

(Enter HILDEBRAND.)

HIL. Well, father, is there news for me at last?

HILD. King Gama is in sight, but much I fear  
With no Princess!

HIL. Alas, my liege, I've heard  
That Princess Ida has forsworn the world,  
And, with a band of women, shut herself  
Within a lonely country house, and there  
Devotes herself to stern philosophies!

HILD. Then I should say the loss of such a wife  
Is one to which a reasonable man  
Would easily be reconciled.

HIL. Oh, no!

Or I am not a reasonable man.  
She is my wife – has been for twenty years!  
(*Looking through glass.*) I think I see her now.

HILD. Ha! Let me look!

HIL. In my mind's eye, I mean – a blushing bride,  
All bib and tucker, frill and furbelow!  
How exquisite she looked as she was borne,  
Recumbent, in her foster-mother's arms!  
How the bride wept – nor would be comforted  
Until the hireling mother-for-the-nonce  
Administered refreshment in the vestry.  
And I remember feeling much annoyed  
That she should weep at marrying with me.  
But then I thought, "These brides are all alike.  
You cry at marrying me? How much more cause  
You'd have to cry if it were broken off!"  
These were my thoughts; I kept them to myself,  
For at that age I had not learnt to speak.

(*Exeunt HILDEBRAND and HILARION.*)