The Admirable Crichton

A butler becomes a king after

shipwreck





"It's a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have it, you don't need to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have."

J. M. Barrie

James Matthew Barrie 1860 - 1937

Born - Kirriemuir in Forfarshire

The seventh child to **David Barrie-** a hand-loom weaver

Margaret Ogilvie - the daughter of a stone-mason.

Surviving on the income provided by declining weaving industry

the Barries were never wealthy

it is from his early childhood
experiences as a dweller in the
tenements that Barrie drew his
sympathetic portraits of the rural poor

The death of Barrie's elder brother

David - Barrie - just six years old-

marked effect of his life and work

His mother never recovered from the loss of her son

The psychological significance of Barrie's relationship with his mother and his need for maternal approval

In the biography of her life - published in 1896

The exploration of feminine identity

marked feature of Barrie's writing

The experience of death in childhood - influenced Barrie's work

constantly pre-occupied with the themes of exile-immortality and the otherworldly.

The Admirable Crichton (1902)

bold analysis of the class structure

prejudices of Edwardian society

The play enacts a modern fable

the values of an aristocratic family are literally isolated

-the family being stranded on a desert island-

and deconstruct in a play

debates the conventional ideals of class and gender

Gender roles and restrictions are also satirized -

in Barrie's excellent play

What Every Woman Knows (1908)

J.M. Barrie's rich comedy

role reversals

an aristocratic family are shipwrecked on a deserted island with their ever resourceful butler

Provides a meaningful message

tackles controversial topics of the day, to do with gender and class

but did it with unparalleled charm

The title from the sobriquet (nick name)

of a fellow Scot, the polymath James

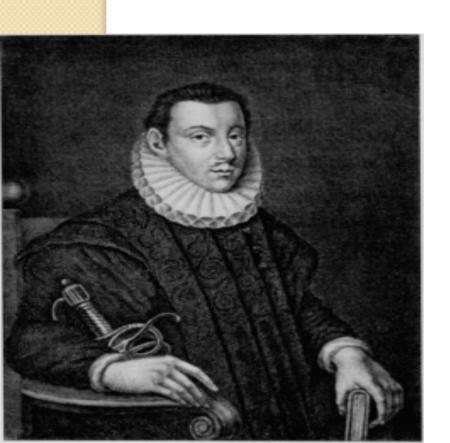
Crichton

- a 16th-century genius and athlete

James Crichton

James Crichton

known as the Admirable Crichton



was a Scottish polymath

 noted for his extraordinary accomplishments in languages,

 the arts, and sciences before he was killed at the age of 21 The epigram-loving Ernest is probably a

caricature of the title character in Oscar

Wilde's The Importance of Being

Earnest.

An epigram - interesting, memorable, and sometimes surprising or satirical statement

The plot may derive from Robinson's Eiland, an 1896 German play by Ludwig Fulda

In this, "a satire upon modern superculture in its relation to primal nature",

a group of Berlin officials are shipwrecked on an island

(including a capitalist, a professor and a journalist)

where a secretary, Arnold, becomes the natural leader of the group.

The contemporary critic Arthur Bingham Walkley

viewed the connection as merely a rumour: "I feel quite indifferent as to its accuracy of fact".

Act One is set in Loam Hall, the household of Lord Loam, a British peer, Crichton being his butler.

Loam considers the class divisions in British society to be artificial.

He promotes his views during teaparties where servants mingle with his aristocratic guests, to the embarrassment of all. Crichton particularly disapproves, considering the class system to be "the natural outcome of a civilised society". (18)

Lady Mary - his oldest daughter-(9)

 is a spirited young woman who resents her father's high-handed methods with his family. Her indignation reaches a climax one day when Lord Loam announces that his three daughters are to have but one maid among them on a yachting trip on which the family is about to embark

 Lady Mary is furious, but she assumes that her maid, Fisher, will go along.

 When Fisher learns that she is expected to look after the two younger sisters in addition to Lady Mary, she promptly resigns, and the two maids attending Catherine and Agatha follow suit.

- Lord Loam is left without any servants for his projected cruise, for his valet also resigns.
- Although his pride is hurt deeply, Crichton finally agrees, out of loyalty to his master, to act as his valet on the trip. (29)
- Moreover, he persuades Tweeny, the housemaid upon whom he casts a favorable eye, to go along as maid to Lord Loam's daughters. (25)

Act Two

Loam- his family and friends- and Crichton are shipwrecked on a

deserted tropical island.

Once the party – out of normal situation-

finds themselves in a state of nature

- the natural order changes

The resourceful Crichton is the only one with any practical knowledge

he assumes - initially with reluctance- the position of leader (47)

This role begins to take on sinister tones when he starts training Ernest, one of the young aristocrats with them-

Crichton's social betters at first resist his growing influence and go their separate ways

but in a pivotal scene they return -

showing their acquiescence by accepting the food Crichton alone has been able to find and cook

Act Three reveals the island two years later.

Crichton has civilised the island with farming and house building

and now, called "the Guv."

with the trappings and privileges of power

- just as his master had been in Britain

Lady Mary - Loam's daughter – falls in love with Crichton-

forgetting her engagement to **Lord Brocklehurst** at home

Just as she and Crichton are about to

be married by a clergyman

(shipwrecked with them)

the sound of a ship's gun is heard

(71)

After a moment's temptation not to reveal their whereabouts –

Crichton makes the conventionally decent choice and launches a signal

As the rescuers greet the castaways-

he resumes his status as butler.

Act Four (subtitled "The Other Island")

set back at Loam Hall-

where the status quo ante has returned uneasily.

The Loams and their friends are embarrassed by Crichton's presence(77)

Ernest has published a false account of events on the island presenting himself and Lord Loam in key roles – (75)

Lady Brocklehurst, Lord
Brocklehurst's mother - quizzes the family and servants about events on the island

suspecting that Lady Mary might have been unfaithful to Lord Brocklehurst (84)

The household evades these questions –

except for a final one when Lady Mary reacts with shock – "Oh no, impossible..." (91)

 to the suggestion that Crichton might become butler at her married household. To protect her - Crichton explains the impossibility is due to his leaving service-

and the play ends with his and Lady Mary's regretful final parting

The play deals with serious class issues

controversial at the time

but does not seriously question the status quo

light 'comedy' about class and privilege

not to insult- but to instruct.

commentary on the British class system

and how long that system can endure being stranded on a desert island

While it's clearly satire

But not mean or bitter kind

The real strength - it's still funny

even a century after it was written

Philip, the protagonist in *Of Human Bondage*

didn't have a lot of friends when he was young - so he spent a lot of his time reading.

One of the things he read was *The Honorable Crichton*

The title-character - Crichton -

completely comfortable with his social role in the family

And at the beginning of the story -

we don't pay too much attention

Even though he eventually becomes this authoritative figure

he's not the driving force in the story

most of the time is spent on squabbling dialogue between the aristocrats-turned-servants.

As a period-social commentary -

Crichton's perspective on the world was really compelling.

He's not a submissive weakling who suddenly finds his heroic side

becomes a leader
he's an actor playing a "game" in
every environment he's in

A butler who believes in the class system more than his master does

upturns the hierarchy when he is shipwrecked for two years with the family –

only to revert to subservience when they are rescued

Lady Mary: You are the best man among us.

Crichton: On an island, my lady, perhaps; but in England, no.

Lady Mary: Then there's something wrong with England.

Crichton: My lady, not even from you can I listen to a word against England.

Most of enjoyment - not from the dialogue,

but from Barrie's lengthy, humorous introductions to each of the four acts,

and ironic running commentary on the motivations of the characters

This comedy was not only funny but tragic and thought provoking

how the social structures are questioned and exploited

apart from the direct story....

the capability of a human being

how his job can't define who he is

we see the weird philosophy of crichton about the society and its layers

British class struggle

a shipwreck on a deserted island

romance all around make for a winning formula-

WHAT is it with those Victorian writers - Kipling, Barrie, Buchan-whose ideal heroine looks, acts and dresses like a boy? (78)

Latent homosexuality

arrested development on account of the British boarding school system

You decide.

Admirable portrait of the injustices of the English class system-

incompetent Lords were served by competent butlers who did everything for them.

When the Lords and Ladies crash on a deserted island, they are helpless at looking after themselves and the servants take over.

But when they are rescued, the 'natural order' resumes.

Servant becomes master when a yacht crashes near a deserted island.

A butler becomes a king after a shipwreck.

J.M. Barrie's entertained members of the Royal family at Princess

Margaret's fourth birthday party

For Barrie the English upper classes were an endless source of fascination and humour

- the ideal target for his social satire, beneath the veneer of which lies a greater -philosophical exploration of the nature of society - civilisation and the will-to-power.

The idea for the play may have been prompted by Arthur Conan Doyle –

suggested to Barrie that if a king and an able seaman were wrecked together on a desert island for the rest of their lives

