreams, my lord.*

POLY. Indeed!

PAGE. They all do nothing, sleep, and draw their pay. And *your* "bright dream," if I may ask?

POLY. Oh, what *I* want to find? Well, something new. There's nothing I've not seen and done upon the common world, down there. In fact, I'm *blasé*, bored to death. I want a new sensation, they tell me I may find it here.

PAGE. Just so, my lord. Perhaps you'll take the strangers' scroll and key, (*gives him a small gilt scroll and an iron key*) and kindly read the scroll.

POLY. (*looking at it*) With pleasure. Let me see. (*opens and reads—Music, very soft, tremolo throughout*)

"Thou who hast reared, in visions wondrous fair,
Thine own ideal 'Castle in the Air,'
Know that 'tis here. But mark, if thou would'st stay,
Ere sunset gilds this new created day,
Some being of a bright ethereal race
Must, willing or unwilling, take thy place,
Must pass, unblest with fortune, rank, or name,
To that too real world, from whence you came;
This iron key, though love and hope cry 'No!'
Will like a spell command, and he must go."

(*Music ceases*)

(*he pauses*) What! some one must return to earth at sunset? Suppose I fling the key away, and give it to no one? It's ugly enough.

PAGE. (*points to scroll*) You haven't quite finished, I think, my lord.

POLY. Ha, no. (*proceeds—Music*)

"But should, ere daylight fades upon the deep,
No parting footfall wake the silent keep,
'Then castle dreamers, joys of fancies' birth
Shall melt in weeping mists, and fall to earth!"

(*music ceases*) What? destroy this enchanting vision! Annihilate Utopia? Never! I'll set about finding a substitute at once. One of these gentlemen, perhaps? (*goes towards GLYCYS*)

PAGE. And now, my lord, I go to tell the King that you are here. *Bows and exit, R.*

POLY. Thanks! (*surveying GLYCYS*) So *his* Utopia is

to sleep, and mine—well, mine's to wake him up. I don't quite see how we can hit off both. Perhaps he'll tell me. (*wakes GLYCYS*) I beg your pardon, but (*GLYCYS gets up, regarding him half awake*) but—I am a perfect stranger here.

GLYCYS. (*briskly*) A perfect stranger! Delighted, I am sure. (*shakes him cordially by the hand*) I don't know who you are. Your antecedents may be of the most questionable kind. I hope you'll stay with me a month.

POLY. (*taken aback*) Such hospitality, to one you do not know—why—really——

GLYCYS. (*cutting him short*) Don't mention it. Allow me. (*offers him cheque book*) Blank cheques—draw on my bankers to your fullest need. I think you said—a perfect stranger? (*POLYDOR bows*) Hypnos! Mythos! (*wakes them, they rise sleepily*) Let me introduce a perfect stranger to you. (*they instantly collect themselves, and welcome him*) This is Mythos, our general-in-chief, a most expensive toy.

MYTHOS. (*shaking POLYDOR's hand*) Who hopes to see you at the mess six times a week, and will with pleasure put you up at once at both his clubs. Delighted!

GLYCYS. And this our public recreator, Hypnos. (*introducing him*)

HYPNOS. (*melodramatically*) Who'll show you Haamlet—with the players' perfect art—whenever—you have—lei-sure—allow me—(*giving him orders*) Admissions to the upper boxes (admitted after seven) for a year. I am most de-lighted.

POLY. (*bewildered*) Thanks—really—you are too kind. Such courtesy is overwhelming—and you are ministers—yet so polite! 'Tis marvellous!

GLYCYS. Ideal, my dear sir, we aim at, and reach—but this, “the grand ideal.” You'll find what visionaries have vainly hoped for in that groping world existing—absolutely existing—here. Look now at me. I am Prime Minister. I have no principles whatever. I fill nine posts, a member of (*touches sash*) a Proletarian Club, and yet a servant of the throne. I hit the happy mean, which reached, is the Statesman's goal. Whatever comes, I always manage to keep in!

"I'll be a little sleep, and draw the
 up the curtain, and look out."

"Well, son,
 you'll be a little sleep, and draw the
 up the curtain, and look out."

"Because you'll be
 a little sleep, and draw the
 up the curtain, and look out."

"Because you'll be
 a little sleep, and draw the
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up, and mine—well, mine's to wake him up. I don't see how we can hit off both. Perhaps he'll tell me.

(GROSS) I beg your pardon, but (GROSS gets sporting his half smile) but—I am a perfect stranger.

(VIRGIL) A perfect stranger? Delighted. I shake him cordially by the hand. I don't know you are. Your antecedents may be of the most noble kind. I hope you'll stay with me a month. (takes short) Such hospitality, to me poor in—why—really—

(taking him short) Don't mention it. Allow me (takes short) Blank cheques—draw in my to your least need. I think you suit—a perfect (PARRON looks) Hypocrite? Without (takes short) Let me introduce a person to you (they instantly collect themselves, and look) This is Mythen, our general-in-chief, & I shall try.

(shaking PARRON'S hand) Who comes to see me now—six times a week, and will with pleasure stop at once at both his clubs. Delighted.

And this our public recreation, Hypocrite (to him)

(addressing him) Who'll show you the players' perfect art—wherever—you have—allow me—(giving him orders) Admissions to boxes (admitted after seven in a year) I am signed.

(addressed) Thanks—really—you are too kind, courtesy is overwhelming—and you are yet so polite! The marvellous—(he looks my dear sir, we are it, and then—has he good deal? No! I find what resources have been for in that growing world existing—where—here. Look how it is. I am going—I have no principles whatever. I will make a matter of (touches him) & Providence shall be a servant of the throne. I am for better—what is the business—good. Whatever I may manage to keep it.

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MYTHOS. Quite the ideal Premier! We're all ideal here; I'm the ideal Warrior!

POLY. Indeed!

MYTHOS. Dressed in the most perfect uniform that taste and science can contrive. I hold the colonelcies of three-and-twenty regiments, and swagger at reviews. I never draw my sword; in short, the only thing I ever do draw—is—my pay!

POLY. What, do you never fight?

MYTHOS. The perfect warrior fight? oh no, that is, except with this (*produces small volume*) This is my weapon, "The Handbook to Apology," translated into eighteen Eastern dialects! I've found it most effective. We enjoy perpetual peace.

POLY. And are your troops as perfect as yourself?

MYTHOS. The army, quite. Excuse me, perhaps you would like to see it? (*looking about with his glasses*) I saw it somewhere here just now. (*looking off*) Ha, there. (*calling*) Hi, here, hi!

Enter a SOLDIER, dressed in the ordinary regulation coat (line) with a Quaker's hat on, ornamented by a straight white feather—he wears spectacles, long hair, carries, slung at his back, instead of pouch, rather a large volume, and bears, instead of a rifle, a red umbrella, surmounted by a bayonet, on the top of which is a conspicuous cork—he marches in and presents arms.

MYTHOS. The Utopian army! Behold, "ideal force."

POLY. What, does it consist of one?

MYTHOS. One rank and file all told, and quite enough. A perfect soldier is never meant to hurt. The uniform, suggested at a recent social science congress, is quite unique: (*pointing*) a bayonet, a cork upon the point, and here (*pointing*) instead of cartridges, a standard work upon international law (*shouting in military style*—SOLDIER *goes through appropriate business*) Shoulder arms—carry arms—right about turn—prepare for action (SOLDIER *drops on one knee, puts down umbrella and refers to book, all with military precision*) Receive cavalry. (SOLDIER *takes up umbrella, facing the audience, opens it, holding it before him as a shield—on the umbrella, is legibly written*

in white letters "We won't do it again") Retreat!
(SOLDIER *disappears*) What think you of ideal war?

POLY. About as much as I do of ideal peace. Here, where's the gate? I'm off. (*about to go*)

HYPNOS. (*staying him*) Nay, stranger, but not thus. You need but cheering with ideal art. (*falling into exaggerated business*) To be or *not* to be, that is the question, whether——

POLY. (*cutting him short*) Thanks, but I came here in search of "something new," and I have met with public recreators, soldiers, aye, and statesmen too, very much like you in that imperfect common world in which I live. It's bad enough, but this, excuse me, seems a little worse. (*about to go*)

GLYCYS. (*barring his way*) Worse, with perpetual place!

MYTHOS. Perpetual place!

HYPNOS. Perpetual pit!

POLY. Advantages no doubt from *your* respective points of view, but not enticing novelties to *me*. Once more, I'm off. Ta-ta, I would rather go in for perpetual ennui.

(*about to exit, meets CHRYSEA and CELIANTE, who enter L.U.E.—he starts back, struck with admiration—CELIANTE pauses and looks coyly at him—CHRYSEA crosses, but is unnoticed by POLYDOR—she crosses and looks enquiringly at him*)

POLY. By Jove—I think I'll bore myself a little here!

CHRY. Prince Polydor, the stranger who has just arrived?

POLY. (*bowing*) The same, fair lady. (*aside*) A couple of "ideal flirts."

CHRY. We were just seeking you. You have, I am told, some fifteen thousand pounds a-year, two country places, a box at both the operas, good expectations, and you know a decent set. In short, you're what they call "a catch." You'll do. (*giving him her hand*) I'll marry you.

POLY. Thank you; I'm sure I'm very much obliged!

CELI. (*taking him aside*) Hush! you might do worse. She doesn't love you—now (*coyly*) I do; and so, by our

Utopian law, you never can be mine. But you may kiss me, if you like.

POLY. May I? (*kisses her*) Well; some novelty in this. What does it mean?

CHRY. We'll tell you.

Trio—POLYDOR, CELIANTE, CHRYSEA.

Air, "Lettre à mon Parrain."

CELL. Since you've come with fancies laden,
Rearing visions bright and fair,
Learn how each ideal maiden,
Builds her castle in the air.

CHRY. We've become our own matchmakers,
Take our pick of Dukes and Earls,
Don't object to wealthy Quakers,
We're such wise ideal girls.

POLY. What! is money your sole fashion,
And does love ne'er make a match?

CELL. Love! Who owns the tender passion,
Is packed off to Colney Hatch.

POLY. Well, I'm not with fancies laden,
On the subject of "the fair;"
But protect me from the maiden,
Who builds "Castles in the Air."

CELL. } *Chorus*.—Since you've come, &c.

CHRY. }

POLY. Well, I'm not, &c.

CHRY. If some youth in accents winning,
Tells his love—we hide our mirth,
And remark, "Before beginning,
Would you tell us—what you're worth?"

POLY. And should he, in indignation,
Answer, "Come—this is too bad!"

CELL. Without further explanation,
We should lock him up as mad.

POLY. Well, I'm not with fancies laden,
On the subject of "the fair;"
But I'll never court a maiden,
Who builds "Castles in the Air."

CELL. } *Chorus as before.*

CHRY. }

POLY. }

POLY. (*to CHRYSEA*) You're rather nice, you know ; but your style isn't *new*. One can meet lots of you in any London season.

CHRY. (*tenderly*) What! is there, then, another perfect land, where girls scout younger sons—and, without a blush, make offers to an eligible "catch" like you?

POLY. Oh dear, yes ; I meet some dozens every day. but I decline them all.

CELI. (*tenderly*) And are there any girls who, also frankly, without the slightest blush, avow their love?

POLY. Oh, yes ; dozens, too,—but I invariably refuse to spoon.

CHRY. (*affectionately*) Spooning, dear, comes *after* marriage.

POLY. (*same business*) Ah, I see ; you think, if you were an "ideal wife"—

CHRY. Of course, dear, I should spoon.

POLY. You would?

CHRY. I would—with some one else ! (*POLYDOR turns away in disgust*)

CELI. (*to him*) Don't go ;—that is—the fact is—my ideal has ever been to be a simple girl. (*shyly*) Unfortunately, it makes one say so many awkward things. You're very nice ;—I beg your pardon—I meant—pray, what is *your* ideal?

POLY. Well ; I've done everything. I'm—I'm rather bored, and I am in search of something *new*.

CHRY. (*thinking*) New—new—(*flourish of trumpets outside*) Ha ! a happy thought—you haven't seen papa?

POLY. Papa! who's he?

GLYCYS, HYPNOS and MYTHOS. Our Majesty the King!

Music—Enter ZYGOS, EUMENIDE, CYON, PAGES, and COURTIERs, preceded by the SOLDIER—as ZYGOS enters GLYCYS and all the MINISTERS come forward to greet him.

Air and Chorus, Entr'acte, "Mignon," Act II.

ZYGOS. I am the ideal king,

Though I never, never, never, never have
my way ;—

I can't do a single thing,
And no one seems to mind what I say.

POLY. What an ideal king !
Wears his crown about the town, and yet can't
have his way.

CELI. If he does the slightest thing
They merely stop his royal pay.

CYON. He can't walk about the streets,
For the little, little, little small boys cry,
And every soul he ever meets
Takes him for a guy—for a guy.

Chorus. He is the ideal king,—
Though he never, never had his way ;
He can't do a single thing,
And no one minds a word he may say.

CELI. (*introducing*) Papa, allow me. This is the
stranger prince, who comes up here in search of "some-
thing new." (*they bow*)

ZYGOS. Indeed ! What does he say, then, to the
"coming monarch?" (*strikes an attitude*)

POLY. The "coming monarch !" I thought he was
suppressed ?

ZYGOS. Oh, no ! In fact he's come—I am "ideal
majesty." Behold a perfect sinecure ! I'm simply kept
to wear the crown, and lay foundation stones. In fact I
represent a monarchy so "limited," that sometimes
entre nous, I almost wish they'd treat me like a company,
and "wind me up !"

EUMEN. Silence, my liege ! you are a perfect king—
and being such—you'll give your sanction to this care-
fully considered bill. (*shews scroll*)

ZYGOS. (*looking at it*) More woman's rights ! What's
this? (*reads*) "A bill to further regulate the orderly
behaviour of married men." What ! dinner at Greenwich
with a friend a misdemeanour, and—(*reading*) Hulloah,
Glycys, I wont stand *this* ! (*giving scroll to him*) Read
out the fifteenth clause.

GLYCYS. (*reading*) "And be it further enacted, for the
better regulating of the conduct of thoughtless and
discontented men of middle age, that if the said friend
hereinbefore specified be of the female sex, other than
the diner's maternal aunts and grandmother on either

side, the said diner shall, on conviction, be imprisoned for a term not less than six calendar months, and whipped occasionally at the discretion of the presiding magistrate."

ZYGOS. Gammon! Deprive humanity—a large and respectable portion of it—of a great resource! (*aside to him*) Glycys—come—Mrs. G. has been at this!

GLYCYS. That clause, my liege, was added by her majesty, the Queen.

EUMEN. (*severely*) Perhaps the Queen has too good reason to add a clause that accurately defines the nature of a "friend." My lord, you'll sign the bill.

ZYGOS. What! rob my hapless race of fellow-men of their one great refuge—never! We've let you come into our clubs, and you've paid us out by blackballing every one who's not a single man! You vote—divide—you preach—you bribe—you physic us—you teach us—ruin us—and write us shocking novels—and now you drive us melancholy mad!

POLY. By Jove, if they do *that*, there's nothing very new about your women!

ZYGOS. Well, I can't say that the Queen's exactly what you might term "New!"

EUMEN. (*indignant*) Sir, is there aught of age about me?

ZYGOS. My dear, you date a little earlier than your own back hair! I quite allow *that's* new! But it doesn't seem to strike the Prince. Here Glycys, all of you, give him the latest novelties. The newest things up here—*par excellence*.

GLYCYS. (*coming forward*) Political corruption gone—an unimpeachable elector, (*triumphantly*) who never takes a bribe!

ZYGOS. (*aside to POLYDOR*) Know how we've managed *that*? We've stopped the franchise—no one has a vote!

MYTH. A perfect army, and no more newspaper paragraphs—official blundering no more!

ZYGOS. (*in loud whisper to POLYDOR*) We've done away with the Horse Guards!

HYPNOS. A perfect drama—no insane burlesque or modern comedy—Shakspeare, in his native purity, night after night, and to a crowded house!

ZYGOS. All paper to the roof—the pit reserved by Government for aggravated criminals—the stalls licensed by a fashionable lunatic asylum—the boxes the last medical resource of those who cannot sleep—with those advantages, I've known his Hamlet run for fifteen nights!

CHRY. Maidens so perfectly brought up, they never know what it is to blush!

ZYGOS. The law forbids the use of rouge to females under nineteen years of age!

CELI. Flirtation rare, and true love quite extinct!

ZYGOS. Croquet become the legal pastime of younger sons and managing mamas!

EUMEN. Husbands grown wondrous moral, and never home a minute after nine!

ZYGOS. The public gas turned out at eight, and the possession of a latch-key—felony!

GLYCYS. (*to POLYDOR*) We have a perfect press—no false reports—no libels—no puffing up your friends.

ZYGOS. Yes, and this is how we do it. Where's this morning's "Perfect Times?" (*COURTIER gives him paper, he opens it and displays a blank sheet, only the title on it, "The Perfect Times"*) Blank! that's what we call pure journalism; we couldn't do it any other way.

POLY. (*astonished*) What, not even a single trade advertisement?

ZYGOS. Not one. Besides, we haven't any trade.

POLY. No trade?

ZYGOS. No, we all co-operate. I wear the crown, and keep a butcher's shop.

POLY. But can't you show me something new?

ZYGOS. Produce the magic extinguisher. (*two PAGES bring on large extinguisher*) The ideal police!

(*extinguisher is raised, POLICEMAN is discovered, who darts on to little BOY standing on stage*)

1ST POLICEMAN. Here, come along, I want you! What's he done?

2ND POLICEMAN. Can't you see? Drunk and disorderly.
Exeunt with BOY.

POLY. I have seen something like that in London. But now show me something new.

GLYCYS. Milk at sevenpence a quart—and guaranteed as genuine by the cow.

ZYGOS. A wise but general extinction of the pumps.

CELI. (*starting*) Ha, stay, I have a bright idea! you spoke of pumps. (*aside to POLYDOR*) You came in search of something new. Tell me, have you, in that world from whence you came, ever met with something men call truth?

POLY. Truth? Well, now you ask me, I cannot say I have. I have heard it mentioned, it isn't much the rage.

CELI. Hush, don't let them hear. It's punishable whatever it is, to mention it up here. You see that ruined well? (*points*) Within its depths, there is, the story goes, a draught of this same truth. Who drinks that water sees things really as they are, and knows himself at once for what he is.

POLY. Enables one to see things clearly? The Well of Truth must be a sort of soda without the "B."

CELI. Do you think so? I've often longed to let my pitcher down, and test its power. It's very slow up here, one sometimes gets a compliment, but never hears the truth—that's what I want to hear.

POLY. Well, then, you shall. (*going up towards the well*) Your Majesty, Utopians, dreamers, and the rest of you. My dream has been a new sensation—it seems that it is here. (*points to well*)

ZYGOS. That ancient well—preserved in ornamental guise to decorate our grounds—"old as the hills." There's nothing at the bottom.

POLY. But the Truth! (*chord—all start—sensation*) Here, where's a bucket? We'll just draw some up. (*excitement of every one except CELIANTE*)

ZYGOS. Quick, read him the Act of Parliament. Rash Stranger Prince, the well is closed by law. You must not throw cold water of that kind upon a castle in the air. (*POLYDOR takes hold of rope*) What, you won't desist? Here, call out the military—seize him at once. He plots against the very safety of the State! (*POLYDOR is seized and brought down*)

POLY. What! an ideal race objects to truth?

B

GLYCYS. The truth—pray what would come of all diplomacy? Secure him!

MYTH. What of the splendid system that produces me? Don't let him go!

HYPNOS. (*melodramatically*) What of the player's perfect art? Where shall I hide my head, if Na-ture is let loose? Away with him!

ZYGOS. (*apologetically*) You hear—that's the sort of view they take of it up here. I've no particular objection to a bucketful myself; but——

EUMEN. (*cutting him short*) But! Do you want the gaping world to know you for the fool you are?

ZYGOS. I shouldn't half mind that, if you could get rather a clearer view, my dear, of your own peculiar "virtues"—a tumbler-full would do you no great harm!

POLY. (*producing key*) So, this is your ideal hospitality—a stranger wants to "lionise" the place, and straightway you lock him up? But I'll be even with you! You are acquainted, I suppose, with the peculiar terms on which I hold this key? (*all start—he holds it up*)

ZYGOS. (*approaching him*) I am. Ere sunset you must return, or some one take your place! (*aside to him*) Between ourselves, if you don't mind the post, I'll abdicate, and leave the throne to you—I'll quit this festive scene, and seek a less ecstatic world!

POLY. (*declining*) Thanks!

ZYGOS. You won't! (*aloud*) Then, lock him up! And, stay—let him see Hamlet for a month, with afternoon performances—say, twice a week! (*horror of all*)

CELL. Oh, horrible! What will you do?

POLY. Behold! (*makes for well*) You won't let down the bucket? Be it so. (*holds up key—Music, tremolo*) Listen!

"But, should the sun sink in yon golden deep,
And yet no footfall wake the silent keep,
Then, castle-dreamers, joys of fancy's birth,
Shall melt in weeping mist and fall to earth!"

You know your doom—you've got till sunset—(*throws key down well*) so, perhaps, you'd better set to work and fish that up.

ZYGOS. Rash, but juvenile materialist, knowest thou what thou hast done?

POLY. I fancy I've put Utopia rather up a tree!

ZYGOS. (*to the rest*) Friends, fools and countrymen, this is no hour for compliments; the mild alternative is dissolution in an evening fog, or that—(*points to well*) Will any of you take the plunge, and draw it up? You know the penalty is probably a bucket full of truth. (*all turn away in horror*) You won't; well, then, pay up your life insurances, and make your wills; and now I'm off to spend the last three hours of this bright enjoyable ideal life!

EUMEN. At home, with me, my lord!

ZYGOS. No, dear, at Rosherville, with—ahem—my aunt! But, stay. Glycys, how ought a perfect State to meet extinction?

GLYCYS. Your majesty?

ZYGOS. A perfect State should be unmoved in any crisis. It strikes me we should come perfection rather strong in this.

GLYCYS. In this—well we generally celebrate invasion by a public dinner. (*general assent*)

ZYGOS. Ha, a public dinner! Good! You're all invited, and I'll take the chair.

Trio and Chorus. (Music by T. Pede).

ZYGOS. Hold him tight—serve him right!

Let him try a perfect jail.

Prison fare, rich and rare,

Life of comfort spent on bail!

Chorus.—Hold him, &c.

POLY. (*to ZYGOS*) No doubt up here you do things well—

Allow small comforts to a swell;

Cigars and billiards in his cell—

They pass the time away!

CELL. (*to POLY.*) You'll find yourself entirely free,

The prison does not boast a key;

They'll give you toast and shrimps for tea,

And champagne twice a day.

(*ZYGOS and CHORUS repeat and dance off.*)

(*at the conclusion POLYDOR is led into castle—all*)

dance off—SOLDIER remains on guard outside castle—Music—he looks about to see that no one is near—then sits down outside castle gate, and putting handkerchief over his head, goes to sleep)

Enter CELIANTE.

CELL. No one near—the sentinel, as usual, asleep—now will I soothe his slumbers with a pleasant song.

Song, “Lost Love” (Music by A. Cellier).

I must—I will try to get it. (*nears well*) Now, my ideal has been to be a sweet and simple maid—like one reads about in fairy stories, and meet a handsome dashing prince, and love him very much—and here he is, locked up, under my very eyes, doomed to—oh! it's too terrible, I must get up that key. Restore it him, and let him, if he will, escape to that imperfect world of his. (*Music—she approaches well*) Dear me, it's very deep; the rope seems strong, though, (*pulling it*) and runs upon the wheel. Oh, I'm so nervous. If I should be seen by any one—oh, dear. (*goes on turning the rope on wheel*) There's something coming up, and oh, so heavy. I've heard people say, the truth was hard to bear—it is indeed—but, ha, it comes—yes—here it is. Oh, that is beautiful! (*pulls up from well a small silver bucket, which she places on edge of well, and admires—chord—POLYDOR enters from R., cautiously, as if escaping*)

POLY. Well, so far so good. No one has stopped me yet. (*seeing CELIANTE*) Ha!

CELL. (*starting*) Oh dear, how you made me jump. How did you manage to get out?

POLY. How? The doors were open, and all free of bolts. Your perfect prisons seem a little out of gear.

CELL. But you shouldn't have escaped. Restraint up here is moral.

POLY. (*pointing to him*) But the sentinel?

CELL. Trusts entirely to your honour. See, he has gone to sleep. But look what I have been doing. You know I love you, and loving you have braved the law, and drawn up this. See, I've been fishing for the key.

POLY. What is that, a bucketful of truth? How very curious?

CELL. Just drawn it up (*looking into it*) and—well—this is delightful. Your key, yes, positively at the bottom.

POLY. By Jove, you don't say so!

CELL. Yes, I do (*about to take it out, pausing suddenly*) but how shall we get it out? Whoever tastes or even touches a single drop of this treacherous water, so they say, cannot exist up here. (*looking at it*) It's very clear and bright, but it must be most dreadful stuff.

POLY. Well, I shall try it. You see I am after something new. This is evidently the thing. (*about to take key out*) Allow me. (*music*)

CELL. (*terrified*) Oh no, oh don't. (*staying his hand*) You're young and beautiful, my own ideal Prince. I love you dreadfully, and would not see you harmed. I tell you this because I am a modest simple maid. No, no, not you; I will brave the penalty for thy sweet sake. Thus do I artless dare the treacherous truth. (*she takes key from the bucket—it is wet—as she does so, chord, she starts back as POLYDOR approaches her*)

POLY. (*producing handkerchief*) Allow me? Your hand is quite wet!

CELL. Don't touch me—I hate you!

POLY. Just now you said you loved me!

CELL. I know I did. Don't look at me. (*aside*) Oh, I feel so ashamed, and all so strange! (*looking at POLYDOR*) and—yes—I love him still—but—(*he advances*) Do leave me, sir. I'm much offended with you—can't you see I am. (*aside*) What awful falsehoods the truth makes one tell! (*to POLYDOR*) I wish you, sir, to go.

POLY. (*quietly*) Oh, if you insist, by all means. But as I only came up here in search of a new sensation, and as this seems about to hit it off—perhaps you will allow me—I'm tolerably *blasé*, and have done everything in turns—(*dips handkerchief in water*) but—(*chord—he starts and gazes rapturously at her*)

CELL. But?—

POLY. Love! Oh, this is very strange; yes, positively new. Young lady—angelic creature! Celiante, (*ardently*) the water of that well has taught me that everything is

pleasureless in life unblessed by this! Oh! say one word—but tell me, sweet ideal, simple Celiante, you'll be mine!

CELI. (*coily*) A sweet ideal, simple maid, under these circumstances, says nothing—but she blushes thus. (*turning her head away*) How do I know you love me?

POLY. (*he takes her hand*) How?—but listen as I plead my suit. How?—a fearful change comes over me. I care not what I do: (*Music, "The Power of Love"*) for you I would carry parcels through the street; take aunts to concerts; aye, (*heroically*) ride down Piccadilly in the afternoon, outside an omnibus. For you—were you to bid me, I would wear, ten shilling hats—give two and threepence for my gloves and smoke cigars that cost three ha'pence each. For you, I'd call on people east of Bedford Square; be photographed at—three for three-and-six; aye, and for you, read the back numbers of the Tichborne trial!

CELI. (*turning to him*) Ah, this is love! (*Music ceases*)

POLY. (*eagerly*) You will be mine, and fly with me?

CELI. I will, but how? But one of us can pass that fatal gate. (*gives him key*) Take it, and leave me here to read indifferent novels—mope, and die!

POLY. Never! No one who tastes or touches of that immortal well, can exist up here; did you not say so?

CELI. I did; but they—papa—will keep me; and yet I long to pass into your real world. Why did you come up here? I was much happier as a castle-building maid.

POLY. (*suddenly*) Not so, and you shall not stay. I have it, they shall let you go.

CELI. They shall; but how? What power have you to break *ideal* laws?

POLY. My power is here, they all shall drink of this.

CELI. I see, the public banquet; you'll make the claret-cup of water.

POLY. From the well of truth! unconscious, one and all will take the draught. I'll answer for the *dénouement*.

Duo—POLYDOR and CELIANTE.—*Air, "Fleur de Bois."*

Exeunt, L. U. E.

Enter ZYGOS ; he looks about him carefully, and carries a pitcher in his hand.

ZYGOS. So far, so good, I've left the table unobserved, and dodged the Queen. The fact is—for why conceal it from myself—that though I'm strictly limited, and stamped on ha'pence, postage stamps, and writs, and do what I may call the lighter fancy business of this perfect State, this appears to be an opportunity not to be lost ; to put the thing in simple guise—the perfect monarch wants to slope. If I could only drag the well with this. (*holding up pitcher*) The hope's a vague one, I admit, but so “uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,” that notwithstanding the divinity that literally hedges up a King—here goes. (*about to approach well*)

Enter GLYCYS ; he also carries a jug and looks cautiously about him.

What! some one comes! (*seeing GLYCYS and dodging out of his way*) What, Glycys—he must not see his monarch up to this!

GLYCYS. (*not seeing him*) So far, so good. I've left the table unobserved, and dodged the King. The fact is, for why conceal it from myself, though I stay in for years ; give all my second cousins bishoprics ; change policy, supporters, regularly, twice a week ; subserve the crown, and pay subscriptions to a red democratic club—I am not happy here. In fact the perfect minister is bored of office, and will, unobserved, retire.

Enter MYTHOS—same business—he carries a hot-water can.

What! Mythos here? He must not see his Premier up to this. (*retires up*)

MYTHOS. (*cautiously*) So far, so good. I've left the table, unobserved, and dodged the premier. The fact is, for why conceal it from myself, that though I lounge about, wear feathers in my hat, retire to a dépôt in times of war, and when invasion comes, sell out—I am not happy here! Briefly, the ideal warrior, would almost court a row, and so, as no one's looking, will execute his most familiar manœuvre—and retreat.

Enter HYPNOS—he carries watering pot—same business as with the others.

Hulloah! that fellow Hypnos! He must not see his general up to this. (*retires*)

HYPNOS. (*same as others*) So far, so good. I've left the table unobserved, and dodged the General; the fact is, for why conceal it from myself, that though by papering the circle well, thrusting trained hirelings in the back row of the pit, and making an indifferent Polonius play the ghost, my Hamlet sometimes takes the town by storm; yet I am not happy here! In very truth, the most legitimate ideal recreator would go without his benefit! (*looking at SENTINEL, R.*) He slumbers at his post! 'Tis well. He should not see such leading business up to this.

(*comes down, still looking, R.—next to him, watching him, MYTHOS—next to MYTHOS, watching him, GLYCYS—and on extreme L., watching GLYCYS, ZYGOS—they all come down together*—MYTHOS touches HYPNOS on the shoulder, he turns round with a start, but on seeing MYTHOS, instantly bows politely, and endeavours to hide his watering pot—same business of GLYCYS and MYTHOS, then of ZYGOS and GLYCYS on seeing ZYGOS—GLYCYS bows obsequiously*)

GLYCYS AND OTHERS. The King! (*chord*)

ZYGOS. The ministry! (*chord*) The very men I want to see. (*aside*) Better to brazen the thing out. (*to them*) This is most opportune. 'Tis well that I should meet my Cabinet at such an hour—about that key now? Now I've thought the matter over, and I should advise——

GLYCYS. Excuse me, but you can't advise. 'Tis *we* advise—the King can't give, he only takes advice.

MYTH. Oh yes, *you* mustn't give advice. It's quite unconstitutional and wrong.

ZYGOS. (*with a swagger*) The King can do no wrong.

GLYCYS. (*snubbing him*) Precisely; for there's nothing that the King can do at all.

* SOLDIER.

HYPNOS.

MYTHOS.

GLYCYS.

ZYGOS.

R.

L.

ZYGOS. (*fishing for something*) Oh, come now—that won't do—I—I—I—sign commissions.

MYTH. Oh, no, you don't—I've had them lithographed. Your signature's turned out eight hundred to the hour, by steam.

ZYGOS. Well, hang it all, I open Parliament.

GLYCYS. Oh, not at all, we've done away with that—a messenger fulfils that duty; and, when necessary, dusts the throne! He does the two for fifty pounds a year!

ZYGOS. (*sarcastically*) Then I suppose your monarch has no privileges?

GLYCYS. Not one.

ZYGOS. Utopia be—then—here, I'll abdicate!

GLYCYS. You can't—ideal monarchs never abdicate!

ZYGOS. Then let me go on my own civil list; and, here, you take the crown! Don't all three speak at once! (*turning to HYPNOS*) What do you say? He'll look it well—let Hypnos be your king!

HYPNOS. (*melo-dramatically*) I cast for king—I, who never have played Duncan since I reached the age of seventeen; and then—'twas Christmas—by force of cruel circumstances, doubled the part with Harlequin! I, sink to such a rôle as this! Your majesty mistakes the line of business for which I have been engaged. A King, indeed!

ZYGOS. Well come—King Lear!

HYPNOS. (*gloomily*) No, no; it promises, but at the close it is Cordelia who gets all "the fat."

ZYGOS. (*turning to the others*) Will neither of you "rule the State?" (*they turn away in disgust*) You won't? Well, then, gentlemen, to cut the matter short, I mean to try another atmosphere. The key lies at the bottom of that well. (*producing pitcher*) I'm going to fish for it.

GLYCYS. You were? And so was I——(*produces jug*)

MYTHOS. And I. (*produces can*)

HYPNOS. And I. (*producing watering-pot*) Here goes!

(*all stand in an attitude, then make a rush at the well—
—all start back*)

ZYGOS. The rope still glistening with wet. My lords and gentlemen, we're done! Some happy child of fancy

Exit SOLDIER.

(Music by T. Pede).

ALL. No one asked { him } why. (dance as before)

GLYCYS. I always sell my vote ;
 Twice a-week I turn my coat.
 MYTHOS. And I would sell a battle
 For a five pound note—pound note, note, note.
 ZYGOS. We are four ideal creatures,
 GLYCYS. Blazing through the sky like meteors ;
 MYTHOS. And we have some monstrous features,
 HYPNOS. Which none can deny.
 ALL. Deny.

GLYCYS. I like to see “ red clubs ” increase.
 MYTHOS. My subalterns at whist I fleece.
 ZYGOS. And I believe my own police,
 ALL. Which is insanity.
 We are four ideal creatures, &c.
 We like, &c.
 (*then dance and finish*)

Enter EUMENIDE, CHRYSEA, CYON.

EUMEN. (*to ZYGOS*) At last I have found you, sir ! and is it thus ideal gentlemen withdraw themselves from table ere the ladies rise ?

ZYGOS. (*bored with her*) My dear, our views of the ideal always clash. The perfect banquet, as I picture it, knows no female face.

EUMEN. And pray, sir, then, what may be your “ ideal ” feast ?

ZYGOS. Cut off the joint, but, at *my club*—— But there, do let me be. Perfection doesn't agree with me at all. I hoped to let myself out of this paradise. Too late. Some possibly more perfect and unhappy fool has, fortunately for himself, anticipated me. To think the coming Monarch should come to this. O for a revolution—*coup d'état*,—Spanish politics—for anything that might bring down the throne. Will no one guillotine me, or at least just help me out of this ?

Enter POLYDOR and CELIANTE—he carries a goblet in his hand, she a silver jug.

POLY. Yes—I——(*ALL fall back*)

ZYGOS. The rash materialist !

CELL. (*SERVANT hands round glasses*) Who threw the key away? he has it back again. I got it up, now ask no questions; but hold your glasses. (*CELIANTE fills it, those of the OTHERS also*)

POLY. You see, before I go I want to give a toast. (*cries of "Hear, hear!"*) So, gentlemen, and ladies fill—and to the brim.

ZYGOS. (*coming forward*) But what's the use of this to me?

CELL. Papa, will you be quiet, and listen to what he says?

POLY. (*raising his goblet*) Here's to Utopia. The perfect State.

May each ideal dreamer learn, though late—
That monarch, statesman, savant, maid, or youth,
To reach perfection—first must taste—(*drinks—ALL do the same*) the truth!

(*gong—Tableau—ALL stand as if thunderstruck—Music tremulo*)

POLY. Ha! ha! The claret-cup was made from water from that well. (*sensation*) How do you all feel, and how do things look now?

(*to ZYGOS*) You sought for power——

ZYGOS. I did, and thought the King
At least would stand me that, 'tis no such thing;
The monarchy, that, by reforming schemes,
Becomes precisely—well—not what it seems,
Gives not true empire. He alone holds pow'r
Who makes himself the master of the hour.
I longed to be a despot, in my state,
No matter what—to bully—rule—dictate.

(*tearing off his crown*)

The crown's a farce! (*pointing to imaginary world beneath*) Down there my point I'll gain,
I'll be a collier, and drink champagne!

POLY. (*pointing in showman style to GLYCYS, who comes forward, same business*) Diplomacy!

GLYCYS. (*in same manner as ZYGOS*) My dream—to learn my part,
So well instructed in the statesman's art,

To shuffle, change, to press a point, give way,
That each to-morrow stultifies to-day.
My mission I mistook—a nobler goal
Waits him who owns a politician's soul.
Office?—a minister? not worth a fig!
I'll go to races, and start thimble-rig!

POLY. (*to MYTHOS*) The army—

MYTHOS. But to me a handy school,
Where facings, lace, and swagger draw the fool.
We've hundreds like me, but think you we'll waste
Upon the State our vulgar showy taste,
A finer field I see—let wise men shirk us—
We'll go *en masse* and join a travelling circus!

POLY. (*to HYPNOS*) Regeneration of the drama—

HYPNOS. Comes my chance.

I'll start at once an agency in France;
Set seventy hacks at work on adaptation.
Perish all Shakespeare—*minus* illustration.
Ha, ha, a happier thought than Drury Lane;
I'll do burlesque (*attitude*). The wild rampaging
Dane!

Ideal art—all gammon—that must shake down,
I'll fill the house with Hamlet and his break-
down!

POLY. (*as CHRY. comes forward*) A Mayfair maiden—

CHRY. Whose one dream for gold
Is to the highest bidder to be sold.

Position, diamonds? It's as clear as day
The scheming maid can take a shorter way;
Fishing for Dukes! new methods better far.—
Next time he comes, I bargain with the Shah!

POLY. (*to EUMEN.*) For woman's rights—

EUMEN. To rule creation's lord
And take the chair at every public board
I've struggled, written, speechified, and fought,
Like woman, who is the weaker vessel, ought.
Ha, ha, my place and destiny I see,
A wild black Amazon in Ashantee!

POLY. (*to CELIANTE*) Simplicity—

CELI. I sought, but somehow find
Sometimes it's simple *not* to speak your mind.

Well, have we done?

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