

OLD PLAYS REVIVED

The revival of old plays always offers the student of the drama an interesting opportunity to add to his collection of footnotes to history. In celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Empire Theatre, Mr. Charles Frohman has revived Mr. R. C. Carton's comedy, entitled *Liberty Hall*, which was first produced at this theatre on August 21, 1893; and, apparently in default of a new play adequately suited to the requirements of that admirable artist in sentimental comedy, Miss Grace George, Mr. William A. Brady has revived that famous comedy, by Victorien Sardou and Emile de Najac, entitled *Divorçons*.

This play is older than *Liberty Hall*: yet a comparison of the two pieces indicates that until very recently the drama in France was fully a generation ahead of the drama in Great Britain. *Divorçons* seems just as fresh as ever; but Mr. Carton's comedy is redolent of the departed epoch of wax flowers and horsehair furniture.

The important point to be recorded is not that the technical conventions of the drama have been revolutionised in recent years. A mere discardance of soliloquies and asides, and a more insistent variation from the ancient symmetry of structure, would not be sufficient to explain the impression that *Liberty Hall* must be assigned to an epoch of the theatre that can never, in any real sense, be revived. The piece displays an artificial and a sentimental attitude toward life which we have learned latterly to reject in the light of more recent and more truthful compositions; but the Sardou comedy still seems to attack the recurrent issues of life with the same sincerity that we have grown accustomed to expect from contemporary writers. It is unnecessary, at this date, to summarise the plot of either piece; but it is sufficient to note that the characters of the Sardou comedy still appeal to us as human beings, whereas we now perceive that the puppets of Mr. Carton were artificially conceived as creatures either too bad or good for human nature's daily food.