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1949

I HAVE FIVE
DAUGHTERS

JANE AUSTEN DOES NOT STAGE WELL

But Theatre Club Did Its Best

Although Margaret Macnamara's "I Have Five Daughters" is as accurate a stage adaptation of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" as could be desired, it is not altogether effective as a play. For those who know the novel—and who does not?—the development has no surprises to offer and in waiting for delectable moments, it is extremely difficult not to be over-critical of their performance.

It says a good deal for the Teddington Theatre Club's production at Ronayne Hall on Wednesday that Mr. Collins' proposal and Mr. Bennet's reaction to it should have held much of their original savour. But the shadow of the book hung heavily over the play, giving it a second-hand air which it could not elude.

The production, by a guest producer, Mr. Frank Lambe, had appropriate pace and flavour and the acting, especially by the women, was excellent, though neither Mr. Leslie Hyland nor Mr. Michael Aron conjured up the polished leisure associated with Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley.

Mrs. Gladys Jacques as the over officious Mrs. Bennet gave a delightfully fluttering performance. Miss Lois Houcain did well in the none too easy task of portraying fiction's most captivating heroine and Mr. Jack Sinclair as Mr. Collins gave a sound performance in a part not really suited to him.

THE COMPLICATED love affairs of Mr. Bennet's five daughters so delightfully portrayed by Jane Austen in her novel, "Pride and Prejudice," are not easy to put over on the stage. But I have not seen a more spirited interpretation of Margaret Macnamara's dramatisation, "I Have Five Daughters," than that given by Teddington Theatre Club at Ronayne Hall, Hampton Wick, last week. The five girls were well contrasted, the wit and irony were put over with ebullience, and the whole production of Frank Lambe had a pace and delicacy that made it most entertaining.

Most enjoyable was Mary Sumpton's lively portrayal of the flighty Lydia, youngest of the three girls, who elopes with Wickham. There was a sparkle and abandon about her performance that were irresistible. Maisie Sharp, as the equally light-headed Kitty, shared with her some of the best laughs of the play. Lois Houchin, as Elizabeth, had a subtle inflection of voice that she used to good purpose. Betty Wadsworth was just right as the calm, amiable Jane, and Sheila McIntosh was the serious-minded Mary.

Ernest Woods was immense as the sarcastic Mr. Bennet, but Gladys Jacques, though giving an exquisite performance in many ways, hardly looked the part of an early nineteenth century mother of five daughters. Jack Sinclair was the heavy priggish, pompous curate, Mr. Collins, to the life, Michael Aron had the requisite charm and grace as Bingley, and Leslie Hyland was at his best as the haughty Darcy.

Kathleen Blayney gave a neat character sketch of the imperious Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Jean Longworth was admirable as Caroline Bingley in riding habit, and Daphne Curtis did all that was necessary in the comparatively small part of Charlotte.

E.B.