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MISCELLANEOUS PAMPHLET SERIES

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**THE LEADERSHIP  
OF  
SHAKESPEARE**

BY

ALLEN DAVENPORT

AUTHOR OF

**"STAGE AFFAIRS IN AMERICA TODAY"**

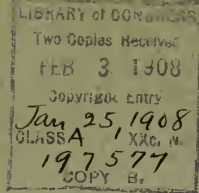
(The Theatre at the beginning of the Twentieth Century)

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## Contents of "Stage Affairs in America Today."

- I. The Playwright: the vital importance of his commission.
- II. The Business Manager: his true mission.
- III. The Actor: the quality of his importance.
- IV. The Stage Manager: his decaying power.
- V. The Theatre Orchestra: its enforced protrusive obedience.
- VI. The Dramatic Critic: the rightful censor; but not merely "by the courtesy of the theatre."
- VII. The Vaudeville System: the morally illegal abuse of its true meant significance.
- VIII. The Prevailing Stock System; its practises a detriment to art aim.
- IX. The Star System: its manifest condition generally irrelevant to the consequences of its true meaning.
- X. The Repertoire System: many compensations for its marked decadency.
- XI. The One Play Combination System: its advantages for art accomplishment if wisely pursued.
- XII. The Dramatic School: its futile results.
- XIII. Acting: its tangibility as an art to be studied.
- XIV. Shakespeare: the future highest value of his plays to the stage.
- XV. The New Theatre; a suggestion regarding the permanent exaltedness of the stage.

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- I. The Theatrical Independent Movements.
- II. The Organized Theatre.
- III. The Leadership of Shakespeare.  
(Later numbers in preparation for publication.)

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# THE ORGANIZED THEATRE:

the succession of inheritance through the fundamental truth of its immortal leadership;—"To hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

## Prerogative Board of Election :

the conformable coalition of the several presidents (or official heads) of the universities and colleges controlling theatres instituted through investment, endowment, and legacy, and which shall, in the conduction of such individual controlment, sympathetically operate in the unanimous adoption of a single bond of organization.

Such "board" to hold the exclusive authority, through the just exercise of the highest wisdom of its prerogative, in the appointment to tenure of office as President of the Organized Theatre, the most available individual out of the ranks of the "qualified

By appointment in promotion from the *Society of Actor*, after a five-years' term of qualified service therein; three years in apprenticeship, and the two years following in responsible parts.

## II. Order of Manager.

E QUALIFIED PROFESSION.

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Such "board" to hold the exclusive authority, through the just exercise of the highest wisdom of its prerogative, in the appointment to tenure of office as President of the Organized Theatre, the most available individual out of the ranks of the "qualified profession of the theatre;" such tenure of office restricted only by conditions stipulated regarding unlawful and corrupt practices of official trust; in such cases, this "prerogative board" authoritatively may cause the removal of such unworthiness.

## [Organization — President. — Head]

*The protection and safeguard for discipline as against dissension.*

### Executive Council—

consisting of three members appointed by President, one each from *Office of Playwright, Order of Manager, and Society of Actor*; the selections subject to reasonably stipulated term of experienced efficiency. This council to investigate and advise, by presidential orders, in matters of appointments, dismissals, arbitrations, etc., etc., pertaining to their separate departments, with the view to assist the executive head in his final jurisdiction and adjustment of such matters.

By appointment in promotion from the *Society of Actor*, after a five-years' term of qualified service therein; three years in apprenticeship, and the two years following in responsible parts.

## II. Order of Manager.

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## I. Office of Playwright.

By appointment in promotion from the *Order of Manager*, or the *Society of Actor*; but only after a five-years' term of qualified service in the *Society of Actor*; and in no instance except through the meritorious distinction of qualified composition tested in adequate performance.

Admitted to the *Organized Theatre* through the degree received in qualified graduation from the university course in the "department of the theatre;" such admittance effected through appointment by the "board of direction" of any individual controlment operating under this single bond of organization. The beginner may hold the option of pursuing throughout, a career in the *Society of Actor*; or he may, after a term of five years' service therein, become alienable (either by application to, or proposal from any individual "board of direction") to the *Order of Manager*; and also (but only through the meritorious distinction of qualified composition which has been tested in adequate performance), to the *Office of Playwright*.

## III. Society of Actor.

THE ESSENTIALITY OF THE THEATRE: THE QUALIFIED PROFESSION



# THE UNIVERSITY THEATRE:

the individual controlment sympathetically operating under the single bond of organization.

The co-efficient, co-harmonious plan of workmanship.

## The Essentiality of the Theatre: its Qualified Profession.

Presided over by an

Authoritative

### Board of Direction

appointed by trustees of university maintaining theatre through investment, endowment and legacy. Such "board" being authority in all matters of appointments, arbitrations, dismissals, etc., etc.; these duties clearly defined in rules and by-laws governing each individual local controlment.

**Playwright.** Office clearly defined in rules and by-laws.

**Business Manager.**

Commerce-Art.  
Efficient Balance.  
Secured in rules and by-laws.

**Stage Manager.**

Rights and restrictions clearly defined in rules and by-laws.

## The Adjunctive Forces:

Supervised by the executive heads of the Business and Stage Departments of the Theatre, in equitable rights and restrictions clearly defined in rules and by-laws; such adjunctive forces holding the option at all times of appeal in writing to the Board of Direction for the redress of any grievances that may arise. The result of an investigation by this Board of Direction to be final. Appointments and dismissals to and from the adjunctive forces to be at the discretionary suggestion of the executive business and stage departments of the theatre, and by the ratification of the Board of Direction.

I. Musical Director.

[Head]

Matron,

II. Scenic Artist.

Auxiliary

III. Electrician.

Foreman

IV. Carpenter.

Stage hands,

An efficient janitorship. etc., etc.

V. Property Custodian.

*Note:* in theatres not maintaining a permanent company, this position of "foreman" would supplant that of "local stage manager," now in vogue.

## THE LEADERSHIP OF SHAKESPEARE.

In all great purposes we find a firmly settled, fundamental, basic principle; a simple formula for procedure. An unshaken law; the solicitation to some stern belief.

The day is at hand, when in the theatre, personality, talent, genius (or what you will), must become subservient and amenable to the predominant virtues of education and decorum. There can be no great theatre otherwise. Even so, the former will find their own, and be bettered a thousand fold by the test.

The theatres' enemies, its desecrators, mostly live inside its walls. They possess therein no faith; unless it be a conceit of themselves. The theatre as an institution, bears no proper significance to them in their wanton waste and abuse of its highest possibilities. It is only a means to superficial existence and vanity. When extravagance and presumptuous egotism destroy the structure that they had hoped might satiate their greed, there is nothing left. They think only to build a new structure, not knowing nor caring what it may contain. They pretend to adjust the theatre to the vulgar understanding of what the public wants. That is the shield to mask their purposed appeal to the sensuous craving for careless entertainment. Shall the theatre ever stand for anything higher, more dig-

nified and potent? Is it worth while? Or shall it sink lower into this blind understanding of what the public wants?

The theatre is capable of fulfilling a high mission; of bestowing positive beneficence on communities by imparting definite truths in the universal adoption by its incumbents of a single belief; such an one as the unshaken, superior law of its immortal leader,—“to hold, as’t were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time its form and pressure.”

Any argument on the comparative beneficence to mankind of the Church and the theatre in America today, is hardly worth the discussion; to assert as much would be to dangerously approach blasphemy. The latter is of like relation to the former as any other industrial condition; the Church, through its intellectual liberalism, having ever the same purposed care in common regarding all kinds and conditions existing in daily life. But this is not to gainsay that the theatre, if it were loosed from the sordid hands of irregular commercialism, illiteracy, and charlatany, might not fulfill a mission greater than does any institution save that of the Church.

Maintaining for the moment this fact—that there could exist a comparative beneficence to mankind in the missions of these institutions, the Church and the theatre—in thinking so, we will reason briefly on some argument relative to the fact. It is necessary first to impartially consider these vital two questions:—the manifest designs of each institution, and—the evidenced honest and devoted endeavors of its separate individuals to truly live up to the best understanding of the highest development of such designs.



The individual should have consummate belief in the sincereness of the task undertaken. He must have character, ability, and integrity, of course; but without belief in the honesty and worthiness of his work he cannot truly apply to that labor his highest character, greatest ability, and staunchest integrity. The playwright, the manager, and the actor must have belief in the worthiness of the institution of which he is a vital part. Otherwise, he cannot apply his highest character, ability and integrity towards properly amusing, persuading, and uplifting the people to a just acceptance of his intentions.

In which of these two walks of life, the pulpit and the stage, consists, among its individuals generally, the deepest *knowledge* of the true exactions and the highest understanding of his vocation,—which possesses the greatest belief? Every impulse, prejudice even, and sense of loyalty presses me to answer—the stage! But I cannot with honesty so answer.

The clergyman may grow to some misgivings concerning the special creed he has adopted, but never in his belief of the church as a means to helpfulness in our daily lives towards walking honestly, piously, and morally in the midst of our fellow men; to offer us the opportunity at least to embrace some sort of religion. If there is often an insincereness, a hollowness perhaps in the ceremony that masks the simplicity of its primal design, even so, such cannot of necessity decry the individual in his unswerving belief in the essential and predominant benedictions of the Church. All clergymen believe in the Church. When they cannot, they no longer remain in it.

It is not so with the playwright, the manager, the actor. Few of them believe in the theatre regarding its manifest high designs; but still they remain in it,

even while scoffing. More than that many of them ignorantly boast of an equality of service with the Church that the theatre pays to mankind.

The Church is real; the theatre must ever simulate. In the pulpit sits sincerity; on the stage, the dissembler. Widely considered, mankind is more or less insincere, hypocritical, and dissembling; it possesses much unreality. I am writing in a high sense; in the same degree as we find the unscrupulous attorney, intellectually, through cunning argument and seeming honesty, overcoming the truths and facts of his opponent's reasoning, seeking to evade the laws rather than secure submission to their authority. So with the politician, the tradesman, and many others. That is of the actors' art. To that extent that such dissemblance becomes most highly educated and cultured, even to that extent do its best exponents plan most ably to artfully conceal such unreality, making it seem real.

It has always been, to a great extent, the predominant oratorical and dramatic gifts of the pulpiteer which have most persuaded, convinced, entertained, and—to speak plainly—filled the Church pews. And this is irrespective of dogma, ceremonials, and differing forms. It is often irrespective of the importance of the subject matter of the sermon. In all these cases the real trust is impressed through unreality. So conducted from the pulpit it becomes illegitimate. It is often only the semblance of sincerity, sometimes seeming to be the role of hypocrisy, and again, the voice of the dissembler. It is superior intellect balancing unreality till it weighs even with reality. From the stage this is legitimate; it is the honest practice of the actor.

The theatre must invite the mental cunning and dissemblance of these various great individuals, who, till now, have sought an outlet for their superior intelligence by means of other channels,—it is time now to attract them to a reputable, dignified, and truly respectable profession of the theatre where their practice, by the very honesty of its unreality, becomes unquestionably the essence of legitimacy. But the individuals so practising must have sincere belief in the high motive of their vocation.

We have come to the age of written sermons. The pulpit is too limitable for the preacher today; he cannot reach far enough from thereon. The theatre shall hold him. That institution must deservedly transcend to such necessity; its mission now lies there. A greater purpose rests in this dawning universal Church, this far reaching religion; and it shall be held alone by the indestructible oneness of the Christ idea; in the grand simplicity of his everlasting leadership.

But we cannot ever gainsay the necessity, the absolute usefulness since the beginning, of all varying creeds, dogmas, and mystical speculation to the steady advancement of the Church. It was vitally essential that all these great questions and problems should be asked and solved, in order to bring us nearer to the one common understanding. Then, what has ever been the all-powerful factor pervading and determining these necessary, momentous contemplations? Learning, the power of education. Its steadfastness is all-needed now in the ultimate fixedness of the universal Church. And so shall it be with the theatre!

#### THE SHAKESPEARE IDEA.

In significantly securing the perpetuity of the theatre through the leadership and fundamental teaching of Shakespeare, it must not be thought that in the adop-

tion of such an essential settlement, it would be to the exclusion of a liberal and wise affiliation of the worthy dramatic literature of all times. Quite the reverse. We see in Shakespeare principally the formula, the procedure, and the consummation of some rational, tangible and catholic policy in the establishment of a qualification for the *profession of the theatre*, be that qualification whatsoever the wisdom of its generators might provide. There would be a text-book of sensible revision, and possible of continual additions to meet, and make adaptable, the progressiveness of the hour. Our religion should not be the worship of useless and cumbersome traditions. Shakespeare's plays should be methodically instituted, and made to ever remain a study in literature, dramatic expression, and research. And, overtowering all, there should ever remain their spirit quality, the Shakespeare idea, preserved in his immortal leadership. The inspiration that transcends all others; but not to *their* own special value. The established theatre of Shakespeare!

At the beginning, in the anticipation of the unavoidable contentions which must arise when confronted with a too literal interpretation of the Shakespeare law,—“to hold, as't were, the mirror up to nature,”—let us bring at once to bear on the question, the significant, all-important understanding of an *immortal leadership*; then, we who would otherwise lightly weigh in a common scale of understanding this fundamental truth, must now correspondingly transcend our translation to a much finer measure; one truly commensurate with the loftiness and ideality with which we should look upon and reverence such inspirational immortality in leadership. In the theatre today, many of its incumbents who are writing, producing, and

exhibiting, think that they are truly "holding the mirror up to nature," in that they ever seek in "realistic effects," to mirror the ordinary commonplaceness in life, through the exposition of incidents and persons transplac'd from the original sources from which such ideas and characters were drawn. In this unstudied understanding of Shakespeare's mission to the men and women of the theatre, we see only a compromising apology.

We cannot, with reason, believe that this great leader, imbued with the highest knowledge of nature—truth—meant nor taught that the mere commonplaceness of life should be photographically transplac'd to the environments of the theatre, regardless of the conventions and licenses of art, and the unavoidable unreality of setting in which must be artfully shown the form and pressure of the very age and body of the time, justly featuring and imaging their virtues and scorns in the representation of the great truths of life.

Who can gainsay the interior existence and enforced intention of these truths, whether they come garbed in the exterior form of harsh reality, of sublime poetry, of enchanting fantasy, or the ridiculousness of burlesque? Throughout all of these we find the means to the art of representing life. And throughout the expanse of human life and thought, we find its consummation in Shakespeare—the immortal leader. He has delineated it in every variety of phase. It is seen through the simplest diction, and in the sublimest poetry; throughout are reflected the simple and great truths of life. The quality of the mirror only may change; for it is now vulgar reality, now poetry, now fantasy, and now farce. And as the moving characters of daily life, in the mere external reflection of themselves, that is,—in the exact and truthful copy



of their forms, whether in beauty or in ugliness,—are most clearly and pointedly seen in mirrors most artfully and consummately designed, and ever most defectively and untruthfully revealed in the crude reality of nature's offering, so shall the innermost great truths of their lives, in their softest beauty and in their greatest ugliness, find a more exact and truthful copy in the most highly consummated mirror that shall hold them up to nature.

It is an unguisaying fact that the dramas that have enforced with greatest effectualness the truths of life, have ever been set in the unrealistic plan of poetry.

If we accord to Shakespeare an unmeasured transcendency, we can find no contradiction in his works to gainsay this fundamental law. A mind so supreme would not be content with such inconsistency. We are ever prone to theorize and speculate as to the thought intention of some sublime stanza. Should we be too hasty to preserve a literal exactness in our understanding of "to hold, as't were, the mirror up to nature?" As elsewhere, we should also here transcend to the undeniable loftiness of the immortal leadership.

The clergyman could not be who was unpossessed of a fundamental knowledge of his work; if he were ignorant and unlearned,—in truth, if he were not educated. How can the men and women of the theatre claim any just relation regarding the equality of the earnestness, devotion, and character of the mission they would fulfill, when the vast majority of their numbers—unrightfully professing and practicing an art, and still clamoring for an equal recognition with the Church as a beneficiary to mankind—when such I say, have known no drudgery of preparation, and neither respect nor recognize the necessity of academic train-

ing and discipline in the preparation of an intellectual pursuit—the vocation of acting?

And finally what can so well exalt this intellectual vocation, this dignified and potent *profession of the theatre*, as an unshaken, genuine condition of belief in the superior existence of an immortal leadership?

“I see all human wits  
Are measured but a few ;  
Unmeasured still my Shakespeare sits,  
Lone as the blessed Jew.”

We shall ever accept in this quatrain of Emerson's, a substantial reasoning. Why should we not consecrate such immortal leadership to its rightful authority in the theatre, that we may indeed, in simple truth, ever be able “to hold, as't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure?”

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## SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE.

Following this number of the MISCELLANEOUS SERIES, (but at no certain date), will appear in order pamphlets concerning:—*The Society of Actor*, *The Order of Manager*, and *The Office of Playwright*.

In the plan for an *Organized Theatre*, these essential elements should become in themselves individual bodies, electing their own officers, and instituting their own special rules and by-laws for the purposes of high social development and self-improvement amongst their individual incumbents.

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