



Drawing-Room Plays: Selected and Adapted from the French

Lady Adelaide Cadogan

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On one occasion Garrick was present in a country house at a performance of "Hamlet." On the conclusion of the play he was pressed to give his opinion of the acting. The great actor, after some hesitation, commended the manner in which the Players' King had played his part. Now this very minor part had been acted by a scene shifter of his own theatre. Whether Garrick was aware of this, history records not; but his preference of the humblest professional to the most accomplished amateur is a warning to the latter.

Lady Adelaide Cadogan seems to have had this anecdote in mind when she selected and adapted these plays from the French. They are written for amateurs, being absolutely free from the enthusiasm and passion of tragedy and comedy. When we speak of them as farces, we are by no means blind to their merits. They are what they profess to be —short, amusing, unobjectionable in tone, and easy to act.

Of the seven plays, "Well Matched After All" is the one that most nearly approaches the level of comedy; while "Bric-a-Brac" is perhaps the most entertaining. The success of "Well Matched" would greatly depend on the acting of Rooney, the old Irish servant. A good brogue is as refreshing in a drawing-room piece as sunshine in a landscape. It is very probable, however, that while "Well Matched" is the best comedy to read, "How Happy Could I Be with Either?" might prove the best to act. The scene in which Mr. Tremayne reads the Queen and the Times at the same time Lady Susan and her niece would convulse the audience if acted with spirit. There is always an "if"; but we can say that Lady Adelaide's plays will repay time and trouble—the only royal road to good acting. We must not close this brief notice without a word of hearty commendation for the illustrations, by E. Z. Shute.

-The Academy - Vol. 34 [1888]

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