Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION:
PINERO AS AN ACTOR AND PLAYWRIGHT
Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (24th May, 1855 – 23rd Nov., 1934) is a representative dramatist of the age in which New Drama flourished. There were three pioneers of New Drama: T.W. Robertson (1829-71), Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929) and A.W. Pinero. Robertson brought into his dramatic art contemporary realism. He presented the problems of the time in his plays, laughing at the vulgarities and luxuries of the aristocratic classes. He depicted the foibles and snobbery of all classes in Ours, Caste, School, Home, M.P. and David Garrick. Henry Arthur Jones began by writing a melodrama, The Silver King. His second play Saints and Sinners is realistic, dealing with every day problems.

Arthur Wing Pinero followed closely in the footsteps of Robertson. His three plays, The Magistrate (1855) The School Mistress (1886) and Dandy Dick (1887) are light comedies full of satire and social realism. In these plays, two tendencies – one realistic and the other sentimental, are quite dominant. Although, the old melodramatic and sentimental qualities are still present in the plays, Pinero paved the way for social, realistic problem plays of the late nineteenth century drama.

Before we trace the spirit of the late nineteenth century drama we need to understand major aspects of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero's personal
life. Arthur was born into a fairly well-to-do family of Portugese descent at 21 Dalby Terrace, Islington, London in 1855. His father was John Daniel Pinero and his mother was Lucy Daines Pinero. Both his grandfather and father were lawyers, and it was expected that he would take up the same profession. However, his heart was elsewhere. A keen theatre goer, Pinero wished for a career on stage. At the age of 15, he enrolled in London’s Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution to study elocution. For four years till 1874, he trained in stage craft. In 1874, the 19 year old Pinero joined the Theatre Royal Company in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was a minor player, appearing in its repertoire of classic and contemporary plays ranging from Shakespeare to Edward Bulwer Lytton. Afterwards, he joined the Royal Alexandra Theatre of Liverpool as a “utility actor”. Here he was noticed by the actor and agent Henry Irving who was an influential name in theatrical circles. With his good word, Pinero won a role in a London production which led to a place with the Lyceum Theatre in 1876.

Realizing that he was not capable of being a good and successful actor, Pinero turned to the other side of the curtain and began to write short plays. These were one-act “curtain raisers.” His first play ‘Two
*Hundred a Year* was staged at London’s Globe Theatre on October 6, 1877. Its plot and setting would characterize much of Pinero’s later work: romantic relationships among well-to-do middle-to upper-class scions of Victorian England. In *Two Hundred a Year*, the male protagonist needs to find a well-to-do wife who would support him; the woman who chooses him, does so because she wishes to have a man at her mercy.

For the next few years Pinero belonged to the ranks of respected actors. During this period he also devoted his time to writing curtain raisers. He also acted in them. During the production of his play *Daisy’s Escape* in September 1879, He met Myra Emile Hamilton, nee Myra Moore whom he married in 1883. Pinero, as a dramatist, had progressive attitudes regarding women and the burdens that society, religion and economics placed upon them. His male characters were often overshadowed by intelligent, witty women, and his plot structures usually revolved around a woman who was constrained by the strict morals of the Victorian age, and the need to maintain her “respectability.” The traditional symbols of ‘decency’ were often turned into comic figures.

Pinero’s first full length comedy, *The Squire*, was produced at St. James’ Theatre in 1881. The male protagonist, Thorndyke, is a rake who
desires to find a woman who will support him. Kate Verity is a liberated character who runs her own farm. Their marriage remains a secret to the world. When Kate becomes pregnant, a woman claiming to be Thorndyke's wife appears; in the end, the bigamy is proved to be a misunderstanding, and Thorndyke retains his dignity. This play created a controversy as Pinero was accused of stealing the plot from Thomas Hardy's Far from the Madding Crowd. However, it was not proved and the play enjoyed a successful run.

Pinero was soon a popular and critically acclaimed dramatist. He often directed his own plays with minute attention to detail. A number of his plays – *The Magistrate* (1885), *The School Mistress* (1886) and *Dandy Dick* (1887) – enjoyed successful runs. Like many of his plays, they mirrored a popular form of stage writing known as the "piece bien faité", French for the well made play. These were usually spirited comedies that relied on a tangled, though resolved, plot structure. *The School Mistress* features a lady who leads a double life as a proper Victorian lady by day as director of a girls finishing school but supports her good-for-nothing husband by working as an actress in the evenings. Dandy Dick concerns a man of the cloth who becomes addicted to racetrack gambling. Martin
Banham, writing in the International Dictionary of Theatre, called these plays as "brilliant examples of their craft .... All powered by plots of splendid English dottiness, which gives them a style and eccentric verve that distinguishes them"\(^1\) from their French counterparts.

Pinero gave credit to another English dramatist whose career preceded his own, Robertson, as a greater influence on his writing than the French comedies. Robertson had introduced more realistic sets and had given up the conventional dramatic devices like the soliloquy and the aside. Pinero followed in his footsteps. He paid homage to Robertson in his Trelawny of the Wells (1898).

Pinero began to move away from the light farce of the piece bien faite around 1889, and evidence of his more serious approach came with *The Profligate*, which premiered at London's Garrick Theatre in April 1889. The play featured a corrupt protagonist and charted his sad decline. The play had 129 performances but was not considered a success. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* enjoyed better success. It premiered at St. James' Theatre, London in May 1893 and ran for 225 performances. Pinero was hailed as the best English playwright in two hundred years. Irving rightly

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\(^1\) Martin Banham, International Dictionary of Theatre.
observed, "Pinero raised the English theatre out of the gutter and the actor was deposed from the chief seat of the authorship."² Pinero contributed most to make and shape the theatre of the nineties. He cut his way through a forest and helped to lift British drama to a position higher than that in which he had found it. Hamilton Fyfe has rightly pointed out that, "Pinero helped to lift the British drama to a position entirely different from that in which he found it. The purpose planned in his mind by Henry Irving was steadily followed; his efforts were rewarded. He was the first regular modern writer for the stage in England to conceive of a noted drama which should be a branch of theatre, the first to claim for the playwright the dignity of the printed pages, the first to raise a hatred against the undergrowth of prejudice, and most of all the contempt which hindered dramatic advance. Others have made out their way further into the forest, but all honour to the man who blazed the trail."³

The plot of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was considered somewhat risqué in its day – Paula Tanqueray's less than virtuous past comes to light when her new stepdaughter becomes engaged to one of her former beaus. The revelation shakes her marriage to the well-to-do respectable

George Tanqueray. She faces public disgrace, and, in the end, commits suicide; meanwhile, Pinero's male characters face no such censure over their affairs. Because of the finale, future critics would condemn Pinero; they pointed out that Paula Tanqueray and other heroines always seemed to suffer in the end. Other critics contended that this was Pinero's way of first shocking, then playing into the moral attitude of the time. In the Dictionary of Literary Biography, the critic J.P. Wearing wrote of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and its relevance: "If the play seems tame to modern viewers, it should be remembered that Pinero managed to induce society audiences to watch a play which condemned the hypocrisy of which they were culpable."⁴

These and other mid-career works put Pinero in line with other contemporary dramatists writing for the European stage, such as Henrik Ibsen, Gerhart Hauptmann, and Maurice Maeterlink. Many of Pinero's works seemed especially comparable to Ibsen, for they dramatized contemporary social ills within their plots. Victorian society's double standard was incriminated by Pinero in other works, including *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895) *Iris* (1901), *Letty* (1903) and *His House in

⁴ J.P. Wearing, Dictionary of Literary Biography.
Order (1906). This latter play is a Rebecca-like tale about a new wife haunted by the reputation of her predecessor, a supposedly good-hearted, virtuous woman; then it is discovered that the first wife carried on an affair under her husband's nose for years.

There is a close relationship between Pinero's training as an actor and his plays which were written with technical skill. Some critics have considered Pinero the most accomplished craftsman of the English theatre since the times of Shakespeare. In construction Shakespeare alone can match or surpass him. His play Gay Lord Quex brings to us the echoes of The Merchant of Venice and of the screen scene in The School for Scandal. Another play His House in Order is considered a lesson in technical adroitness. His long career as an actor developed in him a great skill for stage craft. He was the first English dramatist to write his plays according to the suitability of actors and actresses because they were physically and intellectually suited to the parts which they performed. Thus his own experience as an actor stood him in good stead. That is why Pinero chose Mrs. Patrick Campbell to play the part of Paula in The Second Mrs. Tanqueray. Mrs.sPatrick Campbell says; "I tried from the beginning to
like Paula a little, to make her not merely a neurotic type; to give her a conscience, a soul..... I played Paula better from this point of view"\(^5\).

It is clear from the preliminary remarks on Pinero that he was writing plays quite different from conventional plays and that he was a pioneer of *New Drama*. When we study him as the innovator of *New Drama* it is imperative to describe the drama of the Victorian age. Pinero came after the Victorian era, which was quite dry and barren in the sphere of drama. The typical Victorian attitudes and beliefs of complacency, smugness and compromise hampered the development of drama. Matthew Arnold wrote: "In England we have no drama at all. Our vast society is not homogenous enough, not sufficiently united, even any large portion of it, in a common view of life, a common ideal capable of serving as a basis for modern English drama"\(^6\). Pinero read a paper on 21\(^{st}\) March, 1929 when he had became a mature dramatist and had written a dozen plays and comedies of manner. The title of the paper was *Theatre in the Seventies*. The paper shows the state to which theatre had fallen in the middle of the nineteenth century. He declared: It was a theatre, so far as the higher aims of the drama were concerned, of faded,

\(^5\) Vide *Life and Some Letters* by Mrs. Patrick Campbell.
\(^6\) Matthew Arnold.
outworn tradition. Shakespeare was acted prettily, regularly in a plodding inspiring way but modern poetic dramatist audience was still asked to listen to the theatrics of James Sheridan Knowles and the claptrap of Edward Bulwer Lytton”.

In the above statement Pinero has pointed out the decline of drama in the nineteenth century. At this point it is in conformity with the requirement of our topic that a clear picture of the decadence of drama should be portrayed. Although Queen Victoria ruled up to 1902, reaction against the Victorian age had set in as early as 1880. The year 1880 is a landmark in the development of English literature. It represents distinct lines of change and transformation. From 1880 a number of dominant traits of Victorian literature fell more or less into abeyance. There was a social revolt against Victorians for getting independence for the individual; the rebellion, was against the complacency, decorousness and the fake morality of the Victorians. The eighties changed the temper of literature, especially that of drama, and realism and humanism joined. Hence literature, mainly fiction, took a new direction under the influence

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of French naturalism. The *New Drama* revolted strongly against Victorian complacency and smoothness.

During the Victorian period there was negligible dramatic activity. The causes of the decline of drama were many; the regulation of the theatre was under the control of Lord Chamberlain. Down to 1843, only three play houses were licensed to produce plays; these were Drury Lane, Convent Garden and the Haymarket. The ratio of theatres to population was, therefore, very low with the resulting tendency on the part of the controllers of the licensed play houses to enlarge their structure to such a point that anything like intimate drama became physically impossible, and melodramas and farces, with their unnatural and grossly exaggerated character and situation predominated. Furthermore, there was a government control over dramatic themes, and dramatists found themselves closely restricted and far from being able to 'hold the mirror up to nature'. Their dramatic mirror, indeed, was exceedingly narrow, and the reflections were crazed and warped out of all resemblance to normal human life. Certain illegitimate play-houses did come into existence and led a precarious life in defiance of regulation, but it was not until the passage of the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 that any real freedom was
granted to the theatre and by that time damage had been done from which it took several decades to recover.

The decline of the Victorian theatre due to government regulation was so much because the spirit of the time of the Victorian age was not dramatic. It was scientific, analytical, and critical. The age could not be satisfied by the microcosm of the stage. All these causes combined to make the Victorian age poor in dramatic composition. It was an age of reading and reflecting. The most popular branch which flourished in this age was the novel of manners.

In this age there were typical Victorian dramatists such as Tennyson and Browning. Browning possessed dramatic talent which expressed itself in his famous dramatic monologues. Probably he was too much of an intellectual and too much of a poet to be a successful dramatist. Similarly Bulower had written a dozen melodramas of which The Lady of Lions (1938) and Richelieu are successful plays. The other dramatist worth the name was Boucicault who had written many melodramas of which the Colleen Bawn, Arrah-no-Pogue, and the Shaughraun are almost naturalistic; they were very popular; but on the whole the Victorian age was quite unfertile in the field of drama.
It has been pointed out earlier, that 1880 is the dividing year between the Victorian Drama and the New Drama. After 1860 many smaller theatres in London provided sufficient scope for staging comedies and tragedies. By 1880 the moral tone of England had changed considerably, the romantic and idealistic spirit of the Victorian age had given way to realistic and scientific spirit of drama. Scientific criticism was necessary for the rise of New Drama. There were many factors and new possibilities for the revival of drama after 1880. Ifor Evans has rightly listed the causes of the decline of drama during the Victorian period "The decline of the drama cannot be assigned to any single cause. The prosperous middle-class society had no genuine appreciation of drama as an art, and the actor, with a few notable exceptions remained a member of a profession without honour. The home was a prescribed centre of early Victorian life, and in the home the novel was the universally favoured form of literature."\(^8\) By an act of 1843, the restriction which had kept the performance of plays to the patent theatre was removed. Strangely enough the new liberty was not immediately realized, but in the sixties and the seventies a number of new theatres were built. Unhappily it was not one of the choicest periods in English literature, but

\(^8\) Ifor Evans, *A Short History of English Literature*, p. 190.
whatever the structural deficiencies, conditions were reached in which there was a free trade in the presentation of plays. There was, further, an improvement in the quality of audience and the delight of the Queen in dramatic entertainment tended to give theatre a social standing which it had not possessed in the early years of the century. The position of the dramatist improved from the sixties onwards. It contrived to substitute a profit making basis for a lump payment. Further, there existed especially from the sixties, an increasing awareness of social problems and some of these found expression in drama.

These new factors led to the introduction of *New Drama* in the eighties. The impact of biological thought on every branch of literature was deep. The publication of *The Origin of Species* by Darwin had created great controversies. The theory of evolution had its impact on every field of knowledge. The writers were very much guided by the new vision of evolution as propounded by Darwin. Foreign influences were also struggling to penetrate into English art and drama. The sudden appearance of Ibsen (1828-1906), had created a great stir in the post Victorian Drama in England. Ibsen was a Norwegian dramatist who had written a number of plays that revolutionized English drama. The best
known plays are The Doll’s House, Ghosts, Pillars of Society, The Master Builder, Hedda Gabler, Brand and Peer Gynt. It is George Bernard Shaw who came under direct and deep influence of Ibsen. Shaw’s critical book Quintessence of Ibsen shows deep understanding and reverence for plays of Ibsen.

Ibsen’s influence on Pinero was indirect even though there is a close affinity between the two as regards their early theatrical history from 1851 to 1862. Ibsen’s birth as a dramatist producer, and stage manager in the Norwegian theatre is spectacular. Pinero became an actor at the early age of 19 in 1874 and received his training in the actor’s craft at Wyndhams, Edinburgh, under Henry Irving. At the same time Ibsen had published in the periodical Andhremner, a critical comment on the importance of situation at the expense of psychology but later on he modified his views about the dramatic devices. There was no direct influence of Ibsen on the plays of Pinero. Really Pinero’s plays are a legacy of the school of well made play. There is a close similarity between Pinero and Ibsen in their early career but Ibsen was too great an artist to be satisfied with drama, which used only artificial devices. His primary concern was the communication of significant expressions. After the
Viking, the next play that Ibsen wrote was Swanhold which is his first play of modern drama, of human heart and deep emotions. This was written with a realistic touch in characterization and plot. Another play of Ibsen, A Doll's House proved the superiority of the new theatre over old artificial and rhetorical technique. Similarly Pinero's plays were also cast in the new realistic mode in reference to rhetorical technique. Thus Pinero made an advance in the direction of revivalism which was the salient feature of New Drama.

Ibsen's plays had essentially altered the conception of drama of the previous dramatists who thought that they could give up reticence in drama and describe facts by their real names. In British drama there had always been a trait of idealism which resulted in exaggerating character but Pinero, in the Profligate and The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, shows the courage to deal with ugly facts which shows Ibsen's influence. The other feature of New Drama was an element of naturalism of which the founders were Zola and Maupassant. Naturalism was a photographic representation of life which aimed at the treatment of life in the most realistic manner.
Thus the New Drama which saw the light of the day in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century carried foreign influences, such as the impact of Balzac, Mauppasant and Zola. These foreign authors were the spirit of the New Drama. Ibsen became the favourite of the British dramatists namely, Bernard Shaw, Pinero and Robertson.

The biggest impetus to the New Drama in England was given by Ibsen. He dominated the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The influence of Ibsen was so profound that we must know something about his art and dramas. In England there was a great storm against the Ibsenic theatre. But Edmund Gosse took up the cause of the plays of Ibsen. He wrote an article in the Saturday Review eulogizing his plays. Henric Ibsen was born in 1828 in Norway at Skein of wealthy parents. His parents lost wealth and he had to spend his early life in poverty. By his plays he created an exalted place for himself in the world of drama. His plays became quite popular all over Europe. Ibsen was thin skinned, an introvert, imaginative and a brooding type of man. He was a great original thinker. He had deep love of beauty and a longing for affection. Thus the two qualities, which were present in Ibsen from his boyhood manifested themselves in his plays. The strong realism depicts the actual life. The
second quality – the mystic thought with its quest for the analysis of the
soul also dominated his works. He is the founder of the problem play
which is the greatest force in the revival of drama. The most prominent
play The Ghost was produced in 1891. William Archer translated the play
into English. The storm created by the critics was silenced by arguments
of Shaw contained in the book Quintessence of Ibsenism. This book
heralded the arrival of New Drama. The play combines two qualities, the
psychological delineation of character and the realistic appeal or the
photographic presentation of actual contemporary life.

The impact of Ibsen on Pinero will be taken in a separate chapter
where by particular analysis the influence on Pinero will be presented.

**Pinero as a Dramatist**

Pinero knew his limitations and never extended his dramatic talent into
philosophical and unknown regions. After having worked for about eight
years, in various dramatic companies, he left the stage and became a
serious playwright. And his plays came out in quick succession. His plays
present a wide spectrum of British society. He is not a dramatist of ideas
nor a prophet, nor a reformer. His drama is not academic or based on his
study, but he draws upon life with greater consistency and fidelity to facts than Ibsen. He is neither a prophet nor a psychologist but within a certain range, he understands individual character; at the same time he is an expert in very ingenious stage-craft. His mind is practical rather than imaginative. His themes therefore are direct and prosaic. They are not very poetic. His dialogue is swift and precocious. In characterization he is much better than his contemporaries. For example, Bernard Shaw was writing his plays in the nineties of the nineteenth century. His first play was staged in 1892. By that time Pinero had written ten plays. The first play of Pinero came out in 1881 and another play *The Profligate* was staged in 1889. All these plays lay more importance on character than on ideas and themes. In the first play, *The Squire*, Pinero portrays the character of a woman secretly married to Lieutenant Thorndyke, but she faced not only scandal but the anger of the former wife of Thorndyke. The other plays of the eighties *The Magistrate*, and *The School Mistress*, *The Weaker Sex*, and *The Cabinet Minister* concentrate on the portraits of farcical characters. In his plays Pinero brought back to life the farce of character based upon incongruity where characters perform improbable things. *The School Mistress* is a wilder farce than any other play of Pinero.
There is a tinge of exaggeration in the character of *The School Mistress*. In the nineties the number of plays that he wrote is ten only. In 1891 he wrote *Lady Bountiful* and in 1892 came out *The Times* which is a play of the sentimental kind. The play seeks to make fun of social aspirant Percy Egerton Bompas, the man who grows wealthy, dreams of nothing but high social life. Being a draper by profession he is very conscious of his newly earned wealth. He has become conceited and he thinks that he is a member of the upper class.

The preliminary study of Pinero's plays shows that he is a satirist and a creator of manners. Hamilton Fyfe rightly observes: "Pinero is a satirist; he is what the Romans called 'Censormorun', a critic and corrector of manners of public and private behavior. It pleases him to notice and call attention to folly, pretentiousness, caddishness, vanity, to the miscalculation of the selfish, of squirming of the weak". In the first decade of the twentieth century he wrote five plays. *Letty* (1903), *A Wife without a Smile* (1906), *The Thunder Bolt* (1908), *Midchannel* (1909). The most popular plays of Pinero fall in the first decades of the twentieth century. In these plays the element of religion was not as strong as in his

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previous plays. He gives us a realistic portrait of stage writing in *Iris*. Bernard Shaw says; "Pinero is in no way bound to suppress the fact that his *Iris* is a person to be envied by millions of better women. If he made his plays false to life by inventing fictitious disadvantages for her, he would be acting as unscrupulously as any tract writer. If society chooses to provide for its Irises better than for its working women, it must not expect honest playwrights to manufacture surprise evidence to save its credit."\(^{10}\)

In the first decade of the twentieth century the most important play *Iris* is a striking achievement of the dramatist. The play is the tragedy of a woman with a sweet nature but no moral stamina. The woman is left widow at a very early age with a small fortune which she is likely to give up if she remarries. This is a character play in which the character controls the plot. Pinero attaches little importance to plot. His whole emphasis is on character. In this way he is a modern dramatist because he does not follow the conventional plot texture; he starts with a certain character that happens to interest him or his audiences. This trait of his drama will be discussed at length in a separate chapter. As far as themes

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\(^{10}\) *The Complete Bernard Shaw*. Published in 1965 by Paul Hamlyn, London, p. 222.
are concerned. Pinero had no dogmatic view on sex, marriage, divorce but since suffragette agitation was moving the heart and mind of the contemporary society, he wrote plays about women.

His treatment of women is unique because he portrays them in the most suitable way. The theme of women and shifting relationships is treated conventionally in the following dramas: *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, The Profligate, The Weaker Sex, Midchannel, Lady Bountiful, A Wife without Smile, The Amazons, The School Mistress*. All these plays present the problem of women. The whole concern of Pinero is to show how women are influenced by the social conditions in which they live.

In the second decades of the twentieth century Pinero wrote five plays. *Preserving Mr. Panmure* (1911), *The Mind-The Paint Girl* (1912), *Playgoers* (1913), *The Big Drum* (1915) and *The Freaks* (1917). In this decade Ibsenism had exerted a deep impact on British Drama. Now farcical drama was making way for serious drama. One of these five plays is a one act play which saw the light of day under the impact of the popularity of the one act play in America. This was a shift from Ibsen to American. The one act play became popular in England and it was
recognized as a distinct dramatic form of high merit. Pinero was in the front line of the one act play movement. Among his famous one act plays are *Playgoers* (1913), *A Seat in the Park* (1922), and *The Private Room* (1928).

In the third decade of the twentieth century again, Pinero wrote five plays- *A Seat in the Park* (1922), *The Enchanted Cottage* (1922), *The Private Room* (1928) and the two plays *Dr. Hamer's Holiday and Childman*.

One of his very remarkable plays is *Playgoers* (1913) which contains a domestic episode cast in the farcical mode. The play does not show any respect for the theatre of ideas. It was produced at the Saint James Theatre. Pinero’s chief concern in the play is the problem of middle aged women. Another play of this period is *A Seat in the Park* which was produced at Winter Garden Theatre in (1922). It embodies the best features of Pinero’s plays: an absorbing story, a well made plot and very sharp dialogue. It is a specimen of contemporary realism because in this play the playwright improves upon his older plays by excluding external realism and by invoking the aid of imagination and an ingredient of imagination provokes the audience towards seriousness. This play verges on the New Drama of Ideas. There is a clear impact of Ibsen in this play.
Towards the end of his dramatic career Pinero became a famous playwright of one act plays. These plays should be viewed against the background of the Repertory Movement, which was started in Ireland by Irish dramatists and authors, W.B. Feart and Lady Gregory, George Russell, and a few other artists. This movement was inspired by a definite theory of dramatic art and ideas. The movement aimed at the quality of the play and thus helped the cause of good drama. But Pinero's plays are full of conventionalism, and the features of New Drama.

Shaw was a great champion of Ibsenism. His plays deal with the themes which are concerned with social, political and cultural problems but Pinero could not handle thematic plays effectively. *The Playgoers* is concerned with the problem of creation which was an issue uppermost in the Victorian mind. Darwin's Descent of Men had dealt a serious blow to the theory of creation as propagated by various religions. The problem of life after death is the theme of the play, *The Playgoers*. In it Pinero was unable to give any effective rendering of this fundamental human problem. Pinero had written many one act plays which were the product of the age of John Galsworthy and J.M. Synge who had written one act
plays. But his one-act plays pale into insignificance before the powerful theme, found in the plays of Galsworthy and Bernard Shaw.

A preliminary study of Pinero’s plays shows that his drama is a mixture of the two techniques of the well-made-play and the thesis play. In an age of artificiality his characters are involved in artificial situations. The women, in his plays, Paula, Zoe, Agnes and Iris are strangely worked out individuals; external circumstances in most cases are the causes of tragedy. The melodramatic and the sensational maintain the spirit of suspense, the threads of the plot are firmly tied together.

The period in which Pinero was writing was also remarkable for Galsworthy’s plays. In his essay, Some Platitudes Concerning Drama, Galsworthy clarifies his views on drama. “A drama must be so shaped as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its moral, and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day”\textsuperscript{11}.

A deep study of Pinero and his plays demonstrates that he had contributed much to the rise of the New Drama. As the great pioneers of

\textsuperscript{11} Galsworthy’s The Inn of Tranquility, p. 15.
modern drama, Robertson and Arthur Jones contributed much to its progress in their own way. Robertson brought into his dramatic art contemporary realism. He employed advanced devices and dramatic methods. In the same period Galsworthy had given to drama naturalness, simplicity and decisive dialogues. Pinero followed closely in the footsteps of Robertson. His plays are light comedies full of satire. In his plays we find double tendency, one realistic and the other sentimental. The old melodramatic, sentimental quality of the conventional drama was still present. Pinero along with Robertson had paved the way for social realistic problem play. Thus Robertson and Pinero had introduced a new element of realism in to drama.

The last thirty years of the nineteenth century were marked by a new tendency to realism. In France, Balzac, Maupassant and Zola had completely changed the drift of fiction. They were champions of realism.

The influence of Ibsen was tremendous on the drama of the late nineteenth century. On account of the influence of Ibsen and a strong wave of realism from France where Balzac, Maupassant and Zola had become the ideals of French literature; a new form of drama had evolved which is now called the New Drama.
The New Drama was a turning point in the history of British drama which has been marked by creative urges and relapses into decadence. The Elizabethan and Restoration periods were the glorious ages of the greatness of drama. Towards the close of 18th century, there was a marked decay in the creative art of drama. The early nineteenth century was great in poetry and criticism, but poor in dramatic output. There is no doubt that in this period there were great actors and actresses. The names of Edmund Kean, Rogercamble and Mrs. Siddons can never be forgotten. They gave commanding performances of the great Shakespearean plays and characters. Under the long shadow of Shakespeare, no creative dramatist appeared on the scene.

Drama had declined in the Romantic and Victorian period. There were very large and lofty speeches of actors which become inaudible. The flash of repartees becomes impossible. Consequently there was a decline in drama. After 1860 many smaller theatres provided sufficient scope for staging hilarious comedies and painful tragedies. By the eighties the moral temper of England had changed considerably. The literary tone changed from the purely romantic and idealistic to the realistic and scientific. For the first time critics like E.K. Chambers and Molten
undertook the study of Shakespearean theatre. This opened up new possibilities for the revival of drama. Ifor Evans has rightly listed the causes of the revival of drama after eighties and nineties. But whatever the structural deficiencies, conditions were reached in which there was a free trade in the presentation of plays. "There was further an improvement in the quality of audiences and the delight of the Queen in dramatic entertainment tended to give the theatre a social standing which it had not possessed in the early years of the century. The positions of the dramatists improved when from the sixties there was an increasing awareness of social problems and some of these found expression in drama."\(^\text{12}\)

Thus the spirit of drama during the last two decades of the nineteenth century is realistic. Every playwright tried to describe contemporary life. Pinero also observed the spirit of the age and began to write plays which we can call Comedy of Manner, Short Plays and Melodramatic Plays. He created a vast audience for the New Drama. He contributed thirty five plays; almost all of them were highly successful. His minor play *Sweet Lavender* enjoyed 683 performances in which Allen

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12 *A Short History of English Literature* by Ifor Evans, p. 100.
Terry was the chief actress. In this introductory chapter, I have dealt with the main features by a preliminary study. Pinero as a playwright has written farces, tragedies and comedies which had become very popular in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and first three decades of the twentieth century. It is true that he could not touch on the philosophical spirit of the age and he could not free himself from streaks of fantasy, yet he emerges as the pioneer of the New Drama at the end of the nineteenth century. In the ensuing chapter the plays of Pinero will be discussed with the device of particular analysis.