

**THE STAGE, ANCIENT AND
MODERN; ITS TENDENCIES
ON MORALS AND
RELIGION: A LECTURE**

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The Stage, Ancient and Modern; Its Tendencies on Morals and Religion: A lecture by Francis Close

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FRANCIS CLOSE

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MORALS AND RELIGION.

A LECTURE

BY

FRANCIS CLOSE, D.D.,

DEAN OF CARLISLE.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

Having been recently startled by the apparent sanction given to the *STAGE* by a worthy Bishop of our Church, I hasten to send the following Lecture to the press, delivered fully six and twenty years ago, but apparently now more needed than ever.

I have long challenged the refutation of the historical facts and arguments of the following pages; and, assuming them to be true, it is matter of demonstration that the Stage in all ages has proved itself to be a school of immorality and vice, that every effort to purify and cleanse it has failed, and that the best men connected

with it have given up every attempt of the kind in despair.

No one can doubt the sincerity with which the Bishop of Manchester believes that he can perform this office of cleansing this Augean stable; but I cannot but think his Lordship will have to repent the apparent sanction which he has given to the histrionic art. Nor is it at all impossible that some young persons, of both sexes, attracted to the theatre by the Episcopal approbation, may find there--that which hundreds have found--food for vicious tastes, and excitement to their moral ruin.

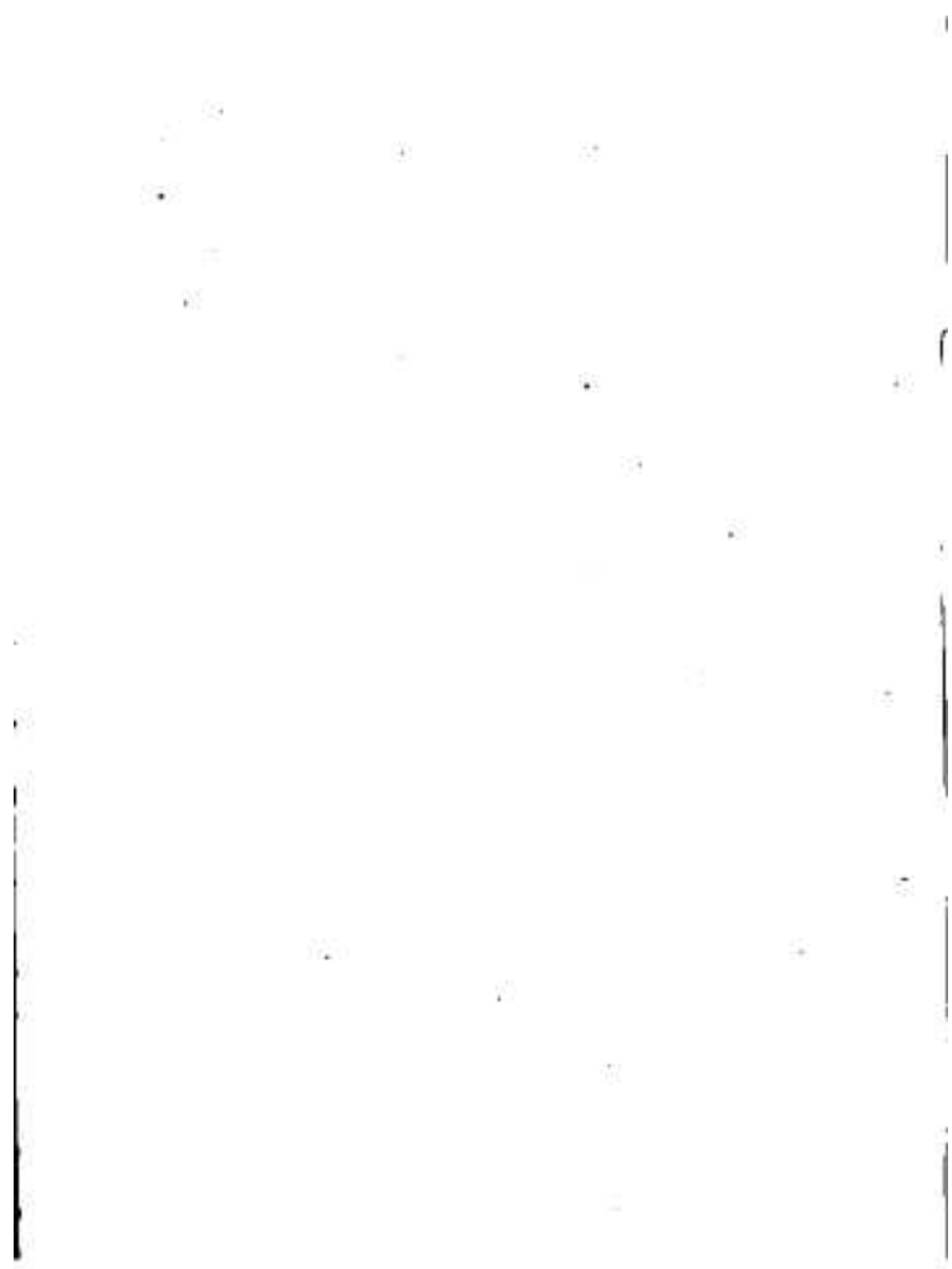
My deep convictions on this subject forbid my silence; and I do earnestly pray that serious evils may not result from the well-intentioned, but, as I believe, most disastrous advice which has thus been proclaimed on the floor of two theatres by a Christian Bishop. My deep regrets

are proportionate to the personal respect which I feel for so active and energetic, but greatly mistaken member of our Episcopal Bench.

FRANCIS CLOSE,

Dean of Carlisle.

February 8th, 1877.



THE STAGE, &c.

The subject which will engage your attention on this occasion is one which has, for a long time, occupied my mind, and one on which I have long sought an opportunity to express myself in public: conceiving that although the very name of "pulpit" is derived from a certain portion of the ancient theatre, yet that the Christian pulpit is not exactly the place for the discussion of many topics which naturally arise out of the one now before us. It is highly expedient, and divines in various ages have deemed it to be their duty, to denounce the follies and vices of the stage *ex cathedrâ*, to condemn them with authority; but on this occasion I rather wish to enter into a discussion on

the general merits of the case, to examine the arguments *pro* and *con*; and alleging the evidence of history, to consider the pretensions of the histrionic art as a professed friend of religion and morals.

Many Christian people are much misinformed upon the subject, while they are doubtless open to conviction, and it may be confidently asserted that there are many who give their support to theatrical amusements simply because they are unacquainted with the evils connected with them.

Avoiding therefore a mere declamatory condemnation of theatrical exhibitions, let us enter upon a calm and dispassionate enquiry on this important subject. And to this end allow me to place before you in order, a brief and rapid, though it be a somewhat imperfect sketch of the history of the rise and progress of the stage in all ages; in order that we may be enabled to