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The Admirable Crichton

A Comedy

J. M. Barrie

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DOVER THRIFT EDITIONS

GENERAL EDITOR: MARY CAROLYN WALDREP

EDITOR OF THIS VOLUME: JANET B. KOPITO

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Note

Scottish author J. M. (James Matthew) Barrie (1860–1937) was a journalist, novelist, and playwright, but his name forever will be associated with his best-known literary work, *Peter Pan*. The fanciful play, first performed in 1904, grew out of Barrie's involvement with the Davies family, especially the children George and Jack, for whom he devised the Peter Pan story. Peter Pan and his gang, the Lost Boys, experience various adventures on the island of Neverland, encountering pirates and fairies, among others. The play's subtitle, "The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up," evokes the memory of Barrie's brother David, who, dying at the The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) age of thirteen, would "never grow up."

In contrast to the fantasy world of *Peter Pan*, Barrie's play *The Admirable Crichton*, first produced onstage in 1902, reflects the The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) author's interest in dramatizing aspects of Britain's class structure. The British aristocracy is exemplified by Lord Loam, who favors taking down social barriers between the upper class and the servant The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) class. Crichton, his butler, described by Barrie as "only a servant," believes that Lord Loam's single fault is that "he is The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) not sufficiently The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) contemptuous of his The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) inferiors." In supporting the status quo, Crichton says, "The most beautiful thing in the world in a haughty, The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) aristocratic English house, with every one kept in his place." But what happens when the play's action moves to an island in the tropics, where the members of the two social classes have been shipwrecked during a sailing excursion and stripped of their societal props? The tables are turned, and with plentiful wit and irony, Barrie reveals what transpires when the stranded parties return to "civilization."

Contents

[Note](#)

[Characters](#)

[Act 1](#)

[Act 2](#)

[Act 3](#)

[Act 4](#)

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Crichton

The Hon. Ernest Woolley

Lady Agatha Lasenby

Lady Catherine Lasenby

Lady Mary Lasenby

The Revd John Treherne

The Earl of Loam

Lord Brocklehurst

Mrs Perkins

Monsieur Fleury

Mr Rolleston

Mr Tompsett

Miss Fisher

Miss Simmons

Mademoiselle Jeanne

Thomas

John

Jane

Gladys

Eliza ('Tweeny')

Stable-Boy

A Kitchen Wench

A Page-Boy

A Naval Officer

The Countess of Brocklehurst

ACT 1.

At Loam House, Mayfair

A moment before the curtain rises, the Hon. Ernest Woolley drives up to the door of Loam House in Mayfair. There is a happy smile on his pleasant, insignificant face, and this presumably means that he is thinking of himself. He is too busy over nothing, this man about town, to be always thinking of himself, but, on the other hand, he almost never thinks of any other person. Probably Ernest's great moment is when he wakes of a morning and realises that The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) he really is Ernest, for we must all wish The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) to be that which is our ideal. We can conceive him springing out of bed light-heartedly and waiting for his man to do the rest. He is dressed in excellent taste, with just the little bit more which shows that he is not without a sense of humour: the dandiacal are often saved by carrying a smile at the whole thing in their spats, let us say. Ernest left Cambridge The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) the other day, a member of the Athenaeum (which he would be sorry to have you The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) confound with a club in London of the same name). He is a bachelor, but not of arts, no mean epigrammatist (as you shall see), and a favourite of the ladies. He is almost a celebrity in restaurants, where he dines frequently, returning to sup; and during this last year he has probably paid as much in them for the privilege

of handing his hat to an attendant The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) as the rent of a working-man's flat. He complains brightly that he is hard up, and that if somebody or other The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) at Westminster does not look out the The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) country will go to the dogs. He is no fool. He has the The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) shrewdness to float with the current because The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) it is a labour-saving process, but he has sufficient pluck to fight, if fight he must (a brief contest, for he would soon be toppled over). He has a light nature, The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) which would enable him to bob up cheerily in new conditions and return unaltered to the old ones. His selfishness is The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) his most endearing quality. If The Admirable Crichton: A Comedy (Dover Thrift Editions) he has his way he will spend his life like a cat in pushing his betters out of the soft places, and until he is old he will be fondled in the process.

He gives his hat to one footman and his cane to another, and mounts the great staircase unassisted and undirected. As a nephew of the house he need show no credentials even to Crichton, who is guarding a door above.

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