

**THE LADY OF LYONS,
OR LOVE AND PRIDE:
A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS**

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The lady of Lyons, or Love and pride: a play in five acts by Anonymous

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LADY OF LYONS:

OR,

LOVE AND PRIDE.

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"EUGENE ARAM," "THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII,"

"RIENZI," ETC.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.

1851.

22426.27.11

Lytton, Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
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TO

THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"

WHOSE GENIUS AND EXAMPLE HAVE ALIKE CONTRIBUTED

TOWARDS THE REGENERATION

OF

The National Drama,

THIS PLAY IS INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

AN indistinct recollection of the very pretty little tale, called "The Bellows-Mender," suggested the plot of this Drama. The incidents are, however, greatly altered from those in the tale, and the characters entirely re-cast.

Having long had a wish to illustrate certain periods of the French history, so, in the selection of the date in which the scenes of this play are laid, I saw that the time of the Republic was the one in which the incidents were rendered most probable, in which the probationary career of the hero could well be made sufficiently rapid for dramatic effect, and in which the character of the time itself was depicted by the agencies necessary to the conduct of the narrative. For during the early years of the first and most brilliant successes of the French Republic, in the general ferment of society, and the brief equalization of ranks, Claude's high-placed love, his ardent feelings, his unsettled principles,—the struggle between which makes the passion of this drama, —his ambition, and his career, were phenomena that characterized the age, and in which the spirit of the nation went along with the extravagance of the individual. In some respects, Claude Melnotte is a type of that restless, brilliant,

and evanescent generation that sprung up from the ashes of the terrible Revolution,—men born to be agents of the genius of Napoleon, to accomplish the most marvellous exploits, and to leave but little of permanent triumph and solid advantage to the succeeding race.

In the selection of this period I can honestly say, however, that I endeavoured, as much as possible, to avoid every political allusion applicable to our own time and land,—our own party prejudices and passions. How difficult a task this was, a reference to any drama in which the characters are supposed to live under Republican institutions will prove! There is scarcely a single play, the scene of which is laid in Rome, in Greece, in Switzerland, wherein political allusions and political declamations are not carefully elaborated as the most striking and telling parts of the performance.*

The principal fault of this Play, as characteristic of the time, is, perhaps, indeed, the too cautious avoidance of all those references to liberty and equality in which, no doubt, every man living at that day would have hourly indulged. The old and classical sentiment, that virtue is nobility, contains the pith of the political creed announced by Claude Melnotte; and that sentiment is the founder, and often the motto, of aristocracy itself. In fact, the enthusiasm of Claude is far more that of a soldier than a citizen;† and it

* The noble tragedy of "Ion" has for its very plot, its very catastrophe, almost its very moral, the abolition of royalty and the establishment of a Republic;—yet no one would suspect Serjeant Talfourd of designing the overthrow of the British Constitution.

† The allusion to the rapidity of promotion in the French army was absolutely necessary to the conduct of the story; and, after all, it is expressed in language borrowed and adapted from that very jacobinical authority, Horatio Viscount

is not the reasoner nor the politician, but the man, with his feelings and his struggles, with whom the audience sympathize when he exults in the redemption of his name. It is perfectly clear that neither the English author nor the English audience can recognise much in harmony with their own sentiments, when Claude declares that the gold he has won in the campaign in Italy "*is hallowed in the cause of nations!*" The question for us to consider is, not whether an Englishman or a philosopher would think that there was any sanctity in the principles of that brilliant war, but whether an enthusiastic soldier under Napoleon would not have believed it. Our national prepossessions and prejudices,—our closeness to an age, the false glitter of which we can so well detect,—alike, I hope, guard us against all political infection from a play cast in a time when the coming shadow of a military despotism was already darkening the prospects of an unwise and weak Republic: and if there be any where the antipodes to the French Jacobin of the last century, it is the English Reformer of the present. For my own part, I never met with any one, however warm a lover of abstract liberty, who had a sympathy with the principles of the Directory and the Government of M. Barras. But enough in contradiction of a charge which the whole English public have ridiculed and scouted, and which has sought to introduce into the free domains of art all the miserable calumnies and wretched spleen of party hostilities.

Nelson. Nor is it easy to conceive how the sentiment—that merit, not money, should purchase promotion in the army—can be called a *Republican* doctrine; since, though it certainly did pervade the French Republican army, it inculcates a principle far more common in despotic countries than under free institutions. We must look to the annals of the East for the most frequent examples of the rise of fortunate soldiers.