

acting itself. If reading to a company of listeners is good, surely acting, which is simply better reading, is better. The evil must be sought for in the play or players, or both. And it is obvious that, in the player, you have both included. Given a worthy actor or set of actors, and it goes without the saying that they will present no play unworthy of them. Given, on the other hand, a set of actors morally or intellectually unfit to enter with sympathy into the serious problems of life, and even a Shakespeare, or the Bible itself, must be morally despoiled at their hands. This, it seems to me, is the seat of the disease. Even if the common actor did not see fit to parade his vulgarity in public places and public conveyances, as he so frequently prefers to do, still we should demand some prior assurance of the fitness—not of one of the company, but of all—to interpret life to us before we risked having our own lives poisoned at the source. We require warrant of fitness on the part of a teacher before we entrust our children to his tuition and influence.

And now I think the evil and the cure are increasingly obvious. When the stage takes itself seriously as an educational agency, it stands in precisely the same position as other agencies that cater to the higher education of the people. And the mass of the people do not regard ideals of sufficient worth to pay for them. This is the case alike with the pulpit, the press and the school. Just so far as they rise above the conception of common utilities, they must depend upon endowment in some form or other. The few of higher vision must make the sacrifice, and extend the privileges they provide to those who would not seek them for themselves. For reasons that are obvious, the state, as a whole, while it cannot keep pace with the more intelligent and aggressive of its citizens, can, and often does rise above what the average would dictate. To state endowments, therefore, to some degree, but to private endowments to a greater degree, must we look for the maintenance of all those activities that cater to the nation's ideals, and the theatre which can, upon its merit, claim a right to be, will find its place among these. Until this, with exceptions so rare that the very rareness adds pathetic emphasis to the general situation, seeking good in the theatre must closely resemble the proverbial "seeking a needle in a haystack."