

**THE THEATROCRAT:
A TRAGIC PLAY OF
CHURCH AND STAGE**

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The Theatrocrat: A Tragic Play of Church and Stage by John Davidson

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**BY
JOHN DAVIDSON**

**LONDON
E. GRANT RICHARDS
1905**

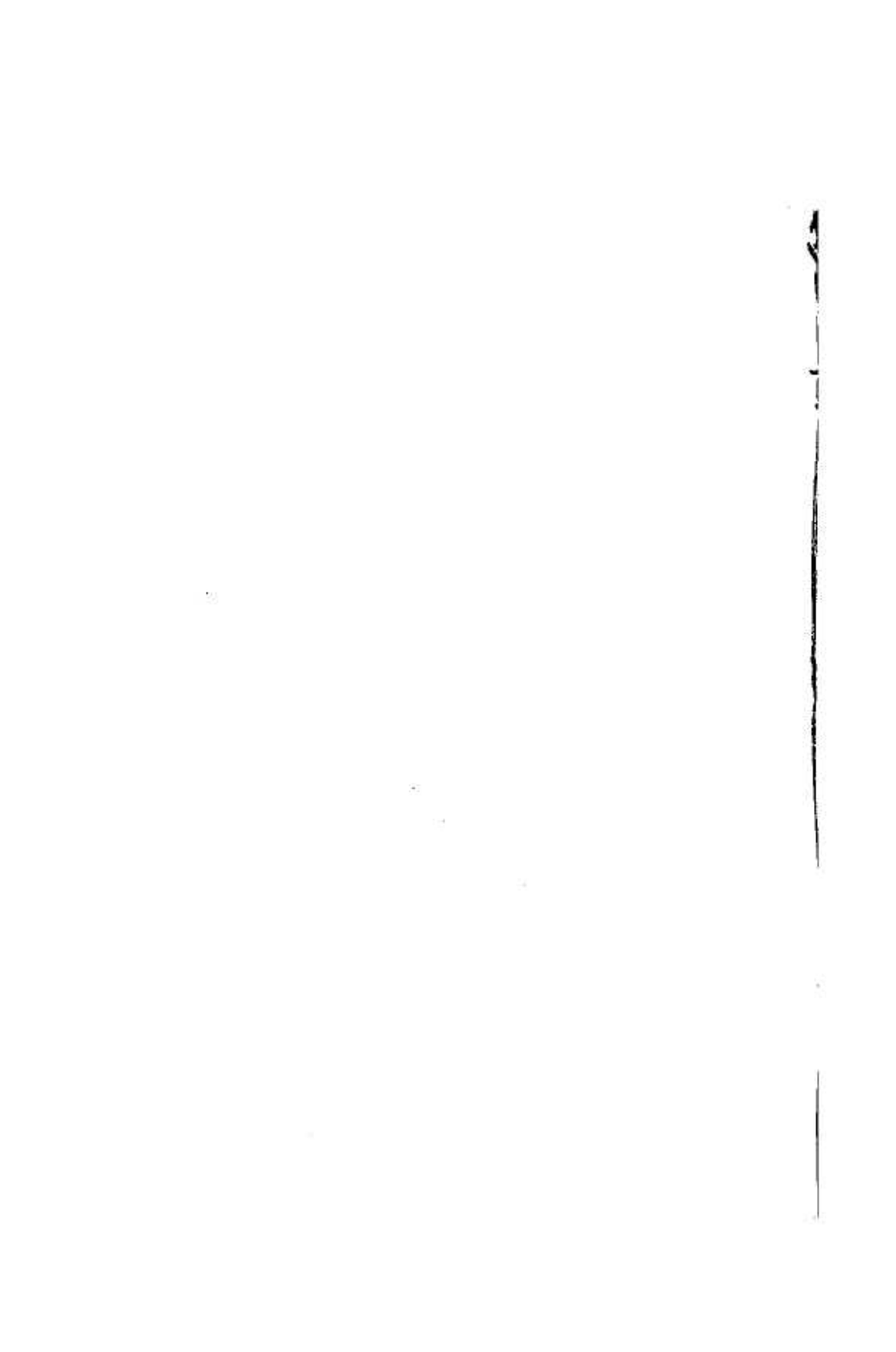
TO THE GENERATION KNOCKING
AT THE DOOR

Break—break it open ; let the knocker rust :
Consider no " shalt not ", and no man's " must " :
And, being entered, promptly take the lead,
Setting aside tradition, custom, creed ;
Nor watch the balance of the huckster's beam ;
Declare your hardest thought, your proudest dream :
Await no summons ; laugh at all rebuff ;
High hearts and youth are destiny enough.
The mystery and the power enshrined in you
Are old as time and as the moment new :
And none but you can tell what part you play,
Nor can you tell until you make assay,
For this alone, this always, will succeed,
The miracle and magic of the deed.

JOHN DAVIDSON.

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INTRODUCTION

I

WORDSWORTH'S IMMORALITY AND MINE

POETRY is immoral. It will state any and every morality. It has done so. There is no passion of man or passion of Matter outside its province. It will expound with equal zest the twice incestuous intrigue of Satan, Sin, and Death, and the discarnate adoration of Dante for the most beatified lady in the world's record. There is no horror of deluge, fire, plague, or war it does not rejoice to utter; no evanescent hue, or scent, or sound, it cannot catch, secure, and reproduce in word and rhythm. The worship of Aphrodite and the worship of the Virgin are impossible without its ministrations. It will celebrate the triumph of the pride of life riding to victory roughshod over friend and foe, and the flame-clad glory of the martyr who lives in

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obloquy and dies in agony for an idea or a dream. Poetry is a statement of the world and of the Universe as the world can know it. Sometimes it is of its own time : sometimes it is ahead of time, reaching forward to a new and newer understanding and interpretation. In the latter case poetry is not only immoral in the Universal order ; but also in relation to its own division of time : a great poet is very apt to be, for his own age and time, a great immoralist. This is a hard saying in England, where the current meaning of immorality is so narrow, nauseous, and stupid. I wish to transmute this depreciated word, to make it so eminent that men shall desire to be called immoralists. To be immoral is to be different : that says it precisely, stripped of all accretions, barnacles and seaweed, rust and slime : the keen keel swift to furrow the deep. The difference is always one of conduct : there is no other difference between man and man : from the first breath to the last, life in all its being and doing is conduct. The difference may be as slight as a change in the form of poetical expression or the mode of wearing the hair ; or it may be as important as the sayings of Christ, as vast and significant as the French Revolution and the career of Napoleon. Nothing in life is interest-