## CHAPTER - II

### Exponents

It has already been seen that the Drama of Ideas as genre has had a number of exponents. But it is Ibsen who remains the greatest exponent of this genre in the continent during the latter part of the nineteenth century while in England, before Bernard Shaw, Arthur Wing Pinero and Sir Arthur Jones did some work in this line. As noted in the Introductory chapter, this form of drama did not fall from the sky. But the full flowering of this form was achieved in the hands of Henrich Ibsen.

In England the Drama of Ideas stemmed particularly from the native source of Pinero and Jones and was enriched by an awareness of the works of Ibsen and his followers. It has been observed that the Drama of Ideas would have come into being if even Ibsen, its greatest exponent, had not been born to write. And yet Ibsen remains the first real exponent of this particular class of drama. Only in the modern times in England do we find a real effort not merely to adopt foreign materials, but also to explore foreign dramatic attitudes.[1] It is true that the Elizabethan dramatists knew a few of the foreign playwrights and often they dealt with foreign materials in their dramatic works. It is true that the Restoration dramatists knew Moliere and

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1. British Drama - Allardyce Nicoll. George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. London, 1952. P 249

Racine rather well. But the dramatist of the twentieth century is not content with the knowledge of the dramatic activities of one country only, and hence he goes to Norway, to Denmark, to Russia and associates himself not only with the materials but also with the dramatic attitudes of the writers of these countries. The modern Drama of Ideas is a phenomenon not peculiar to England; it is a phenomenon covering the whole of Europe. Gradually the genre came to cover the whole world and today the drama of the world is the Drama of Ideas. It is Ibsen who really started the battle of establishing the Drama of Ideas as the drama of the modern times.

Though the English drama of the century was to become the Drama of Ideas, it was not an easy matter for Ibsen to become accepted by the English theatre and,still more important, the English mind. Englishman is, almost as a rule, conservative; the English mind is very slow to accept anything that appears to it to be new ; it is more slow to accept anything unconventional. Moreover, it was the Victorian age - an age when the people loved and expressed only the flattering truth and fought shy of the unpleasant, naked, and entire truth. They loved the idealistic world of romance and they were "moral". No wonder, then, that the unconventional Ibsen appeared to them utterly immoral and they earnestly wanted to keep him, to keep the Englishman uncontaminated, at an arm's length. According to Wiliam Archer,in 1880 there were probably not more than half-a-

dozen people in England to whom the name of Ibsen conveyed any meaning.[1] Some people certainly knew Ibsen's name, but did not care much for him. The "Well-made" play, the cheap melodramas and adaptations from Scribe and Sardou suited the moral world of the Victorian people.

But things could not continue in this way because the younger sons of the middle class would not have them so continued. As Camillo Pellizzi has nicely discussed, the middle classes always have their younger sons who revolt against the established conventions and moralities.[2] Norwegian Ibsen was a rebel who started to break the moral edifice of his time by thinking "immoral" things and putting "immoral" things in the mouth of his characters. This scandalised the convention-ridden middle class most. Whatever the middle class considered moral has been rejected by Ibsen. But steadily though slowly he attracted the attention of the "middle-class anti-middle-class", as Pellizzi calls them[3]. Appreciation and acceptance of Ibsen in England has been already noted. But despite the struggle of William Archer, Bernard Shaw, Edmund Gosse, and Philip Wicksteed to popularise Ibsen in England, few other

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1. George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century. Vol I - Archibald Henderson, Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. 1956. P 403.
2. English Drama - Camillo Pellizzi. Macmillan, London,1935. P 71
3. Ibid. P 79

champions appeared. However, the ceaseles strugggle of Shaw and Archer - though they looked at the Norwegian dramatist from different, almost opposite angles - bore fruit. Ibsen was established in England as the poineer of the modern Drama of Ideas. Now onwards he became the most powerful force in the English drama.

There were, we may say, four main phases in Ibsen's dramatic output, and it is by no means certain that the phase on which the English concentrated most was the most important. In the first phase Ibsen was a poet of high distinction and also a great poetic dramatist - as in Brand and PeerGynt. Secondly, in his plays on legendary and historical themes, including The Pretenders, Lady Inger, Emperor and Galilean and TheVikings, he sometimes touches a majestic level. Thirdly, there are social dramas on which the tendency to regard Ibsen as the first exponent of the tendency to use the stage as the platform or the pulpit chiefly rests. Fourthly, there is Ibsen the symbolist, who may conceivably be the profoundest Ibsen of all, though his last plays hardly suggest as much to the English mind.

It would be interesting and worthwhile to see how William Archer and Bernard Shaw, both champions of Ibsen, looked at the great Norwegian from different angles. In 1890 Shaw read a paper on Ibsen in a meeting of the Fabian Society; this paper formed the basis of the famous work The Quintessence of Ibsenism. Shaw does not claim that his paper

on Ibsen "is an original work in the sense of being the result of a spontaneous internal impulse on my part".[1] However, Shaw's paper created a sensation. The question that was asked was - what did Ibsen have to do with Socialism? Shaw really proceeded to rank Ibsen among the socialists of the Shavian brand. The difference between Archer and Shaw as the popularisers of Ibsen is that Archer wanted to look at him as a purposive moralist, philosophic thinker and ethical teacher. Shaw, in his zeal, tried to portray Ibsen as a Shavian thinker and socialist which aggrieved the old Norwegian himself who wrote to his friend Hans Lieu Breackstad maintaining that he was never nor did he ever want to become a socialist[2]. Shaw really went too far in that paper, but the final draft of The Quintessence of Ibsenism was far better even though it contained most of his original ideas about Ibsen.

Shaw and Archer carried on the campaign in favour of Ibsen with unabated vigour though they constantly got in each other's way. Archer mercilessly attacked those of Ibsen's admirers, meaning Shaw more than anyone else, who

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1. Preface to the First Edition of The Quintessence of Ibsenism. The Complete Preface Of Bernard Shaw .Paul Hamlyn Ltd.London. 1965 P 829 . The meeting of the Fabian Society was held on the 18 th July 1890 under the Presidency of Mrs Annie Besant.
2. Ibsen - Michael Meyer.Pelican. 1974. P 666.( Letter from Ibsen to Brackstad.)

set him up as a prophet and often failed to mention that the famous dramatist was a bit of a poet as well. People heard so much of the gospel according to Ibsen that most of them came to consider him as a mere hot-gospeller. Archer contended that Ibsen had no gospel at all to preach. For Shaw, Ibsen was a social polemist and an ethical philosopher. It has been pointed out, therefore, that TheQuintessence ofIbsenism is more a quintessence of Shavianism. Actually Archer and Shaw are both right and wrong. There is no doubt that Ibsen primarily is a poet and a dramatist. And yet he remains an advocate of individual liberty - one who strives to awaken men to a real comprehension of themselves; he remains a moral reformer who shook the moral edifice of the nineteenth century dwelling with painful insistence on the seamy side of human character and social institutions. Again the interest and the method of his plays are almst entirely psychological. It is little wonder that Shaw found a lot of affinity between Ibsen and himself. But though a social reformer, Ibsen is not a socialist. Shaw in his zeal imposed socialism on the reformer. But the view that Ibsen is a social reformer should not be too much emphasized, for he was an artist in the first place.

Ibsen's contribution to the theatre was three-fold, and in each respect the drama owes more to him than to any other dramatist since Shakespeare. First, he broke down the social barrier which had previously bounded it. He was

the first man to show that high tragedy could be written about ordinary people and in ordinary everyday prose, and the importance of the seemingly simple achievement can hardly be exaggerated. Before Ibsen, tragedy had concerned itself with kings and queens, princes and princesses or, at the lowest, with Montagues and Capulets. Ibsen showed that high tragedy could and did take place at least as frequently in back parlours as in castles and palaces..

Ibsen's second great contribution was technical. He threw away the old artificialities of plot which are usually associated with the name of Scribe, but of which even Shakespeare and Schiller, one may assert, are also guilty ; mistaken identities, overheard conversations, intercepted letters, and the like. It was a slow and painful process to rid himself of these artificialities; something of the old machinery is still there as late as A Doll's House. But Ibsen's last plays are remarkably free from this. Equally important, he developed the art of prose dialogue to a degree of refinement which has never been surpassed ; not merely the different ways people talk, and the different languages they use under different circumstances, but that "double-density dialogue which is his peculiar legacy, the sub-text, the meaning behind the meaning". Through this he was able to create characters as complex as the most complex of Flaubert or Henry James without the aid of explanatory narrations or

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1. Ibsen - Michael Meyer. Pelican. 1974. P 862.

monologues. And this demanded, and opened the way for, a new kind of acting, analytical, penetrating, self-effacing, and sensitive. There was no place in his plays for the old operatics.

What now-a-days seem technical limitations, such as the over exposition in the opening scenes, the excessive and sometimes repetitive planting of information needful to the audience, was dictated by the limitations of the audience. When Ibsen tried in Hedda Gabler to reduce his exposition to a modern minimum, the reaction of the audience was one of almost total bewilderment. It is no coincidence that this, the least popular of his mature plays in his own time, is the one most frequently performed today and for which fewest allowances have to be made.

But none of the technical contributions explains the continued life of Ibsen's plays on the stage today; and one regrets the tendency of the compilers of programme notes to stress his importance as an innovator. Ibsen's enduring greatness as a dramatist is due not so much to his technical innovations as to the depth and subtlety of his understanding of human character, espically feminine character and of human relationships.

None of the great novelists, not excluding Flaubert who created the immortal character of Madame Bovery, created more memorably observed women than Agnes, Nora, Mrs. Alving, Ellida Wangel, Rebecca West, Rita Allmers or Ella Rentheim. And, at the same time, Ibsen created a succession of male characters of a size and strength that present a challenge to

any actor equal to that of Oedipus, Hamlet or Lear - Brand, Peer Gynt, Osvald Alving, Dr.Stockmann, Halvard Solness, John Gabriel Borkman, Arnold Rubek. These characters defy shallow or "clever" acting; but these are the characters which, when worthily represented, offer as rewarding experiences as it is possible to receive in a theatre. And yet so de icate was Ibsen's understanding of human character ana relationships that a selfish actor can only par ially succeed in these roles. Unless the relationships with the other characters are rightly interpreted the performance is bound to meet with failure

Ibsen's uniqueness among the dramatists as a contributor to the drama of ideas and social debate has been noted, but one must underline an essential difference between him and his great contemporaries. Unlike Tolstoy or Zola, unlike, indeed, any other writer before him, he made his impact most powerfully on crowds gathered together not in a church or a market place, but in a theatre. And it is not the least of Ibsen's numerous contributions to the theatre that he turned the theatre from a place of mere entertainment into a place from which men emerged compelled to rethink basic principles which they had seldom seriously questioned. Euripedes had done this more than two thousand years ago, but no dramatist since on the same scale. There were no fewer social abuses in Shakespeare's England than in Ibsen's Norway,but Shakespeare never so obviously challenged any of them.

Moliere, whose contribution to the drama of the social debate is considerable, also believed in compromise. But whoever walked out of an Ibsen play, in his own time or since, felt compelled to reconsider their basic concepts of life and society. This is true of the plays of Bernard Shaw and even if Shaw has not borrowed this side of his workmanship from Ibsen, the close similarity in this respect between him and the great Norwegian can hardly be overlooked.

Ibsen, the key figure in the evolution of modern Scandinavian literature, is important in another respect - as an influence on the broader development of the European realistic and naturalistic movements. Though certainly he is not a model naturalist like Zola,as the term later came to be understood, his importance as a predecessor of later German, British, and American naturalists is great. In England and America, Ibsen's influence became noticeable in the period immediately before the First World War though he was introduced to the conscious students of literature in England during the eighties of the nineteenth century. In this era, thanks mainly to the zealous works of Shaw, William Archer, Edmund Gosse etc.,Ibsen's drama excited a tremendous social,moral, and literary controversy. Today, of course, after so much of change in the society, many of Ibsen's dramas seem to have earned the seal of being "dated", and today he is viewed mainly as a master of dramatic psychology. Yet, granting that his social dramas

have become dated and that he is primarily an artist, it must be admitted that his attacks on Philistinism and hypocrisy are just as significant today.

In Brand we find the hero bringing misery to his family and himself through his fantastic quest for truth. It is true that Ibsen pleads for idealism and integrity. Here Ibsen implies that abstract truth is the natural enemy of illusory happiness and he speaks in favour of this kind of happiness. But the contradiction between idealistic search for truth and defence of illusory happines is more apparent than real; it is only when idealism is carried to an excess that it becomes fanaticism and it is apt to destroy peace by destroying illusory happiness.

Ibsen's championship for individual's liberty to act according to one's conscience found its full expression in his championship of Feminism. Ibsen very strongly argues for the emancipation and liberation of women from the bondage of middle-class marriage although his position is by no means identical with that of the organised feminist movement of the modern times like the "Women's Lib". A Doll's House did more than any other single literary work to better the social position of woman wrecking the society and its morality to the roots. But though Ibsen battles to emancipate woman from the clutches of bourgeois morality, he fails to offer a convincing picture of a woman taking her desired place alongside man and achieving her proper intellectual and social fulfilment. So in Hedda Gabler

Ibsen shows the perils which await the emancipated woman in a society which is not ready to accept her. It is the "superior woman", the woman of intellect and imagination,for whom Ibsen battles, and none of his superior women like Nora Helmer and Hedda Gabler achieves perfect happiness through her revolt or attempted revolt. But the point to be borne in mind is that it is not the revolt itself which causes her miseries, but the then society which failed to accept this type of revolting woman. Bernard Shaw has created women charcters who not only revolt but take their places alongside men.

Ibsen is the ovowed antagonist to the middle-class morality, which in his plays often takes the form of malicious persecution of gifted individuals. Bourgeois society savagely attacks the individuals who by words and deeds seem to menace its own property. But the attack upon the individual is cleverly done under the pretence of defending the bourgeois ideals of justice, freedom and equality. The so-called pillars of the society are presented in Ibsen's plays as stuffed men whose wealth and power has been built upon the works of others; thus they sub-consciously fear true creativity and idealism when they encounter it[1]. He demonstrated, at the same time,that the ideas of the reformers are often as shallow and hypocritical

1. Continental European Literature - Donald Heiney and Lenthiel H. Downs. Barron's Educational Series Inc. N.Y. 1974. P 39-40.

as those of the preservers of the established institutions. Criticism of the bourgeois society is present in almost all the dramatic works of Ibsen,particularly in A Doll's House, The Pillars of the Society , and An Enemy of the People . Though not a socialist of the Shavian or any other brand, the fact remains that Ibsen is in revolt against the middle-class to which he belongs by birth; he, not unlike Bernard Shaw, is a middle-class anti middle-class, as already noted.

Of all the works of Ibsen A Doll's House (1879) is undoubtedly a landmark. It has been said that when Nora walked out of her husband's house defying the canons of the bourgeois society, the new drama - the drama of ideas - was born and it was the beginning of the end of the "moral" dogmas of the nineteenth century. At the same time in this drama the woman understands that she has a soul of her own and she has the right to choose her own life and station. Upto that time, there had really been no play which startled so many people in so many widely separated places within so short a time. It is true that it took more than a decade for A Doll's House to reach English theatre-goers, though meanwhile it had shaken the Norwegian society to its very foundations. A thoughtful young person coming upon A Doll's House today would find it far from easy to understand why there was so much of fuss about it; what is there in the play that created so much of sensation. The discovery of Nora that a woman is not just a machine, rather she also has her own soul or personality or whatever we might call a

woman's awakened ego ; that a woman has or can have a personality of her own was an idea foreign to the moral world of the nineteenth century. It was not that only during the Tang and Sung dynasties of China women were accorded a very low position in the society; the picture of Europe of the nineteenth century was not less gloomy. Today after the victory of feminism every woman makes the discovery in her childhood; she even assumes it as a self evident fact and does not bother to discover it at all. Naturally this play does not seem to be startling to us; but in 1879 the discovery of the awakened ego, the personality, startled not the audience only, but also Nora herself. Ibsen had previously shocked all Norway with Love's Comedy , a play in rhymed verse expressing an anti-romantic view of the preliminaries of marriage. But it was many years before the great dramatist would come out of exile with any confidence that his countrymen would receive him. Introduction of any serious subjects, subjects that were considered immoral was completely at variance with the tastes of the people brought up under the tradition of the "Well-made play". Here we may well remember the flood of newspaper vituperation let loose when Ghosts was first produced in England in the eighteen nineties. Nonetheless, the tradition of the so called "Well-made" play disappeared and the new drama - the drama of ideas - came decidedly to take its place.

To come back to A Doll's House, when Nora told her husband to discuss what had passed between them like two rational human beings, a new thing entered the stage ; it is "discussion" which became the focus. When this new drama of idea, A Doll's House, appeared, it was judged simply as a contribution to the debate on the institution of marriage and middle-class morality, and not on its artistic merits. The play became the focus of heated arguments on social ethics in Northern Europe. But England, more "sophisticated" and "moral" as it was, remained unmoved though not for long, thanks to the pioneering works of Archer, Shaw and a few others.

The construction of A Doll's House is well-knit; a few machinery of the "well-made play" are employed. Where this play differs from the typical "well-made play" is the introduction of, as noted above, the machinery of "discussion". Again, in a "well-made play" Nora would have jumped into the bosom of her husband after sentimental confessions and love-talks from both . But in this play Nora bangs the door behind her and walks out to live her own life. The character of Nora Helmer is one of the most beautifully portrayed by Ibsen; she talks from her sub-conscious self which reveals the poetry in her soul. She is actually the first of the "superior" women. The conflict between the individual conscience and the rules of the conventional society is the main interest of the play - and all this was new in the theatre-world. Nevertheless, the similarity between A Doll's House and the plays of the

Parisian school cannot be ignored. The whole play is packed with incidents of secret meetings, forgery and the threatening of revelation, the fearful letter, the exposure of the secret - these are the machinery employed in the "Well-made play". Only the clearing out of the mess in the denouement in the spirit of the "well-made play" is absent. In this play Ibsen has shown that marriage, as an institution, is full of pitfalls, and middle-class sentiments make marriage unhappy.

To the reader who has enjoyed the subject matter of the social dramas but resented the banality of form, Love's comedy, which had shocked Norway before A Doll's House, should be highly congenial; it handles a kindred theme with radiant vivacity, and presents a picture not less dramatic and alive of the same society than in A Doll's House . In fact, here Ibsen had struck for the first time the vein which the last thirty years of his dramatic career have been devoted to working out. Love's Comedy may well claim to have begun the social drama of the modern times. It handles the theme of love and marriage and presents through a medium charged with eloquence and imagery, a new picture of the then society. The exhibition of philosophic reflection is rather crude, but in it one may see abounding youthful energy.The play has its own faults :the character-portrayal is not finished, the action is slight, and the climax, though not devoid of sensation, has little relation to human nature. But the play is biting and the sting lay in the portrayal of the pettiness of persons and classes who

are held in high esteem, not only by others, but by themselves. Here Ibsen came to hold up the satiric mirror to the suburban drawing-room of Norway and to the varied phenomena current there under the name of Love. This was not only the picture of the urbane people of Norway; it was the picture of the same urbane people everywhere in Europe. It may not be out of place to mention here that in our country today the picture of the so-called educated and progressive urban people is much the same. Many themes in Ibsen and Shaw may seem to have become "dated" in Europe, but they are quite living in the modern Indian and many other societies.

Ibsen did another serious thing in Love's comedy and he wanted it to be serious. Here we find a clergyman brought upon the stage --- an act which was regarded as high affrontery in those days.

But Love's Comedy is much more than a mere satire. Its exuberant humour has a bitter core. Ibsen's criticism of common-place love-making at first appears to be harmless enough. The ceremonial formalities of love-making and engagement, raptures over the engaged pair, hasty and thoughtless wooing, the effect of familiarity upon a shallow affection, and the efforts to save the appearance of romance when its zeal has departed -- all these yielded comedy here. But these things may be found in some other writers before Ibsen. But Ibsen parts company with all his predecessors in this that whereas they would say that for success of marriage only a deep and sincere love together with prudent good sense was necessary, Ibsen couples this

good sense with the startling paradox that the first condition of a happy marriage is the absence of love, and the first condition of enduring love is the absence of marriage.

The student of the latter-day Ibsen is somewhat taken aback to find the grim Poet of Doubt in him whose task seems to mercilessly criticise the institutions in general and the institution of marriage in particular if it is not one of convenience. The amazement of the student increases when he finds that the championing of loveless marriage or marriageless love comes from a poet who himself was happily married. The truth may be discerned in the fact that there were two faces of, or rather two persons in, Ibsen --- one was an idealist who would not drag idealism to the verge of fanaticism and, the other, a hard, remorseless critic. Love for the idealist Ibsen, is a passion which loses its virtue when it reaches its goal through matrimonial alliance. Marriage, for the critic Ibsen,is an institution beset with faults and those who enter it blinded with love are sure to be disillusioned and miserable. The failure and tragedy of marriage has been attributed to the childish innocence of Nora in A Dall's House. In another play, Ghosts, it has been ascribed to the maidenly ignorance of Helena Alving. It is to be noticed that neither Nora nor Helena Alving precisely married "for love". But in Love's Comedyit is blind love alone that plays the part of the canker to suck happiness out of the wedded life. But the play suffered from the vigour of its satire which influences speech and

action. Satirist and dramatist here entered upon a partnership that lasted throughout the life of Ibsen. Another weakness of the play is that its rhymed verse does not have the flexibility of Brand and Peer Gynt . In these plays the characters speak the dialogue, but here they deliver set speeches burdened with epigram.

Of all Ibsen's plays Emperor and Galilean (published in 1873) is one of the most underrated by the posterity though he himself often referred to it as his masterpiece. Despite the remoteness of its theme, Emperor and Galilean is one of Ibsen's most personal statements. The problem that baffled and finally destroyed Julian was one that was always at the back of Ibsen's mind - where to find a faith to replace the Christianity of his a upbringing. The third quarter of the nineteenth century was,more than the preceding ages, a time of revolt against conventional religious thinking, with Bible-critisim and natural science going hand in hand. Emperor and Galilean in its search for a "third Kingdom" was as much a book of this era as The Origin of Species and Das Kapital. To find a religion which would combine and reconcile Christian ethics and "the joy of life" is a problem that troubled the souls of many a thoughtful man. It was a problem which Ibsen personally was never to solve and it is the central idea of not only Emperor and Galilean , but also of Ghosts and The Master Builder .

In 1877 was published The Pillars of the Society. Since it is an indictment of a particular right

wing leader, contemporary opinion naturally varied according to the political views of the reader. The liberals and the radicals hailed the play with the same delight and enthusiasm with which the conservatives had hailed The League of Youth.

The plot of The Pillars of the Society is set in a small port with Karsten Bernick, a wealthy ship-owner who has married a rich woman he does not love, as the chief character. His life has been a series of successes in double-dealing, often not above the law. Caught in an actress's bedroom while still engaged (fifteen years before the play opens),he allowed his fiance's brother Johan to take the blame. Planning a railway to the town, he secretly bought up all the land through which the proposed line will pass. When Johan returns from America and threatens to expose him, Bernick lets him go to sea in a ship he knows is rotten and must sink. But he finds, seemingly too late, that his own son has also boarded the very ship. In the ending, which is rather unconvincing, the ship is discovered not to have sailed, and Bernick in his relief confesses his crime and goes not only unpunished, but better off than he was before. Such a summary omits many of the important incidents and characters. The pettiness of provincial life, one of the things Ibsen hated most, is mercilessly detailed in the play.

The Pillars of the Society dealt with two problems of especial topicality for the 1870s. One was the question of women's rights, the other that of the so called "floating

coffins", that is, rotten ships sure to be sunk. The dramatic presentation of such topical problem is not unprecedented. But,it was the depth and subtlety of Ibsen's characterisation, his psychological insight and ability to strip respected people and institutions of their masks that made The Pillars of the Society a revelation to its contemporaries. These are precisely the reasons why this play appeals to the readers of today, too. One of the most important aspects of the play is the sharpness with which individual modes of speech are differentiated which helps distinguishing the characters. This was one of Ibsen's supreme strengths and one of his main contributions to the technique of prose drama. In The Pillars of the Society colloquial dialogue, objectivity, and tightness of plot -- requirements and characteristics of prose drama --- are beautifully combined. It is really the first of Ibsen's plays in which we may identify many of the elements which we instinctively associate with the playwright's name --- marriage founded on a lie, passionate women shocked and inhibited by the conventions of the society, an arrogant man of intellectual and practical gifts who becomes the cause of misery of his nearest ones. The concept of woman inhibited by the conventions of the society finds more elaborate and finished expression in the next play, Ghosts.

One of the greatest plays of Ibsen, Ghosts , which created a stir throughout Europe and which was condemned by most of the contemporaries of the dramatist, but which was to establish the fame of Ibsen as the greatest

living dramatist of the late nineteenth century, was written in 1881-82. It was in Norway, Ibsen's native country, itself that this play was most heavily and savagely attacked and the playwright taken to task for introducing immoral,obscene matters on the stage. It could be reasonably expected that the conservative papers would attack it, but the diatribes against the play and the playwright of the so-called liberal press was shocking. But a few critics boldly championed the play. In the face of almost insane attacks and stormy indignations labelling the play as the filthiest ever written, P.O.Schjott, Professor of Greek at the Christiana University, wrote : "For all the modern dramas we have read, Ghosts comes nearest to classical tragedy . . . When the dust of ignorant criticism has subsided, which we trust will happen soon, this play of Ibsen's, with its pure,bold contours,will stand not only as his noblest deed but as the greatest work of art which he or indeed our whole dramatic literature has produced."[1] This observation proved to be prophetic.

Ibsen's contemporaries looked at Ghosts primarily as a play about physical illness, just as they had looked at A Doll's House primarily as a play about women's rights. With only a few exceptions they failed to realize that the true subject of this play is the devitalising effect of a dumb acceptance of convention. Osvald is branded with disease not because his father was almost a beast, but

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1. Quoted from : Ibsen --- Michael Meyer, Pelicam 1974. P 510

because his mother, Mrs. Alving, had obeyed the ethics of the established institutions. In other words, Ghosts is a play about ethical, not physical illness. The importance of waging war against the past, the need for each individual to find his or her own freedom, the danger of renouncing love in the name of duty and middle-class morality --these are the real themes in Ghosts as they are the main themes of every play Ibsen wrote from A Doll's House onwards. And the targets are the same as those he had attacked in A Doll's House, and before that, in The Pillars of Society, and those he was to go on attacking until the end of his life --- the hollowness of great reputations, provincialism of outlook, the narrow and inhibiting effect of small-town life, the suppression of individual freedom from within and without, the neglect of the significance of heredity.The main theme of the play is the falseness of marriages of convenience ; the primal cause of the catastrophe is the marriage into which Mrs. Alving was forced and in which she was maintained by the hypocrisy of Pastor Manders. The title is symbolic : among the "ghosts" with which the play deals is the traditional idea that a woman's place is beside her husband, no matter even if he is a beast. The ghost of her husband's vice and her own vacillation pursues her down the years and actually breaks out in her son and in the burning of the Orphanage.

In one important technical respect Ghosts anticipates the later plays; it is the "double density dialogue" to which I have already referred. The Pillars of Society and A

Doll's House are both simply written, because for most of the part the characters do not indulge in this double-density dialogue in which more is meant than is uttered. But in Ghosts Mrs. Alving and Manders especially spend much of the time circling round a subject to which they dread to refer directly and at these moments the dialogue is oblique. This double-density dialogue, when the characters say one thing and mean another and in which the sub-text is more important than the text, was to be one of Ibsen's most important contributions to the technique of prose drama.

An Enemy of the People (1882) was written in the burst of indignation which swept over Ibsen following the savage attack on Ghosts . The theme here is the hypocrisy of middle-class "vested interests" which turn savegely on the exponent of truth -- truth that menaces their property. An Enemy of the People tells the story of the doctor at a small spa (country town) who has helped to develop the mineral baths which are to attract tourists to the place. When the baths were completed, the grateful city rewarded him with a well-paid job. The locals praise him as a public benefactor, but when they learn that the baths will have to be closed for several years affecting their income badly, they turn against him. When the doctor calls a meeting to put his views to them, the people brand him as the enemy of the people. The protagonist, Dr.Stockmann, only succeeded in making himself an enemy of the people through his honesty. But he, instead of succumbing, determines to carry on the fight for the truth even though the whole community goes

against him. He discovers that he has become a strong man because the strong man is he who is most alone. A Doll's House and Ghosts have women as protagonists, while in An Enemy of the People, the protagonist is a man, but the blasting of the vested interest is common to all these plays.

An Enemy of the People lacks the density and overtones of Ibsen's later works for which the play suffers in the hands of academic crticism. But there are few plays outside the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare and, possibly Tchekhov, with which the play need fear any comparison. So long as town councils and politicians exist there is no fear of its theme becoming dated even though in these days of universal adult suffrage the opinion expressed by Dr.Stockmann,"the minority is always right", for instance, seems very odd. On these points Ibsen was in fact, expressing a commonly shared attitude; Mill, Toqueville, Dickens and a host of liberal thinkers of the time had little faith on the wisdom of the majority. On the credit side, moreover, it must be noted that Dr.Stockmann is one of the half-score greatest male parts Ibsen wrote. The historical importance of The Enemy of the People is that it is the first political debate which remains, at the same time, a great play and reminds us of many "political plays" of Bernard Shaw.

To the end of his literary career,which spread over half-a-century, Ibsen was to keep moving forward relentlessly, never repeating the pattern of an earlier

success. Having exposed the hollowness of a certain kind of a left-wing politician in The League of Youth, he had gone on to expose the hollowness of their right-wing counterparts in The Pillars of Society ; having questioned the sanctity of marriage in A Doll's House, he had questioned it further in Ghosts and simultaneously exposed the hollowness of many other "sacred"institutions. Then he had returned to the field of politics and included the common voters.An Enemy of the People is an attack, not merely on those self-seekers who lead people by the nose, but also on those who allow themselves to be thus led. This explains why the liberal press became so savage in attacking Ibsen --- an attack no less malicious than that waged by the conservative press.

In the next play The Wild Duck the social criticism went into the background, never to come to the forefront again. Apparently The Wild Duck is, not unlike A Doll's House, Ghosts, and An Enemy of the People, a realistic play about real people. But it is different from these preceding plays in the use of symbols. In Brand Ibsen had used symbolism; but in that play the symbols are incidental and not integrated to the total design. In The Wild Duck, on the other hand, there is a single and precise symbol, for far from being incidental, this symbol---that of the duck itself --- is the life-breath of the play. Ibsen was not to use this method in all his subsequent plays; we notice the use of symbolism in The Master Builder and Little Eyolf, but not in,say, Hedda Gobler,which has, so far as

symbolism is concerned, more in common with Ghosts than with The Wild Duck. The symbol represents the refusal of most people, once they have been wounded, to go on living and face the reality. In this play,Ibsen argues for illusory happiness and against fanatic idealism. Gregers, through his obsession to bare the truth to those about him, only causes misery through removing their consolatory illusions. Hjalmar and his father have sought to hide themselves in the deep sea of illusions, but Gregers hauls them back to the surface. The spokesman of Ibsen's ideas in this play is the sarcastic Relling. He knows that Hjalmar is just worthless, but argues to Gregers that it is a private illusion which makes the life of a man bearable; he need have a fantasy into which he can retreat when adversity overwhelms him. When Gregers, pursuing the truth, removes the veil of illusion, Hjalmar and his family are destroyed. This is something new which could not be found in the earlier plays like A Doll's House,Ghosts and An Enemy of the People.

The method of The Wild Duck seemed new in one important aspect and this is the mixing of categories ---- the way tragedy and comedy tread on each other's heels. This method upset most of Ibsen's contemporaries, but it delighted such persons like Bernard Shaw to look on with pity and horror at a profound tragedy, shaking with laughter all the time at an irresistible comedy. This reminds us of The Heartbreak House,one of the artistic triumphs of Bernard Shaw, in which, too, we notice this method of mixing the

categories.

Rosmersholm (1885-86) in which Ibsen explored the realm of the unconscious is actually the most inexhaustible of all his dramatic works and it perplexed his contemporaries as impossibly obscure. To the modern reading public or audience this is a cause of admiration and fascination. The play marks Ibsen's final withdrawal as a playwright from the realm of politics ; in other words, it is the last of his plays which introduces national and local politics as a decisive factor in shaping the destinies of individuals and peoples. But this is not the only interesting feature of the play. The play is about two lovers as potentially passionate as Romeo and Juliet of Shakespeare, but Rosmer and Rebecca are the children of the nineteenth century --- a time when bourgeois moral values dominated the characters of individuals. The lovers never touch each other until the moment they clasped hands to walk out and drown themselves. Unless the passions are suggested, there seems no reason why they should commit suicide. This is the play in which Ibsen, for the first time in his works, overtly probed the unconscious mind. The problem of how one human being can gain control over the mind of another and persuade him or her to act according to inclination within them which they repress, being dominated by the moral values of the time, was much in the air. This problem interested Ibsen much, but it was a thing which the ordinary theatre-goer was not aware of. What was implied subtly in the dialogue naturally became incomprehensible to him.

Ibsen,through Rebecca, presented the predicament of the woman of intellect whose passions can find no outlet.

Rosmersholm provides a link between Ibsen's old method and his new so far as characterisation is concerned. Rosmer is the last of his characters who are caught up in the maze of politics and Rebecca is the first of his passionate but inhibited female characters. Almost as baffling as Rosmersholm is Hedda Gabler.

It is a curious thing that the European public who accepted characters like Madame Bovary and Ana Karenina, should be baffled by Rebecca West and Hedda Gabler. The drama,in the stage of the contemporary technical development, could only present simple characters. The secrets of thoughts, the development of soul, could no more than be merely indicated. It is obvious that a novel about Hedda Gabler could be as interesting to the then public as Madame Bovary but her presentation on the stage left them cold; they failed to understand her.

This play, Hedda Gabler, is the most universally admired and the most frequently performed of the plays of Ibsen. The play is immensely actable with short exchanges between characters. Here we notice Ibsen dispensing with long speeches; here we notice no explanation given by other characters and no self-characterisation in order to defend or excuse himself or herself. In this play Ibsen explored the difficult region of the psychology of a woman who is

still fundamentally a child of her particular past. She has not been able to disinherit the ethical nullity and the narrow traditions of a military caste to which she belongs. Freedom is inhibited by a dread of scandal, a theme which had been dealt with in Ghosts in a different context. As Hedda is a child fundamentally, so she is afraid of adult responsibility. The only outlet of her emotion is the fantasy of the self; in this she is much unlike Nora and Mrs.Alving. Whenever she faces any crisis, she fails to meet it fairly and sqarely; she has, for her equipment, only her negative tradition which proves ultimately destructive.The pistol in her hand is the symbol of her negative tradition. We find that intelligence and temparament do not make her fit to live the passive life of a housewife. George Tesman, her husband, is a none-too-brilliant scholar; she has married him because she expected him to advance far in his profession. To her dismay she discovers that Tesman is not her soul's mate. She now regrets she did not accept the brilliant,though unstable, young man Lovborg. She learns from her friend Thea that Lovborg has written a book which bears the unmistakable mark of his genius. She learns further, to her frustration and anger, that Thea has abandoned her husband to become Lovborg's mistress.By chance the manuscript of the book of Lovborg, which was not yet published, falls to her hand and she imagines it to be the child of the love of Lovborg and Thea. This thought becomes too much for her and she throws

the manuscript into fire. At first her husband George Tesman is enraged with her for this, but at last agrees to sleep over the matter when Hedda points out that the publication of this brilliant book would rob him of the professorship for which both Tesman and Lovborg are trying. When Lovborg comes to know of his loss of the manuscript, he comes to Hedda and says that he contemplates suicide for he has lost his only child, meaning the manuscript. She lends him two pistols hoping he would die in a heroic manner. But she is denied her morbid triumph when Lovborg dies in a place of ill-fame,apparently accidentally, by shooting himself. When Brack, to whom Hedda had confided how boring her honeymoon with Tesman was,threatens to reveal the origin of the pistol with which Lovborg was killed, she refuses this ignominy and shame and shoots herself.

Hedda Gabler, from the standpoint of dramatic technique , is a great achievement . It is the double-density dialogue, through which the dramatist reveals the inner soul of the characters; and in this respect this play has a kinship with Ghosts.Self-realization, Ibsen realized, is the highest task and the greatest hapiness of an individual. It may be said that in all the plays of Ibsen the dramatist hammers on this point. One of the tragedies of women, Ibsen seems to point out, is that their will-power tends to remain undeveloped. The theme of Hedda Gabler is this : her personal tragedy is that she has committed herself to the stolid and dull

middle-class married life which does not allow her any outlet to express her talent and individuality. Mrs. Alving in Ghosts has to submit to the conventional ideas about a woman's position ; has to return to her husband whom she can never love, only to become more miserable. Her submission to conventional attitude becomes the Nemesis for her son. It must be admitted that Mrs.Alving is not a woman of the superior type. Hedda Gabler demonstrates what a big burden of social censure is heaped on a superior woman if she tries to live according to the urges of her inner self. Side by side we notice in her character a fear of scandal when Brack threatens her to reveal the secret of the pistol. Hedda is a very complex character, but to call her malicious even when she burns the manuscript of Lovborg's book would be beside the mark. The complexity of the play is rooted particularly in the complexity of her character ; the play is complex also for the reason that, being a play, it does not have much scope for explanation. As noted already, in this play Ibsen depended more on short speeches than on long ones. Explanation and narration being absent, the play appears baffling.

The Master Builder (1892) is technically almost as faultless as Ghosts, as profound and precise in its symbolism as Wild Duck. Just after the publication of the play, great argument developed as to the meaning of the play, which bewildered many of the critics. Amazing theories have been advanced likening Solness to Ibsen himself

creating a cathedral with his dramatic works; the nine dolls of Mrs. Solness were taken to be the nine Muses; the dead twins were thought to be Scandinavianism and Ibsen's own happiness ; the tower of Solness was looked upon as symbolic of Man's revolt against God. Those theories about the meaning of the play baffled the dramatist himself.

Solness and his wife are worthy people, but they do not suit each other and this makes them both unhappy in their life together. They do not become, being the people they are, what they could and should have become --- and this despite the fact that they are not actually miserable and despite their consideration for each other and a kind of love and tenderness noticeable in both for each other. But each broods perpetually and each goes his or her way mentally making the gulf between them bigger and bigger. They are not, of course,portrayed as extraordinary persons ; it is just they feel spiritually akin, strongly attracted to each other; they feel that they belong to each other and their relation would ennoble rather than debase them. Then, when one still has what is called the joy of life, a need for happiness, and when one feels unable to live in subdued resignation without the joy of life, comes the collision. They decide to build, so to say, a castle in the air and live together in spirit. This lifts Solness higher than ever before to do things he had never ventured before. He stakes his life on it and is killed. It was not madness on his part to risk his life in building the tower ; it was

the expression of his eager longing to achieve happiness. Ibsen's interest in hypnosis, and the power that one human being can gain over the mind of another has already been noted. He carried it further in The Master Builder concentrating on how unexpressed wishes could sometimes be expressed in action, even at the cost of life. Ibsen pointed out that the struggle for the unattainable with zest for life is a high joy. The death of an individual in attaining this high joy does not destroy its sanctity.

Even a casual glance cannot but notice the resemblace between The Master Builder and Brand in the final catastrophe. But the difference between the two plays is great since whereas Solness meets his tragic end by his own act, Brand is overwhelmed by the forces of external agencies. In another and different point, The Master Builder bears relation with Ghosts and Hedda Gabler ; it is the use of fire as a symbol of a developing crisis. We readily recall the fire in Ghosts that breaks out to destroy the memorial to Captain Alving and Hedda's burning the manuscript of Lovborg's book.

The Master Builder also, like its predecessor Hedda Gabler, appears very unintelligible and hopeless to the critics. When the play was first published in 1893 in England, the critics in a chorus rejected it declaring that in it "dense mist enshrouds characters,

words,actions, and motives" and that it was "blasphemous"[1]. It seems that the critics could little see the workings of the soul of the characters ; could little gauze the psychology of man and woman submerged in the joy of life. The play appeared "blasphemous" to the critics who saw the building of the tower as a revolt against God and an attempt to reach the high heavens. They could not see that the sky-high tower is the joy of life which Solness and Hilde in united heart wanted to obtain.

When We Dead Awaken is one of the most valuable testaments we have to Ibsen's extraordinary mind and vision. It seems that Ibsen had deliberately suppressed the poet in him while writing the "social" plays from The Pillars of the Society to The Wild Duck.There is no poetry in these plays save perhaps Mrs. Alving's speech about the ghosts that "lie as thick as the grains of sand". But in every play Ibsen had written since Rosmersholm, with the exception of Hedda Gabler there are moments when we are aware of the poet in him. Then in John Gabriel Borkman again the poet came to the fore. In When we Dead Awaken, which followed John Gabriel Borkman, the movement towards poetry was carried to a stage further.

There is no lack of ideas in the plays of Ibsen, the foremost being that conventional attitudes

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1. Ibsen. M.Meyer. Pelican. 1974. P 738. The quotation is from the Daily Telegraph.

towards institutions is a veritable destroyer of happiness. But in When We Dead Awaken Ibsen seems to say that when the body dies the dead awaken.But there is much more than this in the play. Here is the story of an aged sculptor Arnold Rubek who is unhappily married to a much younger wife,Maja. He meets a former model,Irene, who had loved him but in whom he was interested only as a sculptor. After some dredging up of the past the two climb up a mountain ; the action of the play takes place as they go higher and higher. Near the top they meet Maja and a huntsman, Ulfhejm, with whom she has been enamoured. As a storm rises Maja and Ulfhejm go down to safety while Rubek and Irene continue towards the top where they are killed by an avalanche. Maja and her man return to what they think life but the other two regard as death ; Rubek and Irene climb upwards to what the others regard as death but they regard as life.

Rubek had rejected Irene. And now the ageing artist,restless in his married life, restless in the homeland to which he has returned after a long sojourn abroad, restless in his art,realizes that to reject love is to reject life. When Rubek and Irene meet and talk over old times, she learns, bit by bit, what has happened to the statue he had made and is about to kill him, when she realizes that the history of the destruction of the statue is his own history and that as he used her up and left her "dead", so with her death the life went out of him.But like Nora in A Doll's House, she sees the possibility of a

miracle. The dead may awaken if only they can find an honest and natural relation in which they shall no longer sacrifice and kill one another. Rubek had come to regard Irene not as an end in herself, but solely as a means of ministering to his needs. Thus he had denied Irene's right to live. But now he accepts her as a human being, as an end in herself and expiates his earlier renunciation of love. This does the miracle and both of them awaken to life. It is possible, as Bernard Shaw suggests, that the end of Rubek and Irene also signifies the end of the idols, domestic, moral, religious, and political "in whose name we have been twaddled into misery and confusion and hypocrisy unspeakable"[1]. This play may be regarded as Ibsen's final account with himself.

A few words about Pinero and Jones as the exponents of the drama of ideas must be said. About T.N. Robertson I have already said in the Introductory chapter and although references to Pinero and Jones have also been made there, these two deserve more serious probing. It is today admitted, justifiably, that Pinero and Jones did much commendable work to prepare the ground for the growth of the drama of ideas. More, they prepared the way for an appreciation of Ibsen's genius and accustomed the play-goers to a more faithful and intimate picture of contemporary life and its problems than to what they had been accustomed

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1. Quintessence of Ibsenism -- George Bernard Shaw, Constable & Co. Ltd. London 1913. P 157.

before ; in other words, they paved the way for the reception of the drama of ideas. It is true that as Robertson had failed to free himself completely from melodrama and sentimentalism, so also failed Pinero and Jones. It is also true that it was not until the nineties of the last century, when the influence of Ibsen was making itself felt strongly and Bernard Shaw produced his first plays, that the necessary impetus was there to carry the drama over to the field of social and philosophical ideas. Nevertheless, we cannot be oblivious of the importance of the two dramatists precisely because the change that came over the English drama by the last part of the last century cannot be attributed to Ibsen alone.

The reputation of Arther Wing Pinero rests on his social plays. Ever mindful of construction of his plays,Pinero built his plays according to a deliberate pattern, beginning with a situation that involved a group of people in some dramatically striking relationship with each other ; he developed the plot by means of subtle interplay between the characters and the careful invention of fresh material to some dramatic or hilarious denouement and rounded it off with a final act in which the complications and entanglements are resolved in as natural a manner as possible.

Pinero was, however, not much interested in giving a naturalistic representation of real life.Some critics in Pinero's days including Bernard Shaw who wrote

dramatic criticism were highly critical of the so-called "well-made play" on the ground that a story which was constructed so ingenuously was bound to present only a contrived and unrealistic view of life. As a playwright Pinero's job was to take a situation from real life and then to develop it in such a way as to create an effective piece of dramatic craftsmanship.

Pinero's serious social dramas are a testimony to his skill in story-telling. But he has not a considerable imaginative range. His characters are drawn almost without exception from the well-to-do class of late Victorian and Edwardian era of London living a rather comfortable life. Generally his characters are bankers or stock-brokers --- men of means who have little or no experience and idea about the sordid life of the downtrodden. The women in Pinero's plays are almost as a rule a beautiful,usually pampered,but unhappy lot ; maid-servants wait upon the ease-loving women in palatial buildings and palaces standing in beautiful natural surroundings.

Pinero's most famous play The Second Mrs. Tranqueray was published in 1893. Though Ibsen had been presented and though Shaw's Widowers' Houses had also been published before that date, The Second Mrs.Tranqueray was hailed as epoch-making particularly because the public was still unaware of the true nature of the drama of ideas. The plays of Pinero which went before The Second Mrs.

Tranqueray, for instance,the Dandy Duck,The Hobby Horse, and The Weaker Sex are of little literary or historical interest. Most of these early works are sentimental and even the craftsmanship,in which department Pinero is an adept, is also not upto the standard with the possible exception of the The Magistrate . The plays of Pinero marked as "problem plays" were written in the nineties and it was with The Second Mrs. Tranqueray that he drew the attention of the serious theatre-going public. Of course, today we can see the weakness of the play more clearly than the dramatist's contemporaries could ; even William Archer, otherwise a dependable critic, praised it almost in the superlative. But we discover in the play a certain sentimentalism ; also we discover in the dialogue a literary quality which does strike as genuine. It was,however,with this play that English drama found itself back after the time of Goldsmith and Sheridan. William Archer rightly recognised in this play the beginning of a period of creative activity.

The Second Mrs. Tranqueray is about a woman, Paula, who once lived a rather dishonest and immoral kind of existence, mixing with men without proper regard for the status of married life. She was what was called in those days a "scarlet woman". The play tells of Paula's marriage with Aubery Tranqueray, a highly respectable young man, and her failure to live down her past life; she fails to persuade her husband's friends too to live down that life. She has no other choice but to end her life with her own

hands. But even in this the most famous play of Pinero he does not strike us as a creator of characters. Paula seems to be a work of prejudiced observation instead of comprehension and the other characters owe their faint interest and humanity to the fact that they are the projections of the playwright's own beliefs. Thus whatever the merits of this play, Pinero does not appear to be an interpreter of characters, but only a describer of people as the ordinary man sees and judges them. Bernard Shaw discusses this point and says, "The moment the point is reached at which that comparatively common gift of "an eye for character" has to be supplanted by the higher dramatic gift of sympathy with character -- of the power of seeing the world from the point of view of others instead of merely describing or judging them from one's own point of view in terms of the conventional systems of morals, Mr. Pinero breaks down".[1] This weakness is seen in all the other dramas of Pinero which makes him incapable of taking a place by the side of Ibsen and Shaw. Iris shows the tragic conflict between a luxurious and even pampered life as the wife or mistress of a wealthy but unattractive businessman and a life of poverty in a long-cabin in Canada with a dull criminal-looking young Englishman. Pinero's tragic theme is the destruction of the individual due to his failure to comply with the social code. In the plays of Pinero it is not the law of England that falls upon the unfortunate couples who fall out with each

1. Plays and Players - Bernard Shaw ed. A.C. Ward. O.U.P. 1952. P 23.

other, but the massive weight of the Victorian middle-class opinion. This opinion may have the appearance of a prejudice, but it remains just as cruel and evil a thing. The first ambition of many a man and woman was to get "accepted" by high society. If a man got too friendly with another man's wife, or cheated at cards or went around with an attractive young lady who once earned her bread by dancing in a night club, or even wore wrong clothes, he was not only chucked out of the society, but even spiritually destroyed which is certainly more dangerous. The play of Pinero in which we can see the working of this moral law most clearly is The Benefit of the Doubt (1896). In reading this play one gets the impression that a few words of explanation of Christian charity and forgiveness might clear up the situation and save the trouble;but one also knows that such explanation,given the existing moral code, would not have been accepted, if given at all. We feel that it is not the character portrayed by Pinero that are intrinsically tragic, but the world -- the moral world, particularly of the middle class -- in which these characters live.

Shortly before Pinero wrote The Profligate (1892),the plays of Ibsen began to be known in England and it is probable that they influenced Pinero quite considerably. Ibsen, as we have seen, was essentially a poet as well as a magnificent dramatic craftsman ; he was a man who blazed inwardly at social injustice. Although he was as conscious as Pinero of the heartless social code, he thrust deep below it

to the very heart of his characters. Pinero does not thrust deep. He recognises injustice, but does not give the impression of resenting it. He does not mock the social code of the middle-class like Shaw or probe it like Ibsen. It is the middle -class opinion that prevails at the end. The tragedy is accounted for by the failure of the characters to conform to the established, conventional moral code. The conflict of ideas is there in these plays, but the end is contrived according to conventional moral standards. He is thus not a revolting son of the bourgeoisie like an Ibsen or a Shaw.

The dramas of Pinero which were written after the start of the new century are His House in Order (1906). The Thunderbolt (1908), and Mid-Channel (1909). The first of these introduces a household which has been made dismal through the domination and presence of his wife's relatives. The man seems to be fascinated by the memory of his, as he thinks, saintly first wife. But this image of the first wife is shattered by his brother who is worldy-wise. Pinero has brought out all the drama that is there in this episode. In The Thunderbolt described as "An episode in the History of a Provincial Family" the dramatist focussed attention upon the familiar figure of an "artist" who at the same time has some of the qualities of an intruder and once more life is infused with the material which could easily have been nothing save tediously conventional and hackneyed. The tone of Mid-Channel is definitely darker. This is a play about a businessman and his wife whose marriage is doomed. The husband is always busy

with his business and even when he is indoors his thoughts are clearly elsewhere. The wife realizes that the relation between the two is false and that she cannot continue here. For a moment a reconciliation seems possible but the heroine ends as Iris had done.

Henry Arthur Jones, after writing some trifles, stepped into writing dramas of social criticism, the first serious attempt at which is seen in his Saints and Sinners (1884). The desire of the playwright was to introduce new dramatic materials and a sense of philosophic purpose -- and all these are indicated by him in his valuable preface to this play. The play presents realistically a slice of English life almost in the manner of Robertson, and the play remains, for its day, a severe attack on commercial philistinism the like of which has never been accomplished by Pinero; and here Jones has an edge over Pinero. The playwright stresses the unpalatable fact that there is a wide and hypocritical discrepancy between the religious professions and practices. The play is courageous , presenting a new thing in drama, and the conventionally religious and respectable people must have been scandalized by this. The play ends with the punishment of the stage-villains, but not with, significantly, the conventional happy ending of the so-called "well-made play". What may be regarded as an advance in dramatic realism is the presentation of the picture of the mercenary life and religious hypocrisy. This play could certainly rouse high hopes both for the playwright and the English drama which was surely standing at a turning point, Saints and Sinners shows

that Jones had not only the eye to discern the hypocrisy of the "moral" people, but also that he had great dreams to be the real great exponent of the drama of ideas in England. It is unfortunate that the mind of Jones was not strong enough to keep pace with its dream. He conceived, of course, the drama of ideas, but more theoretically than practically, for his practical performance did not go far on to new directions.

In The Masquerades Jones sharply questions and exposes the sham of marriage conventions and this definitely is a big leap forward. But, though in the preface to The Tempter he had spoken strongly against contemporary realism, in the The Masquerades Jones pursued that common path with a strong flavour of sentimentalism. Dulcie Larrondie is the heroine here. She is a girl of some breeding, but is forced to work as a barmaid having lost all her money. In the inn a kiss from her is auctioned and Sir Brice Skene wins it against her lover, David Ramon. Sir Brice marries her, but their domestic happiness is soon lost as Sir Brice runs through all his money through drinking and gambling. Ramon aids her and then gambles for her against her husband. He wins, but goes off on a scientific expedition, leaving her pure. In this play Jones attempted an imaginative treatment of life. But the attempt is not quite happy precisely because his "imagination is not of very distinguished quality" [1] -- the

1. Pinero, Jones, and Wilde - (Extract from "The Old Drama and the New) : William Archer. Printed in "Essays in Modern Drama". ed. Morris Freeman. D.C.Health & Co. Boston. 1966. P 116.

same handicap from which Pinero also suffered.

In his masterpiece Michael and His Lost Angel (1895) Jones examines the subject of religion. This play was attacked in its own day as irreverent because it presented on the stage a clergyman in illicit passion which could not be endured by the Victorian moralists. The play shocked their conventional religious sentiments and the sense of delicacy. The Reverend Father Feversham compels a girl in the congregation to confess her shame, but soon himself commits the same sin and seems not to be sorry. At the end, however, we find the Reverend Feversham penitently confessing his sin. He then leaves the congregation in disgrace, goes to seclusion and never again sees the girl until she is brought to him in her last hours.Inspite of the fact that Michael and His Lost Angel is an improvement on the customary treatment of illicit passion in the Victorian theatre, this play is a glaring illustration of Jone's compromise with conventional morality.

That Jones failed to make much advance in creating the real drama of ideas may be shown by the characteristic way he reacted against Ibsen and the Ibsenites. We know how the enemies of Ibsen in England continued to fulminate even after Ibsen had been played on the English stage several times. In the prologue to his play The Tempter Henry Jones exhorted his audience to :

> Shun the crude present with vain problems rife
> Nor join the bleak Norwegian's barren quest
> For deathless beauty's self and holy zest

Of rapturous martyrdom, in some base strife
Of petty dullards, soused in native filth

This is a clear enough pointer to the fact that the drama of ideas which was struggling to be born in England did not have much to do with Jones. It was long after that Jones was to recant.

The Tempter, nevertheless, is a remarkable achievement. Published in 1893 the play is a courageous attempt at verse drama ; for its period it was surely a noble attempt. In the preface to this play Jones attacks "realism" which was a new thing. But it seems that the playwright himself failed to grasp the implications of his own theme with the Devil in a physical embodiment drawing Prince Leon from the love of Lady Avis to that of Lady Asobel. The playwright strove to bring religion on to the stage, but as he did not have the necessary depth of mind required to handle such a vital and delicate subject, the effort ended in his contempt for religion. It is narrowness of outlook seen in his attack on Ibsen which worked as an obstacle for him in guiding the English drama.

As regards any conscious philosophy of life there is not much, if any, difference between Pinero and Jones. But in their fertile, live moments they are as unlike as two men in the same profession can be. At such time Pinero does not seem to have any views at all. The English novelists of the Thackeray-Trollope period have created a fictitious world for him and it is about this world that Pinero creates stage

stories. Jones, on the other hand, works passionately from the real ; by throwing himself sympathetically into his figures he gives them the stir of life. Jones is adept in playwrighting with a kindly and humourous observer's sense of contemporary manners and with a knowledge of spiritual history in which his nearest competitor, Pinero, seems so deficient.

Jone's comedies afford materials for the social essayist as well ; here we find an object-lesson in British lower middle-class hypocrisy. The attack is not the usual spurious, sham attack of the average stage-moralist ; very often it seems courageous and uncompromising. It is almost a truism that a play which is a criticism of contemporary life involves a certain struggle with the conventional people. In the case of the comedies of Jones, particularly, The Triumph of the Philistines, the result was obvious. As Shaw observes, "Accordingly Mr. Jones was not so unanimously applauded when the curtain fell on poor Mr. Jorgan's very mixed "Triumph" as Pinero was after Mrs. Ebbsmith pulled the Bible out of the fire".[1]

Ibsen, one might say, stood in a sort of mysterious correspondence with the fermenting, germinating ideas of the day. As George Brandes is reported to have said, " Once or twice I have even had a distinct impression that new ideas, which were on the point of manifesting themselves publicly

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1. Our Theatre in the Nineties - Bernard Shaw. Constable & Co. Ltd. St. Ed. 1932. P 123.

but were not received by others, had been preoccupying and indeed tormenting him"[1]. Brandes also noted Ibsen's ear for "the low rumble that tells of ideas undermining the ground ... for the throb of their pinions in the air"[2]. Now this mysterious correspondence with the fermenting, germinating ideas of the late nineteenth century was foreign to both Pinero and Jones. The new revolutionary ideas which were not received or accepted by others, were not accepted by any one of them either. The playwright of the drama of ideas must be able to march with the progress of time and capable of receiving new ideas and dramatizing them in the face of public criticism. We feel that in the plays of Pinero and Jones the situation, the action, rather than the idea, is the important thing which is at variance with our conception of this type of play. The period of Pinero and Jones was rich with ideas floating in the air ; but both the dramatists failed to seize that raw-material to build dramas with. This failure is due not so much to their lack of intellect but to their fear of being called "immoral" because the floating and the germinating ideas of their days were mostly "immoral", that is, unconventional. They were reared by the bourgeois morality of the late Victorian era. The drama of ideas is the handmaid of the revolting sons of the middle class like Ibsen and Shaw ; Pinero and Jones were, if one may use such a term, the accepting sons.

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1. Quoted from - Ibsen - Michael Meyer.Penguine. 1974. P 500
2. Ibid. P 500.

For the sake of justice it should be admitted that Pinero and Jones raised English drama from the mud and placed it in a position where it could command respect. "They made the way easy for those who were to follow them, and it is doubtful whether Bernard Shaw ... would have found his way on the stage at all ... if these two men had not preceded him"[1]. This observation, while not essentially untrue, puts added emphasis on the importance of Pinero and Jones as the predecessors of Shaw. They seldom exercised any significant influence upon the latter but immensely greater dramatist ; their attitudes were fundamentally different from those of Shaw. But their importance lies in the fact that they carried on, after Robertson, the study of the problems of the day and to that extent paved the way for Bernard Shaw.

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1. The Outline of Literature - ed. John Drinkwater. Revised by Horace Shipp. Dramatic Literature. 1950. P 718.