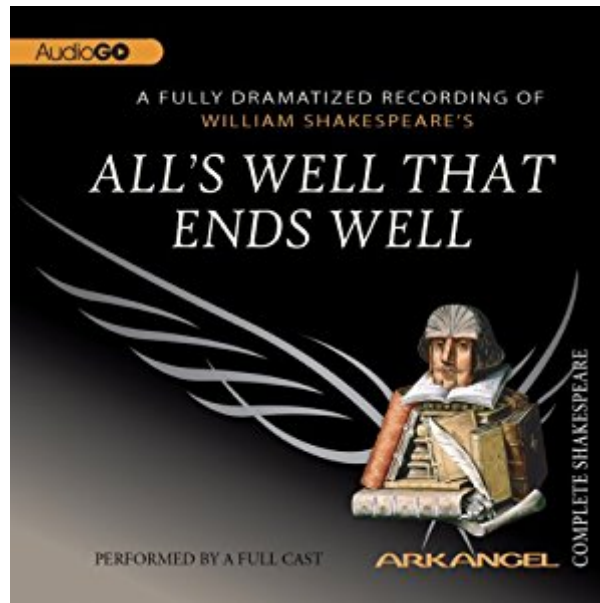


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# All's Well That Ends Well: Arkangel Shakespeare



## Synopsis

The young and virtuous physician's daughter Helena desperately loves Count Bertram, but he regards her as beneath his notice. When Helena cures the king of France of a mortal illness, he rewards her with Bertram's hand, but before their marriage can be consummated the count flees. To win her husband back again, Helena forms a daring and resourceful plan. A plot to unmask the strutting soldier Parolles makes up another strand in this sometimes disturbing comedy of deception and disguise.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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## Customer Reviews

A Shakespeare classic! Quick delivery!

I needed to digest this play before seeing a performance of it. As there are not too many options for this work available, I ordered this after reading the posted reviews of this series. Listening to it reminded me of radio drama (when that medium had such fare) and of how powerful just the spoken word can be. I followed along with a downloaded text and it was a virtually 'effortless' experience. The reviews are of a mind on this and I with them. Looking forward to hearing some others.

I have bought or will buy this series from Arkangel. There was one exception where most of the reviews were negative. This one was of very good quality and I recommend purchase of it.

Another excellent production in the Arkangel series of Shakespeare plays. Clear verse speaking

through-out makes the language come alive and maintains the interest to the end. Highly recommended .

Well, I dislike 's policy of linking dramatization of plays with books about the play - the two are entirely different things. But, that is a subject for another day. This set of three CDs contains a really great dramatization of Shakespeare's play, *All's Well That Ends Well*. Arkangel brought together a battery of great actors (including Emily Woof, Sam West, Edward De Souza, and (a personal favorite!) Clive Swift), who really brought the story to life. My one and only complaint is that the story is produced straight out of the book - which means that there is very little introduction of the cast of characters or of the scenes. When you read the play, you see the scene described and the characters listed, and when you see the play performed you see the scenery and see the faces of the actors. But, in this purely audio play you have to get to know the characters from their voices alone, and sometimes it is a little hard to imagine where the action is actually taking place. But, in spite of that little problem, I really did enjoy the play and had little problem following the broad outline of what was happening to whom and why. Yep, I found this to be a very enjoyable dramatization, and I do not hesitate to recommend it!

"*All's Well That Ends Well*" is one of Shakespeare's "problem comedies", probably lesser known, in which a young woman of Rossillion, Helen, wants to obtain the love of someone out of her social rank, Bertram, the Count of Rossillion. Like many of the Shakespeare plays, there are moments of treachery, disguises and miscommunication within many of the scenes that complicates the plot. To try to get the King to agree for Bertram to marry her, Helen offers to help the King with his sickness. Once recovered, The King advises Bertram to now wed Helen. Bertram refuses at first, but then finally relents, confessing to himself that he will never love her. Helen then tries to do many things to win over Bertram after he leaves for war, and she comes up with a plan to disguise herself and see him once again. Eventually, through a bit of trickery, Helen is able to win over by accomplishing his list of "demands" in a letter that he sent. Some of the questions that one may ask while reading this book: Why would Helen want to bother with trying to persuade Bertram to love her, since he is hardly worth it? Clearly, Helen, the heroine in this story, is a noble character, but often her judgment in the play is something to be questioned. Another question to be considered is what makes a couple compatible, especially those that seem to be mismatches? This is a comedy that thrives on a social mismatch between the classes. A more poignant fact is that Helen is a faithful person to her words, while Bertram has no redeeming quality that makes him worthy of her (Bertram hardly

becomes a sympathetic character mainly because he never changes from the beginning to the end of the play). Overall, it is a decent read. But I think that "The Taming of the Shrew" is a better comedy, mainly because there is a stronger sense of character development in Petruchio and Kate.

Try as you might, you will have a hard time finding any redeeming social merit to the "hero" of this play. In an era of arranged marriages, "our hero" abandons his bride and runs off to the wars because she is not good enough for him. This opinion makes him a majority of one, since everyone else thinks she is too good for him. Before he leaves, however, he sets her an impossible task which will win his devotion, if not his love. The heroine then undertakes to fulfill the terms of the task. In order to accomplish the task she devises a plan which will wound everyone who loves her and take advantage of his unworthiness of her. It's hard to see what she sees in him, but as the saying goes, love is not only blind, it is also deaf and dumb. The plot moves snappily along toward its foreordained happy conclusion, with the hero's aide-de-camp, a sort of cross between Iago and Falstaff, providing "comic" relief. Arkangel Shakespeare has put on a five star production of a three star play. Many recordings of Shakespeare plays add poor sound quality to poor diction, resulting in a product that is difficult, if not impossible, to follow. The sound is good, the lines are well-spoken, and the dialog is easily followed.

I am a latecomer to the Arkangel Shakespeares but, having now gone through six of them, I would bet my life on their quality and the creative ways they make an audio play as realistic and fun as possible. I've loved Shakespeare for 40 years but never much liked this particular play - and here I've just listened to a spectacular audio production that was better than any version I've ever seen onstage (as others have said, super actors in all roles). If you've never liked ALL'S WELL, or if you've never seen it, or if you've read it and found it a problem play, you'll find in this performance that most of the problems disappear. Will did know how to write a good 'un. Our heroine's travails, the rise and fall of Parolles, the regeneration of Bertram, are delightful and highly recommended. And I say this, not having read the play in 25 years and hearing it cold out of the gate. Well done, Arkangel!

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