Chapter-V

PINERO'S GENIUS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP
The Art of Dialogue:

It is well known that in the sphere of drama the modern period is heralded by Tom Robertson, whose comedies have a serious note that almost transforms them into problem plays. An example of such plays is his most famous production, 'Caste'. In the last decades of the nineteenth century Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones boldly forged ahead in the endeavor to give to the stage something that should do more than copy past models.

Pinero constructed his dialogue with due care and attention. He knew very well that dialogue is the plastic medium of the playwright. It is by means of dialogue that a playwright achieves his ultimate effect. From start to finish, dialogue is the hand-maid of a play; its ingredients are clearly of fine texture, furthering with each line the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated. In order to be theatrically effective, Pinero constructed his dialogues with fairness. Pinero was an actor, a man of the theatre. He was therefore, conscious of the fact that in the theatre, as in real life, much is attributed to the man or woman who can magnetize a listener by vivid conversational gift and the charm of witty expression. Dialogues attract the attention of the listeners and bind them under the spell of illusion from the
outset. Being a practical playwright, he knew that the primary tests of good dialogue are several. How would a line sound in the theatre? Does it convey anything to the listeners in the darkened auditorium?—Is it appropriate to the character to whom it has been assigned? Does it further the plot, raise a laugh or a tear? Does it give the actor a chance? In short, does it lead anywhere?

Unlike the older plays, however, in Pinero we find naturalness combined with vivacity and vigour. Pinero’s achievement in this direction, therefore, emerged by comparison. The condition of English Drama before Pinero was appalling, but nowhere was it truer than in dialogue construction. W.S. Gilbert wrote his plays in blank verse and in the nature of parables; Sullivan produced operas full of sarcastic humour. H. J. Byron relied on rollicking spirit and on silly puns to make his farces popular; he often degenerated into mere punning and verbal horse-play. W.S. Wills turned out smooth poetic drama and Swinburne wrote plays which would take a week to act; He made his characters talk two hundred lines or more at one time in total disregard of the fact that the audience had to stay in their seats in discomfort for hours. George Meredith dallied with comedy. The sentimentalists wrote nothing but weary dialogue with little wit. Stilled pathos or strained wit, frequent punning, or mere vulgarities were the order of the day.
Pinero altered all this; just as he brought drama towards realism, he brought also a change in the construction of dialogue. Some spade work had already been done. T.W. Robertson and H. A. Jones attempted a return to nature with occasional success but wit, with a dash of sentiment, often broke in. Robertson went little beyond showing the faint glimmerings of hope. A greater change was brought by H. A. Jones who showed the first marked symptoms of a reaction, and of a tendency to reject extrinsic ornamentation in preference to a dialogue that would be intrinsic to character and situation. But a decided change was exercised by Pinero, though it was not until he got into the trait that the reform was fully accomplished.

To begin with Pinero discarded the devices of soliloquies and asides in which a character explained why he was there and what he intended to do to give the audience, as it were, a peep into the past or a disclosure of the speaker’s intention as to the future. This artificial unravelling of motive or emotion, an infraction of the surface texture of life, was a hangover from the past platform convention. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the proscenium arch had made pictorial realism theoretically possible; the apparel of the Elizabethan stage survived and most of the action took place on it. There was nothing inconsistent in the ordinary convention of the soliloquies. But
in the last quarter of the nineteenth century new methods of stage lighting and other new literary and artistic influences had completed the process of evolution withdrawing the whole stage within the frame of the picture and reducing visual conventions. Soliloquies, therefore, were nothing but inscribed labels issuing from the mouth of the figures; asides also were a sort of running commentary on the secret motives of the character. It is pertinent to note that this inept conventionalism of `soliloquies' and `asides' which we regard today as gratuitous and uncalled for, was in England first dispensed with by Pinero alone.

*Sweet Lavender* and *The Magistrate* look old fashioned. Both these plays make a liberal use of the device of Asides. Pinero himself made them look old fashioned by initiating and establishing a totally new fashion which rendered obsolete the technical method of his twenty seven previous plays. This view is supported by C.W. Montague who says, “It is interesting to compare the later plays of Pinero with his early work and with the plays of his middle period. In youth he made his characters speak soliloquies like Hamlet and years afterwards he would send hosts to write letters in the middle of a dinner party in order that guests may deliver biographies of them
down at the foot-light." In *The Second Mrs Tanqueray, The Thunder Bolt* and *Midchannel* no trace of these outmoded devices is found; the plays take rank with other works of realistic drama among other things on account of the reality of the phrasing.

Apart from this, Pinero did away with long speeches, a bane of the Victorian playwrights. Drama, like all literature, grew from verse and for emotional purpose a medium was needed to mark the speech of everyday life. It was a conventional means to differentiate between the mimic personages and the audience.

From 1700 to 1900 not a single play in blank verse was produced which could deserve to live on the modern stage. The reason, of course, was a poetic dialogue and when prose dialogue came to be written, the method was to put long speeches in the mouths of the characters. Pinero felt that a dramatist had to prune conversation with a view to reinforcing the dramatic possibilities and the theatrical effectiveness. The plot could not be held up for dialogues: meandering talk was useless, as it took away interest, and once the interest flagged the writer became a bungler, a conjurer who failed to produce his promised effect from the magic hat. Every line in the play must propel

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1. C. W. Montague, *Dramatic values*, p. 130.
the plot one step nearer its ultimate denouement. In Pinero's plays
dialogue is not empty rhetoric; it is constructed with due attention to
plot and character. The plays, therefore, make interesting stories well
told. In this respect Pinero lived up to his ideal of theatrical talent
which, in his opinion, "consisted in the power of making characters not
only tell a story by means of dialogue but tell it in such skillfully-
devised form and order as would within the limits of an ordinary
theatrical representation give rise to the greatest possible amount of
that peculiar emotional affect the production of which is the one great
function of the theatre.² He is an admirable story teller; the stage is his
medium. If he writes farces or sentiment, he entertains and pleases; if
he writes more serious drama, he holds attention. This is possible
because Pinero does not look upon his dialogue as decoration or
embellishment for his character but as a legitimate means to extend
the action over the wide range of events which constitute the frame
work of the play: speech puts the actual impact of events into words:
it dramatizes forces which are not seen. The praise given by Harold
William is therefore just and true "all his work is self conscious in
construction, often nearly impeccable, in dialogues, swift and

². Pinero, a Lecture on R. L. Stevenson, the dramatist.
decisive.”

F. S. Boas also presents his view about Pinero in such words: “Whatever the form of a play to him, it was not merely a conversation piece, but a work of constructive design.” Pinero was not by instinct a stylist; he has not the Anglo-Irish ear of a Synge or Shaw for beautiful prose rhythm. Yet at its best his dialogue had the finish, fine edge of lapidary art and it could take on a conspicuous variety of tones.”

Pinero did not fill in pages with empty rhetoric; he compressed the speeches of his characters. A character for example could say or do anyone of the following:

1. I wish you to go!
2. You must go’
3. ‘Go’
4. Simply opening of the door.

Everything would depend on dramatic exigencies but simplicity would be the keynote. Of this an admirable example is furnished by *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*. In art, this play is perfectly simple, it relies upon action, gesture and facial expression rather than rhetoric and the most impressive scenes are those in which the words in themselves are least noticeable. In this play when Paula springs upon the sofa to

4. F. S. Boas *From Richardson to Pinero*, p. 220.
be sure of catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror so that she is looking her best before Ellean’s lover is brought in, there is a moment of silent suspense more telling than any verbal eloquence. In act II in six short sentences, Pinero conveys the boredom, the loneliness, the utter dejection, that has got in Paula’s life:

Aubrey : Sunshine! Spring!
Paula : (glancing at clock) Exactly six minutes.
Aubrey : Six minutes?
Paula : Six minutes; Aubrey dear, since you made your last remark.
Aubrey : I beg your pardon; I was reading my letters. Have you seen Ellean this morning?
Paula : (coldly) Your last observation, but one was about Ellean.5

The lines not only ring true but they also fulfil one indispensable quality of dialogue – emotion. Stage dialogue rests primarily on feeling. Wit philosophy, moral truth, poetic language, all those count for nothing unless there be in the words feeling often of obvious kind.

In The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith a phrase occurs twice which is out of keeping with the piece. Lucas Cleeve says to Agnes, “the duke

5. The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, Act II.
had made himself the bearer of some letters from 'friends' and to the Duke says, 'will you be the bearer of a note from me to Sanford?" In *The Trelawny of the Wells* we find artificial prose. Tom says to Avonia, "yes deep down in the well clear pool of genuine refinement, girlish simplicity." Gadd, says to Colpoys, "may boxing night, to those unfortunate enough to find themselves in the theatre, long remain a dismal memory ......and this from Rose, 'the order and chain and the sword he wore in 'Richard'. He gave them to my father." Prosy sentences and flourishes of style abound freely. The raisonneur is particularly prone to bursting in to tirades of rhetorical exuberance. However, when, all these weaknesses are recognized, Pinero still belonged to the vanguard of a new movement. The modern style of writing is impressionistic; the task of the dramatist is to give concentration and distinction to ordinary talk while making it seem still ordinary. Style in prose drama, is, in essence, the transforming of common speech. But Pinero wrote in the 'eighties' when the fashion was to finish a sentence. Compression is not achieved by hot or violent words but by sudden contrasts by breaks, pauses, moments of unexpected calm. Pinero could not of course, achieve the degree of concentration we find today—even genius cannot outrun the

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limitation of his day. But Pinero did attempt more than anyone else in his days, to prune conversation with a view to theatrical effectiveness and to bring it into line with the main currents of the modern drama of realism. In this lay his craftsmanship.

**A Perfect Plot Builder:**

A playwright's ingenuity must rest on the skill with which he constructs his plots. The plot must be the representation of logical sequence of events. The play must have a proper beginning, middle and end and if the dramatist's proposition is the logical statement of that which is to be demonstrated by the complete action of the play, then it is far better for the dramatist. It was Pinero's habit in his early days to sum up the action of the entire act in one sentence so that he had a clear hold on the play.¹

The initial technical problem of the playwright is to decide at what point his play should begin, and apart from his own taste and judgment, the solution of this problem depends on the technical convention of his contemporaries and upon the type of theatre, and the problem of the classical drama which differs from that of realistic

¹ In the Rocket, Act I is called 'Rising'; the second 'Mid air'; and the third 'coming down like a stick'. In the Magistrate, Act I is labelled, The Family Skeleton the second, It leaves its cupboard; and the third, It crumbles. Also in The Squire, Act I, II, III are called 'the secret', 'the siren' and 'Goodbye' respectively.
drama. In all cases the playwright must catch the interest of his audience without any delay. The playwright must introduce characters and elucidate their relationships before the play runs too long.

A critical examination of *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* shows Pinero's degree of skill in handling his exposition. In modern plays we find a better and more artistic exposition, as in Galsworthy's Silver Box where in a few broken words the contents of the scene are revealed. In Shaw's The Devil's Disciple or in Act I of J. K. Barrieis "s" masterly exposition is effected. The condition of the English stage during the days of Pinero, however, was different. Shakespearean plays could dispense with exposition as they were long plays; the characters were simple, though vivid; the social position of the character was obvious; there were series of soliloquies and loquacity to fill any gap. But in modern plays, such devices, if employed, would appear crude. A play today, requires an unusual amount of retrospect.

In *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* we learn about the history of Aubrey Tanqueray's first marriage with Ellean's mother as well as the history of Paula Ray's past life. Once Aubrey gives a farewell dinner party to his intimate friends, s Misquith and Jayne. *Cayley Drummlle* too is expected but has not arrived when the play opens. Without naming
the lady, Aubrey announces to his guests his intention of remarrying. He proposes to go out with them and has one or two notes to write before doing so. Moreover, he is not sorry to give them an opportunity to talk over the announcement he has made. So he repairs to a side table in the same room to do his writing. Misquith and Jayne exchange a few speeches in undertones and then Cayley Drummle brings in an account of George Orreyed’s marriage to the desirable Miss Hervey. The story is so unpleasant to Aubrey that, to get away from the conversation, he returns to his writing but still cannot help listening to Cayley’s comments on George Orreyed’s disappearance. At last the situation becomes so intolerable to him that he proposes to leave the room, bidding the others. “Tell Cayley the News.” This exposition has been called obvious artifice."

George Bernard Shaw said, “when one turns over the pages of The Second Mrs Tanqueray and notes the naïve machinery of the exposition in the first Act, in which two whole scenes are wasted on some parts and the hero, at his own dinner party, is compelled to get up and go ignominiously into the next room to write some letters; when one follows Cayley Drummle, the confidante, to whom both Paula and her husband explain themselves for the benefit of the

audience; when one counts the number of doors which Pinero needs to get his characters on and off the stage, and how they have finally to be supplemented by the inevitable French Windows (two of them) and when the activity of the postman is taken into consideration, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that what most of our critics mean by mastery of the stagecraft is recklessness in the substitution of dead machinery and lay figures for vital action and real character."\textsuperscript{8}

In \textit{The Princess and the Butterfly} Pinero's one accent has been that every one is afraid of old age: the princess expatriates at great length on this theme. 'I have entered my fortieth year' I am 40! 40! ......It is all right and comfortable I suppose for the woman when she has once laboured across the bridge between middle age and old age, but the bridge is such a colossal piece of engineering ......? the years leading from 40 to 50." "The interest, the pathos, the awful significance of 'turning forty' is the burden of all speech which does not in any way arouse such curiosity as the opening speeches in \textit{The Second Mrs Tanqueray}.”

The first Act of \textit{The Princess and the Butterfly} closes with a mutual recognition of the fact on the part of the princess and Sir

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Theatre Essays} by G. B. Shaw (World Classics) p. 22.
George that they are old; the aim of the author was to show the philosophy of love, of sex relationship, the psychological motive for the union between men and women of different ages. But the first act has not been at all economical; the first act of The Second Mrs Tanqueray however is economical. As for economy of means we have only to read Act II of The Second Mrs Tanqueray. In six short lines all the information is given, including the vital one.

In Iris another good exposition is seen. Every step that Iris takes in her downward course throughout the play is dependent upon her character, which has no moral stamina, and upon the condition of the will by which she forfeits her fortune on remarriage. These two cardinal elements in the tragedy of Iris are contained in Act I. The opening scene between Pinsent and Kane contains many references to Iris' temperament. Kane points out that she is young, beautiful and her association with a young man whom she could not dream of marrying lays her open to criticism, conjecture and scandal. Later Iris herself enters and adds to our knowledge of the facts....she even goes so far as to quote from the will. Thus the foundation is laid for the rest of the plot, the main outcome of which depends upon Iris's character as sketched in Act I, a procedure far more difficult than that in The Second Mrs Tanqueray. Iris is a weak woman, a drifter, taxing the power of the
dramatic far more than Paula. It is easier to build a play on positive wills and active agents in conflict with their circumstances than to build it on passive or negative wills. In *Iris*, Pinero had additionally, devised a skilful situation to keep the story afloat, calling for all his ingenuity. The exposition of this play is comparable to that of *Midchannel* in which Act I opens with a conventional series of questions and answers.

The success of *The Benefit of the Doubt* was well deserved. Approbation was also accorded by A. B. Walkley to *His House in Order*. He remarked: "when Pinero is at his best you may reckon yourself as close upon the high watermark of theatrical enjoyment. *In His House in Order* he is at his very best."9 'Holt Edgar' also remarks, "we shall not find a single play in which the plot is so absorbing and well knit, the dialogue so pertinent and the characters so well realized. Even today, twenty-one years after its production, the ingenuity of the piece still leaves the reader breathless."10

Pinero was a brilliant builder of plots primarily because he concentrated dramatic interest on what was important and did not fritter it away on what could be given in retrospect. His skill in plot

construction also lies in his gift for selecting his dramatic material to sustain or increase tension. He is a master of emphasis, of deciding the precise order or continuity of events, the length of the scenes and the number of characters. His use of probability, chance, coincidence, and surprise, how he works out his key scenes, presents part of the action on the stage and part in retrospect of narration, built up with exact relationship, unity of theme and action during the play's 'progression'. In all this he is a craftsman of the first order.

In the development of his plots Pinero favours the simple, naturalistic method. His skill of plot construction lies in his gift for selecting his dramatic material to sustain or increase tension. He is a master of emphasis, of deciding the precise order or continuity of events, length of the scenes and the number of characters.

**Selection of Dramatic Material:**

In the development of his plot Pinero favours the simple and realistic way. Like a good plot builder, Pinero selects a character rather than a situation. The difference between a live play and a dead one is that in the former the character controls the plot while in the latter the plot controls the characters. So the plot of Pinero presents the pictures of some broad phase of life. Pinero never starts with an incident, series
of happenings and the theme; Pinero starts with certain characters that are full of interest for him and his audience. He chooses certain phases of relationship between man and woman. It is due to Ibsen's influence on him. His view about sex was not dogmatic. His plays like *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith, A Wife Without a Smile, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, The Profligate, Lady Bountiful, The Amazons*, are all plays featuring the problems of women, sex, marriage, divorce, Pinero's interest in character, social environment and relationship between man and woman.

His chief motive is to create perfect personalities and to show how they are influenced by the society in which they live. In Shaw's plays, plots as such are threadbare and exist only to prove an argument, but Pinero did not follow these ideas about plots. Consequently Pinero's play, when finished, could be easily summarized in a critical paragraph. The interest in the personal problems of Paula, Iris, Zoe or Agnes produced as a result the plots of these plays. Of Paula, James Agate remarks, "Paula in actual life never did or could exist, she is a legacy from the old Drama in which fallen creatures
contract in real life the habit of falling on their feet and not requiring to be picked up.\textsuperscript{11}

Pinero makes characters on the basis of his plots. He is in the front rank of playwrights; his dramatic action springs out of crude material furnished by the account of some striking events. Since Pinero makes character the basis of his plots, his characters have to possess the germs of dramatic development and to this extent cannot be normal, ordinary characters. Folk Freytag says, "Characters must have something unusual in their nature: man in drama must appear under powerful restraint, excitement, transformation."\textsuperscript{12}

When the struggle of life is wanting, there is no skill in treatment, nothing to keep the drama vibrant. Freytag comments, "By action is meant an event or occurrence arranged according to a controlling idea and having its meaning made apparent by the character."\textsuperscript{13}

In his earlier phase, Pinero referred to the plots governed by some controlling idea, dissolute woman turning to achieve a life of married happiness, or free thinkin. The other plays of Pineros are

\textsuperscript{11} James Agate, \textit{Half-post-eight} (Jonathan Cape, Eleven Gower St. London) 1923, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{12} Freytag, The Techniques of Drama.
\textsuperscript{13} Freytag, The Techniques of Drama.
virtues due to their character. William Archer remarks, “Reverse the process and we get ingenious fog, not a vital work of art.”

In *The Madchannel* and in *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* there is no intrigue to keep the play jogging along in the customary manner. On the contrary, any intrigue involves a major antithesis, which reveals some new aspects of character. Most of his characters remain stage types; the playwright’s mind appears sealed to the mental and emotional upthrusts that make plot an energizing experience. In the play *The Thunderbolt*, Pinero avails himself of the device of the lost will but the theme is permeated with loaded satire. Clayton Hamilton regarded *The Thunderbolt* as one of the "Two greatest plays of British authorship that have been given to the world in the first two decades of the twentieth century."

William Archer considered *The Thunderbolt* the ultimate monument of intensive artistry in modern drama; and commented, "The scene where the *Thunderbolt* falls into the family is the most

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15. In *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, Paula’s intrigues with Hugh Ardale reveal the new woman willing to sacrifice herself for Ellean’s Happiness.
thrilling piece of drama ever conceived."\textsuperscript{17} He again called it, "a piece of judicious drama, a hard fought cross examination."\textsuperscript{18}

In 1889 Sarcey remarks, "A character is a master faculty or passion which absolves all the rest. To study or paint a character is therefore, to place a man in a certain number of situations, to show how the principal motive force in his nature annihilates or directs all those which, if he had been another man, would probably have come into action."\textsuperscript{19} This principle belongs to the eighteenth century rather than to the period of dramatic realism, when psychological analysis became a timely concern to the dramatists. Pinero's characters, in nearly all cases, form his plots but they are not placed in a number of situations deliberately; they themselves make all the influence on those situations. Pinero's plots in \textit{Iris}, \textit{Letty} and \textit{Mid Channel} are studies of feminine types; the playwright throws the search lights inward and builds with great psychological insight.

In \textit{The Princess and the Butterfly}, Pinero tried to depart from the conservative idea of farcical comedy only in three acts, and attempted a five act comedy. This play has nothing in common with the traditional idea of comedy. It is not only the best constructed specimen

\textsuperscript{17} William Archer, \textit{The Old Drama and the New}, p. 318.
\textsuperscript{18} William Archer, \textit{Play Making}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{19} Quoted by Archer in, \textit{Play Making : Epilogue}. 

148
of its type but it measures the interval which separates Pinero from his immediate predecessors.

**His Method of Dramatic Composition:**

Pinero’s method of dramatic composition is complex. He always carefully prepared the substances of his plays, before writing them; He did not proceed without a plan. ‘Pinero’ says: “Before beginning to write a play, I always make sure by means of a definite scheme that there is a way of doing it.” 20 A play has to be kept fluid and plastic and not fixed in the author’s mind or on paper. At the same time, it can not rule out a scheme or reflection on the part of the dramatist. Frohman comments on that, “it is with the utmost precision and only after a solid year or two’s reflection that Pinero will begin to write, then the work proceeds with all the deliberateness and deftness of a superb architect laying the ground work of a building that, once sketched out in the flat, must inevitably rise but in one way.” 21

“His plays are perfect. They read brilliantly which ever side looked at or they are like perfectly proportionate mosaic, each word perfectly placed in each sentence, each speech deftly thought out, exquisitely chiselled and always contributing to the whole, each Act a

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combination of cumulative scenes and the whole moving like the inevitable march of fact to a conclusion that is about as easy to deny as the total sum of a correctly added column of figure."

He foresaw the leading scene and the general course of action in each act before he wrote a line. When he got the whole story clear and divided into Acts, he carefully constructed the Act. But besides this, his method of working was not mechanical and divorced from character. A modern play is not a framework of a story loosely draped in a more or less gorgeous robe of language; interdependence between action, character and dialogue is implied and Pinero made a character the pivot of his plays. Claytons Hamilton rightly remarks, "how Pinero started with certain characters who happened to interest him, lived with them lonely and away from London, watched them, observed what they thought and felt, listened to them and heard what they said". He also remarked that, "when his characters got to talking at dinner time he (the author) had to go without dinner."  

This point is clear that Pinero did not write as Sardou did. Pinero always avoided composing a rough draft first and then holding himself bound by it, for this is a carpenter's work and belongs to a

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23 Conversation on the Contemporary Drama by Clayton Hamilton, p. 117.
lower form of composition. For him character was of prime interest and he got his character from real life. He chose his character, theme and event not only from his peaceful surrounding but also from the noisy cities. Pinero said, "I must start my theme in a city. I must have life around me, eager and strenuous. It may be in a crowded thoroughfare. It may be in my own room at night with the scene of life around me, with the hum and roar of movement and traffic coming up to me from below. Its only then that my brain quickens to creative work." 24 He found drama in the courts and trains which were always fascinating to him: "every word was spoken there distinctly and the speaker was not weary as he sat down at his big table and finished a great deal of his writing at night. His ordinary work was for three-four hours, it is quite as long as mind can remain fresh and concentrated. When his mind is getting tired it becomes rebellious to detail and the play is all details." 25

Pinero devoted several months to the task of building his plays and the task ended only when the author had worked out the entire pattern with the utmost thoroughness and precision. Then he gave himself a short holiday, and appeared at Garrick Club. He himself

selected his own actors. He supervised rehearsals till the last dress rehearsals came of successfully. He attempted all his work with attention. Cunliffe remarks, "Pinero is well worth the study by those who seek to acquire familiarity with the technical devices of the modern stage."\textsuperscript{26}

In America Pinero was very popular. Many playwrights suggested that Pinero was great because he knew all the rules that were required of a dramatist. Pinero says, "there are no rules. With every play, I write, I have to learn afresh the art of play writing. The one quality needed is intuition and discipline of logic, cause and effect; the pendulum swings between the two. Two of the most substantial parts of the fabric which go to make up a fine play are logic and intuition; without the first you can not construct a play, without the second you can not write it."\textsuperscript{27} The most important lesson Pinero taught us which can be deduced from his own performance is that, a playwright has to have a clear conception of his theme for he said "all that we call business is in the printed matter which I carry into the theatre. Why should it be altered when it has all been carefully and even laboriously thought out, every detail of it during the process of

\textsuperscript{26} J. W. Cunliffe, \textit{The Modern English Playwright}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{27} Pinero quoted by Fyfe, H., \textit{Sir Arthur Pinero's Plays and Players}, p. 258.
construction? The movement of a man and what he has to say are inseparable. Expression is multi-form and simultaneous: alteration of one phrase is to weaken all. I try to think of these things before rehearsal. It is not or, certainly should not be, a time for experiment. It is to be acting together of the plays, not for the making of the play."

His method of dramatic presentation is according to actors and audience, because he knows that a play was meant to be acted and that the writer had known nothing about the stage and its requirement. So, the play should be according to actors and audience and not for an individual actor. However, it offered real opportunities for acting. The *Second Mrs. Tanquerary* made the heroine Mrs. Patrick Campbell famous. His stage experience was of great service, his plays did not depend on actors, publishers and players. Pinero felt that his plays stand on their own merit.

*Iris* is looked upon as a great play, *The Fugitive* is a great play but of inferior form from the point of construction. Pinero had not been a sociologist. If Pinero had wanted to tell more than superficial truth about his character, Clement Scott, the critics would have hounded him out of the acting theatre as they had tried to hound out

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Ibsen. Pinero says a dramatist should tell a story in such a skillfully devised form and order as shall, within the limit of an ordinary theatrical representation, give rise to greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotion, a fact the production of which is one great function of theatre."

**Probability, Chance and Coincidence:**

Pinero is a grand builder of characters and plots. He takes a large canvas to begin with and starts to create all kinds of characters as can hold the attention from the first act to the last. He never tried to portray the character with psychological insight. His plays make us feel that his character is concerned with the life of the human race rather than the life of an individual. In his famous play, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, his Paula Tanqueray, and Mrs. Ebbsmith, in The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith, remain individuals. He mostly departs from probability in pure romance, in farce or in light comedy. In *The Amazons*, *Dandy Dick*, *The School Mistress*, the want of probability is not material. The obvious intention of the playwright is to portray probable people doing improbable things. In his serious play chance and coincidence appear artificial devices. In *The Profligate*, the situation in Act III is brought about by a series of bold coincidences as Leslie Brudenell the
heroine, a ward of Mr Cheal, a solicitor, is to be married; Dunstan Renshaw and the bridal party meet at Cheal’s chambers before proceeding to the Registrar’s office. Immediately, however, Janet Preece, who has earlier been betrayed and deserted by Dunstan Renshaw (under an assumed name) arrives at the office to tell her tale of woe...This is a remarkable construction of circumstances without added touches that Janet comes to London in the same train as Leslie and her brother Wilfred and that Wilfred advises the distressed damsel to go to Mr. Cheals and in the other act the course of events is so directed that Janet drops in at Florentine Villa.

This long coincidence brings about a thrilling situation; it is a dearly bought device which sacrifices a great deal of probability. The playwright has interest in several lines in the chain to make the event more probable.

Janet is a sort of companion to Mrs. Stonehay, whose daughter was Leslie’s school friend. The Stonehays have come to Florence, knowing nothing of Leslie’s presence there and they happen to visit the villa in order to see the fresco.

In Letty, in Act III, Letchmere’s party and Mandeville’s party happen to choose the same restaurant, which is a possible act of
chance. The introduction of such an element to resolve an issue constitutes a blemish. However, William Archer actually defends chance and calls its elimination unreasonable: austere but unreal coincidences produce plots which are also unreal and consequently theatrical.

In the *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* he made Irene Stonehay fall in love with one of Paula's ex-lovers, not in itself an improbable event; it does remain an instance of co-incidence and the source of the tragedy lies in these events, not in the character of the protagonist of the tragedy.

Pinero's plots sometimes also suffer from an error of logic. In *The Profligate*, for instance there is a logical failure. An issue is formulated and then the author creates a set of circumstances which suggest that the issue does not arise at all. In *The Profligate*, the point arises as to whether on entering upon marriage, a woman has the right to expect faithfulness of her husband but he does not clear this fact. In *His House in Order* a coincidence dovetails with a crisis which is out of place in the play which claims to be serious. Just when the Ridgeleys succeed in humiliating Nina, the latter is armed with a retaliatory weapon in the form of letters which show that Annabel had a liaison
with Maurewards and that Derrick was their son. Here again the plot of the play is full of suspense, and relies too much on a freak of chance. The plots of Pinero sometimes suffer from an error of logic. Though they may not be wanting in symmetrical form yet some logic is required, to make a play good drama. He had a good capacity to build a good plot, based on character. Pinero says "Before beginning to write a play, I always make sure by means of a definite scheme that there is a way of doing it." 29

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29 Pinero Quoted by Archer in *Play Making*, p. 43.