CHAPTER III

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY PROBLEM PLAY IN ENGLISH

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

One may not agree wholly with William Archer's observation that the age which began with Pinero and ended in the thirties of the Twentieth Century will be considered richer than the Elizabethan age in the field of English Drama, but the period under discussion has certainly produced giants who gave drama a glory and a depth that can be compared with the Greek and the Elizabethan periods. The truth is that for about a hundred years, i.e., from Sheridan's (1751-1816) last important play, 'The Critic' in 1779 to Pinero (1855-1934) not a single great work of drama was written in English. Of course, plays were written and staged and there was a lot of bowing and hissing in response to hot kisses and hurried huggings on the stage, but it was all cheap sentimental stuff. It was an age of great acting and actors like Edmund Kean and Macready stole all show. Like the modern cinema stars, they attracted large crowds and they cared tuppence for the writers or stage directors. There was hardly any playwright worth the name and most of the dramas were simply reheases from the French. Anybody who could piece together loose strings of a borrowed story became a hack playwright and felt thankful to the actors even though he could hardly eke out a bare living. Nothing serious could be attempted on the stage and a play with a message could not be conceived of. In fact, despite

Aristotle's authority, serious drama has flourished only for certain brief periods in the history of world literature and even during those periods the number of people who want to see a sentimental play, a farce or a burlesque was far greater than the number of people who preferred to visit a serious theatre. With all classical authority on the side of seriousness in drama and with all the logical bias splitting of the realist school, drama has been predominantly a thing of entertainment for the western audience. In this connection it would be worthwhile to quote Mr. Jean Touzet, the Secretary General of the famous, Cannes Film Festival who came to witness international Film Festival in Delhi in January, 1977. What he said of cinema is equally applicable to drama in the modern context. Talking of films Mr. Jean Touzet said, 'The developing nations might feel excited over the potential use of Cinema as a medium to reflect social changes. But to the West, the whole idea is irrelevant. There, the cine goer sees a movie just for entertainment'. Judges of public taste hold that western spectators would simply refuse to go to a movie if it tried to be a philosophy and drama, too, cannot exist without an audience. So, the first requirement of any story presented on the stage is its entertainment value. But, as I have already said, during certain brief spells the rational side of man seems to win over his sentimental predilections and the period of about forty years from 1890 to 1930 was certainly such a period in the history of English Drama.

1- 'The Hindustan Times' 09th January, 1977
2- Surendra Sahai - English Drama, 1890-1900 - p.222
There were a number of factors—social, economic, scientific and psychological—responsible for the prevalence of rational approach, but the greatest of all factors was the emergence of Ibsen as the most powerful dramatist of the anti-idealistic school. The Norwegian dramatist strode like a Colossus on the continent and changed the very concept of drama as a form of cheap entertainment. He was the first modern dramatist to handle serious problems with material drawn from everyday life. But even if Ibsen had not come, drama would have incorporated the realist trends and the problems of ordinary life would have become its subject matter. This is not denying Ibsen his due importance. The acknowledgement of his contribution is worldwide, but I do not subscribe to the view that history is mainly shaped by heroes whether in literature or in life despite the authority of Carlyle and Nietzsche. As already pointed out in the earlier chapter while dealing with the development of English drama it was T. W. Robertson (1829-71) who tried in his comedies 'Society' (1865), 'Caste' (1867) and others to escape from the mechanical formulations and standardised sentimentalities of earlier 19th century drama. He felt a strong urge to produce plays which would make an appeal to the common people and depict their lives, their trials and tribulations in a realistic way. His first play, 'Society' was the first-realistic play which immediately caught the public eye. His play 'Caste' was even a greater success than 'Society'.

1. David Daiches—History of English Literature, Vol. II
T.W. Robertson could not produce anything great but in a historical perspective his contribution to the development of the drama of ideas in England seems to be quite significant. True, there was no immediate response and for quite sometime the old tradition dominated but the glimmerings of a new dawn were visible. Robertson's contribution was two-fold. He substituted types with individuals and fashioned characters out of ordinary people of blood and flesh and he discarded rhetoric and blank verse and introduced natural human speech. The sentimentalism was, however, still ruling supreme. Sydney Grundy's sobs and smiles ruled the stage. But two young men Arthur Wing Pinero and Henley Arthur Jones had already started their careers and the dying flicker of Robertson's creative mind was at last going to light other candles. In the hands of Pinero and Jones the drama was coming closer to life. The realism was still only skin-deep because the taste of a century could not be changed over-night and the playwright has to submit to economic limitations.

SIR ARTHUR WING PINERO (1855-1934)

The plays of Robertson could perhaps never have been staged had Sir Squire Bancroft and Marie Wilton, who subsequently became his wife, not decided to build a theatre for staging the realist drama. The instinct of a real showmen in them prompted them to build a theatre to cater to the taste of the sober-section of the Victorian middle class who demanded something close to ordinary life. So a new kind of theatre

1. John Allen - Masters of British Drama, P-134
free of the star system and free of the conventional drama was already there to prop up, Sir Arthur (then Mr.) Pinero. The dramatist was now at least as important, if not more, as the actor and he could live by his pen. Many new theatres were built and were run by actor-managers. These actor-managers were ready to take a little risk because they knew that they had fans who would visit their theatres even if they staged plays out of the old rut. So gradually drama of ideas moved in and the dramatist with new ideas came to have a following. When Pinero started his career in 1877 at the age of twenty two with a trivial comedy 'Two Hundred lbs. a year' little did he know that he was going to make a fortune out of his plays. The farce written in his younger days was sold for the customary sum of fifty pounds. The manager, doubtful of its stage success, had a second thought and suggested a contract giving the author a percentage of the takings. Pinero's stars were in ascendance and he was richer by a neat few thousand pounds. Authorship was at last going to become a lucrative profession.

Arthur Pinero's training as an actor for the first ten years of his young life equipped him with the necessary technical know-how a dramatist needs to make his plays stageworthy. During his long term of over fifty years of authorship he wrote some fifty-four plays and naturally his work is of a very varied quality and style. But his best

1- Aylott Hudson - The Twentieth Century Drama - p.18
2- Sir Ifer Evans - A Short History of English Drama - p.147
work was done by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. In the beginning for quite sometime he occupied himself with farces and light plays—these being the most saleable commodities of the time. Some of these farces such as 'The Magistrate' (1895) 'The Schoolmistress' (1896) and 'Dandy Dick' (1897) can still provide a lot of fun to the readers. Besides, while—although not sparkling as that of Shaw—they have fine plot construction. In fact, all the Pinero plays are marked by the excellence of construction. At times over-perfection of plot introduces a kind of mechanical rigidity and this, to some extent, works against their literary worth. The plots of Pinero's farces are intensely contrived and there is too much of coincidence in them. Pinero seems to have come in his formative years under the influence of the French writers like Sardou and Scribe who laid too much emphasis on plot-construction and so the well-made play became an obsession with him. He took more trouble with the construction of the play than any other dramatist. There was a deliberate pattern and every aspect of the dramatic art was made to fit in the pattern. "Dramas were rolled off ceaselessly to a set—play characters, incidents, exposition, climax and denouement—all were governed by certain laws and once the mould was secured, plaster cast could be struck off almost indefinitely." Bernard Shaw was highly critical of the "well-made" play because these plays presented a contrived and unrealistic

1- Allardyce Nicoll - British Drama - p. 362
view of life on the stage. Pinero sacrificed consistency of
characterisation to the exigencies of the plot. The cata-
strophe was brought about too often by coincidence, and
there were made-up situations to produce theatrical effect.
But Pinero, unlike Shaw, was not an iconoclast. He moved
forward cautiously and got sympathetic pat from discerning
critics. Even in his earliest farces and light plays 'The
Squire' (1881) for example William Archer had found sufficient
proof to herald the coming of 'thoughtful and conscientious
writer with artistic aims'. Having established rapport with
the audience and having secured a considerable following with
his farces and trivial comedies, Pinero moved to write
comedies with an under-tone of seriousness. There is realism
mixed with sentimentality and there is humour mixed with
satire. The important plays of this group are - 'Hobby Horse',
'Lady Bountiful', 'The Pisses' and 'The Princess and the Butterfly.'
But, I think, Pinero will be remembered mostly by his serious
dramas which are called social plays or problem plays. These
are 'The Profligate' (1889), 'The Second Mrs. Tanquerary'
(1893), 'The Notorious Mrs. Ebbersmith' (1895), 'The Benefit of
Doubt' (1901), 'Iris' (1901), 'Letty' (1906), 'His House in
Order' (1906), 'The Thunderbolt' (1908) and 'Mid Channel' (1909).
Having thus put Pinero's work in three categories - i.e.,
(1) earlier farces and trivial comedies (2) Comedies with an
under-tone of seriousness and (3) Social or Problem Plays,  

2- William Archer - Play Making - F. 82
we can now take up his social or Problem Play for detailed discussion. These groups are, however, not water-tight and there is a lot of over-lapping. For example after writing the 'Benefit of Doubt', a serious play, Pinero wrote 'Treasury of the Wells' a sentimental comedy. But for the purpose of our study this arrangement can give a better understanding of the development of Sir Arthur Pinero's dramatic genius. Pinero's earliest works were written in tune with the taste of the time. Despite Robertson's moderate success it was Sydney Grundy who ruled the stage, and so Grundy had to be beaten with his own stick. In 'Sweet Lavender' (1888) he seemed so close to Grundy that supporters of the Sentimental School saw in him a protagonist who had come to teach the disciples of Zola a lesson. Before writing 'Sweet Lavender' Pinero had shown his skill at light comedy and won the heart of English audience visiting the Court Theatre with his 'The Magistrate', the 'School Mistress' and 'Dandy Dick'. These plays put him among the most successful playwrights of his day. Even to-day they can make people laugh aloud in reading. The farcical situations are so developed that if we suspend our inquiring spirit for a while, we get plenty of fun and laugh our head-off. Pinero provided theatrical excitement of the good old kind in his farces. He wrung rich humour from contrived farcical situations but never ran the joke to death as so many less-gifted dramatists do. But even in his light plays Pinero was trying to strike a

different note. He was making his place assured so that he may talk more freely to the theatre going audience. In his farces 'Money Spinner' (1880) and 'The Squire' (1880) he showed his grasp of the social issues of the time and in light plays like 'Dandy Dick' his replacement of incident and situation by character brought him among the pioneers of new drama. The stage was well set for Finero to take up relatively bold themes and be first showed definite signs of a new spirit in theatre with 'Hobby Horse' (1886). In this play Finero tried to show how the rich romanticised poverty and when it came to actual facing what a nuisance they made of themselves to others. The rich suffered from the monotony of life, one of the many side-effects of affluence and they wish to put on the garbs of poverty in order to have dramatic escape from boredom. It was a mild satire mixed with popular ingredients of the time. Even Shaw had a word of praise for 'Hobby Horse'. He considered 'Hobby Horse' to be a good comedy and remarked that it 'had character, humour, observation and literary workmanship'. Finero took up a different theme in 'Lady Beaufiful'. The play tried to make a fun of the idlers who did nothing and lived on others. Camilla, the rich heroine tells Dennis - the idle lover - that the love of woman goes out to those who labour and fail. Women can hardly love those who make no effort, who are neither great nor little, who are the nothing of this world. The lover leaves, labours and

1- G.B. Shaw - Plays and Players - P. 232, Edited A.C. Ward
2- Finero - Lady Beaufiful - P. 35
gets married to some one else who dies to make the playwright bring Dennis and Camilla together. It was sentimental stuff and Finere had yet not attempted a bold theme but the satire and irony in the play was of a kind different from the usual stage-plays of the time. In yet another comedy 'The Times' (1891) Finere played with the common weakness of the new-rich for assuming aristocratic way of life. Beryl, the daughter of the appassionata, who made foolish attempts to create an impression of having attained aristocratic manners, exposes the feigned and pretentious way of aristocratic living when she says to Lord Lurgashall "Ah, don't laugh! if you realised as I do the ham, the falseness of this sort of thing you wouldn't, you couldn't laugh - you'd cry. One's life seems to be made of parade and pretension". It is true that sentimentalism has been allowed over-freely to intrude and the marriage of Beryl with Lord Lurgashall is made of stuff but it would be unjust to say that the play belonged to the old school. There was criticism of Victorian manners and although it was not as severe as that of Shaw in later years but among his contemporaries Finere alone had struck that note. 'The Princess and the Butterfly' depicts the middle-age search for passionate love and security. Princess Fannonia and Sir George Lermant, both above forty, instead of living together decide to marry much younger partners to the utter surprise of Shaw. In these comedies there was a curious mixture of the serious and the sentimental in keeping with the

1- Surendra Sahai - English Drama (1865-1900) - P. 69
2- Finere - The Times - P. 31
3- G.B. Shaw - Plays and Players - P. 207
contemporary taste. But in his social plays, as we will see, he showed boldness and subordinated sentimentality to artistic demands. It appears that there were two different strains in the mental make-up of Pinero—that of radicalism and conservatism. When the realist in him was in ascendancy he wrote with Ibsenite zeal and then again descended to a lower plane. This is why we can group his plays in different categories although we cannot earmark any particular period for any one kind of plays. The serious note appears only intermittently in his plays and even there he merely aims at reform rather than annihilation. “The Weaker Sex” (1888) which meant to satirize ‘gentlemanly ladies and pathological gentlemen’ was hopelessly inept and does not rank among Pinero’s great social plays. Although it tried to take up the theme of women’s rights it offers no guide lines. The main story tells us how a lover having quarreled with his lady-love leaves England to go to America. He earns a name as a poet, returns and falls in love with Sylvia, the eighteen year old daughter of his former beloved. Finding the situation hopeless he goes away once again from both their lives. For provincial audience a different end was contrived. The poet was made to marry the daughter. It is quite clear that Pinero lacked the courage to take a bold decision but his women characters in this play were well-drawn and his mature plays were well on the way. In ‘The Profligate’ (1889) Pinero chose a darker theme. Dunstan had given himself to the pleasures of the flesh in his youth.

1- Allardyce Nicoll — British Drama, 3rd Edition — P.351
2- Allardyce Nicoll — British Drama, 3rd Edition — P.351
His past sins wreck his marital happiness. His honeymoon with his wife is cut-short because of the appearance of Janet with whose emotions he had freely played before marriage. Janet was one of the many victims of his lust and is made to enter the scene at the right time. She comes as the dark messenger of fate. The shocked wife hates Denshaw and he takes poison. But the audiences did not like the end because they were used to sentimental hush-hush and happy endings and so Pinero provided the play with a double ending. The curtain could fall either on a tragic note or on a conventional happy ending where the hero is forgiven and all is well. Pinero knew fully well that the development of the theme demanded a tragic end because with the victim of Denshaw's thoughtless flirtation living no domestic happiness was possible and so he retained the tragic ending for the published edition. Pinero failed to make 'The Profligate' a great tragic play. There is not even a semblance of the tragic grandeur of Macbeth or Hamlet. But then the emotions of tragedy are primarily those of terror and awe and Pinero's plays succeed only in arousing the emotion of pity. But we should not under-rate Pinero because he was not as great as the greatest masters of drama. He was a pioneer in his own way. He was introducing seriousness in the theatre and he showed his determination to carry the story to its logical end. The problem play was there but it was waiting for some magic touch to make it a literary force to reckon with.

Lo Allardyce Nicoll - British Drama, P.364
with. And then arrived Ibsen in England. It is possible
that the plays of Ibsen might have influenced Pinero.
Perhaps, they did. But Pinero was never thought to be a
genuine Ibsenite. Shaw remarked that Pinero did not write
anything 'from which it could be guessed that he is contem-
porary of Ibsen'. On the other hand, the supporters of the
old school thought Pinero 'advanced' and criticized him for
taking his audience 'for a stroll in Regent Street by night'.

THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY:

'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray' (1893) deals with the
emerging dilemma of a woman with a past. It is a play about
a woman Paula of about 27 years whose past is deeply stained.
She was what was called in those days 'scarlet woman'. Aubrey
Tanqueray, a highly respectable and wealthy widower of 42
loves and marries her asserting that a life of happiness, of
good repute is possible on a miserable foundation. Aubrey
Tanqueray has a 19 year old daughter Elleen who under the
influence of her chili and religious mother is prepared to
take final vows soon in an Irish Convent where she has passed
most of her life. Tanqueray had tried to dissuade her from
doing so but failed. But Elleen changes her mind because
she feels that her mother in heaven wants her to go to her
father. Elleen comes to live with Paula who finds life dull.
Elleen remains aloof from Paula and Paula tries to win Elleen
over, attempting to kiss her, but Elleen shrinks from her.

1. C. B. Shaw - Plays and Players - P. 21
2. J. P. Mibbet in - The Times, quoted by Fyfe, op. Cit. P. 146
3. David Daiches - A critical History of
   English Literature Vol. II, P. 1102.
Other friends of the family also keep away because Paula had a past as Mrs. Jarman and Mrs. Darty and was not supposed to be acceptable in respectable circles. Paula lives under tremendous psychological pressure. Mrs. Cortelyon, the nearest neighbour and a friend of the first Mrs. Tanqueray calls only to take Eileen on a trip abroad. To Aubrey it is safe course to save the innocent Eileen from any ill-effect that the company of her step-mother may have. When Eileen returns home she brings Hugh Ardale her soldier lover with her. Having returned from his trip abroad and having felt that love means and guided by her father who wanted her to be "very gentle" to Paula, Eileen declares to behave differently towards Paula. She even kisses Paula and asks her if it is too late to start afresh. Paula cries, "No, No!" and weeps in happiness. Eileen tells her of her romance and at Paula's excited insistence brings Ardale into the room. The story takes a tragic turn. Eileen's lover had been once Paula's lover. Paula tells Aubrey of her past relations with Hugh Ardale and Aubrey forbids Eileen to have any further connection with Hugh. Eileen suspects Paula to have poisoned her father's mind and a tense dramatic scene between Paula and Eileen follows. Paula, white and drawn, enters from the Verandah. As Eileen accuses her, she replies: "It was my - my duty to tell your father what I - what I knew". Eileen reports: "What you know, you can only speak from gossip I...". Then she stops abruptly and backs slowly away from Paula. She cries, "You - you knew Captain Ardale in London. She
runs to the door but Paula seizes her by the wrist, shaking her and demanding an explanation. "You — you think I'm that sort of creature, do you? — You've always hated me. You shall answer me," Ellean replied; "I have always known that you were — from the first moment I saw you". Paula forces Ellean to her knees; crying hysterically that what she says is a lie — that she has always been a good woman. Tanqueray enters. Ellean says faintly that the scene has been her fault; she does not wish to see Ardale again. Tanqueray reflects that there is nothing to do but return Ellean to the convent; he and Paula will go away to make a fresh start. He rejects Paula's offer to leave him but she insists that they can never forget this night or the nightmare life that has preceded it and she foresees the day when age will end her attraction for him. What could be the end? Paula killed herself. There can be no escape from the past be it Banshaw or Paula. The tragedy of Paula may not touch the sublime heights of Shakespearean tragedy but it certainly succeeds in bringing tears to every eye. There are critics who accuse Pinero of being timid in not making Paula live a virtuous life with stained past. But Paula is a helpless victim of circumstances and Pinero knew what it was to live under the massive weight of Victorian middle-class opinion.

'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray' was a landmark in the development of English drama. It was soon translated into French, German and Italian. The role of Mrs. Tanqueray

1. Pinero — The Second Mrs. Tanqueray — P. 57
2. Surendra Sehgal — English Drama (1865-1900) — P. 79
3. Ifor Evans — A short History of English Drama — P. 148
has attracted many famous actresses - Mrs. Patric Campbell and Eleonora Duse - being two of them.

THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH

In 'The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith' (1895) Pinero introduces a free-thinking heroine - a woman agitator. It is a tragedy of human relationship. Agnes, the heroine had the sad experience of an ill-matched marriage for eight years and Lucas was also fleeing from a marriage which offered nothing but bondage. Both come together and decide to work together but their relations are to be completely free from physical passion. Lucas's desire shows itself when he presents her a gown. She has a meeting with Lucas, wears the gown and sacrifices her ideal, because she has, what she calls 'only one hour in a woman's life.' Lucas goes to see his relations and Agnes faces the parson and his sister. She throws the copy of the Bible, left with her by the parson, into the fire, utters a loud cry - - and, thrusting her arm into the fire, drags out the book. Her hour was over and she left with the parson. The character of Agnes is not very convincing, perhaps Pinero had not much of an idea of a woman-agitator and he drew the Character on certain sketches appearing in the newspapers.

In fact, Pinero thought of projecting a new relationship between man and woman - a sexless intellectual relationship and in the process shows the failure of the mind to escape from the common bondage of sex. No amount of intellectual pretensions can lead one to know the truth of human relationship. It is, in fact, only through genuine love and
not socialist discussion that one can have an idea of intimate
life. Pinero did not want to propagate any philosophy. He loved
to be called 'modern' and so kept abreast of the new movements
but he wished neither to be a leader nor starter of any movement.
As already mentioned Pinero was not confined to write any particular
type of play in any particular period.

THE BENEFIT OF DOUBT

After "the Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" he wrote, 'The
Amazons', a farcical comedy and then another serious play 'The
Benefit of the Doubt.' It is a play based on marital suspicion
and conflict. It presents a true friction of the age, of rigid
moral atmosphere of the Victorian and Edwardian Society.
Alexander Fraser suspects his wife's fidelity simply because one
night John Allingham tortured by his wife sought refuge in her
house when Fraser was out. Oliva, Allingham's wife, aces for
separation. Thepherilla gets the benefit of doubt although she is
thought to be not properly watchful of her husband's reputation.
Thepherilla who was absolutely honest and faithful to her husband
begs her husband's pardon for the bother she caused. But Fraser
is a typical product of high Victorian Society. A few words of
Christian charity and forgiveness would have cleared up the whole
trouble but that was not to be. In the Second Act the suspense
gets intensified. Thepherilla leaves the house and goes to Jack
Allingham and is admitted only on the insistence of Oliva.
Thepherilla's relatives are already there. Oliva hides herself in
the library and the relatives in another room. Thepherilla tells

1 John Allen - Masters of British Drama - P. 139
Allingham of Fraser's treatment of innocence being misunderstood. Jack offers a glass of champagne to restore mental health because she had a bad day. Theophilla had not known that Olive had made up and was with Jack nor she knew of her relatives' presence there. She was innocent. Jack knew it but Fraser, her husband, was so inhuman. Where could she go? She proposes to slope with Jack. A knock—The relations enter and then comes Olive. Theophilla swoons and the curtain drops on the Second Act. In the third Act Finero strikes a conciliatory note and the play has a happy end. It is a play bereft of any philosophy and its strength lies, in truthful portrayal of Victorian concept of morality. The theme of marital suspicion is ever-green but the truthful picture of Victorian society is not so convincingly drawn anywhere. The only solution of such conflicts is the solution suggested by Finero i.e., that of reconciliation.

Finero's range of characters was limited. His characters mostly come from the well-to-do class of Victorian and Edwardian London. He must start his theme in a city. He must have life around him—eager, strenuous, palisading life. And when all these elements were present in the play—as they often were—Finero was not to be beaten.

'The Benefit of the Doubt' was followed by 'The Princess and the Butterfly' a comedy and then came 'Trelawney of the 'Wells' a play based on the early years of Tom Robertson who, like Finero, himself was an actor until he won success as a playwright. Of course, Robertson was named Tom Wrench in the

1- Surender Sahai - English Drama, 1865-1900 - P.87
2- Sir Ifer Evans - A Short History of English Drama - P.147
drama and there was a recapturing of the atmosphere of the
sixties. The play earned the praise of Dickinson who called it
a beautiful specimen of a difficult form, the historical comedy.
There is no doubt that 'Trelawney of the Wells' will hold a
place in the repertory of English Comedy for many many years.
In his next play 'The Gay Lord Quex' (1899) Pinero mirrored
the decadent life of late Victorian aristocracy. Here was a
theme that dealt with the fashionable elite and Pinero exposed
the immoralities of London's high Society to full light. The
play was considered to be worthy of Congreve and Sheridan and
Pinero was thought to have risen once to the full possibilities
of the comedy of manners.

Having crossed the Nineteenth century, Pinero entered
the first decade of the 20th Century and by now G.B. Shaw had
become a celebrity. Pinero was a conservative judged by Shawian
standards. He did not want to blast the society and create a
new one. He wanted simply to preserve the existing society and
reform it. Four of Pinero's serious plays written after 1900
are worth mentioning although he continued to write till the
end of third decade. These are - 'Iris', 'His House in Order',
'The Thunder Bolt' and 'Mid Channel'. 'Iris', is a powerful
play dealing with the emotional conflict of a wealthy woman.
The choice is to be made between living a luxurious and pampered
life as the wife and mistress of a wealthy but unattractive
businessman and a life of poverty in a long-cabin in Canada with
a rather dull, Square-Jawed young Englishman- whose love is

1- Sawyer - Opera Cit - P.110
2- John Allen - Masters of British Drama - P.135
3- Sareendra Sahai - English Drama, 1865-1900 - P.90
genuine. Her indecision to choose between a wealthy suitor and a poor lover leads to tragic consequences. 'His House in Order' dealt with the worries of Mrs. Jerson in her husband's household. Pinero is famous for his deft craftsmanship and this excellence is nowhere so clearly manifest as in 'His House in Order'. It's craftsmanship is superb and can hardly be improved upon. 'The Thunder Bolt' took up a different theme. It was regarding a man's will and the question of his property. 'Mid Channel' dealt with the problem of boredom in married life caused by age. After having lived with her husband for fourteen years, the wilful wife of a wealthy stock broker seeks for fresh emotional experiences. There was nothing but tragedy in store for her and her husband.

As I have already mentioned, Pinero's characters come mostly from aristocratic class. His men are wealthy bankers, stock brokers and propertied millionaires. Their wardrobes are full of the most fashionable clothes and there is a train of servants to look after the household. They have no worry regarding a job and they have all the time in the world to get involved in emotional wrangles. His women are extremely beautiful. They live in palatial house and are waited upon by maid servants. They are generally unhappy and often spoilt, wilful and pampered. But Pinero justified his predilection for the aristocracy, on the ground that 'if you want to get a certain order of ideas expressed or question discussed, you must go pretty well up in the social scale'. Despite his confinement

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1- Arthur Compton Rickett - A History of English Literature, P-663
2- Archer - Real Conversation, P-21
to aristocracy Pinero gave some fine characters to English Drama. His Benham, Aubrey, Lucas, Fraser and Quex are not that impressive but the female array of his characters is certainly impressive. Beryl, Paula, Agnes and Sephy are vital enough to live for many generations. The plays of Pinero often remind the readers of the Restoration Comedies. The plays of Congreve and Wycherley depict the follies and foibles of fashionable England and Pinero's plays also deal with this very stuff. Of course, Victorian England had a different code of morality and like Restoration Comedies the flirtation could not go unpunished. In the Restoration period fashion and foppery were encouraged and the faults of the aristocracy went unnoticed and un criticised. In Pinero, even the faint possibility of a reproachable deed invites social ostracism. Aubrey and Paula had to live away from fashionable centre because Paula had a past. Fraser thought of going abroad because his wife's conduct was not like a lady of the high society. Pinero's tragic theme is the destruction of individuals by their failure to comply with the social code. But Pinero did not go deep into the problems. He does not mock the code like Shaw or analyse it like Galsworthy. Ibsen had come to England before he wrote many of his serious plays and yet one fails to notice much of Ibsen's influence on Pinero. In fact Pinero was a middle of the reader and he lacked vision. If we read Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' and then Pinero's 'Iris' we can see the fundamental difference of approach. In the same way Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler' and Pinero's 'The Notorious Mrs. Ebbinsmith' when read together give a clear idea of Pinero's superficial treatment of serious problems. Ibsen thrusts deep
below to the very heart of his characters, Pinero's analysis is only skin-deep. But despite his limited outlook and negligible imaginative range, Pinero was the master of dramatic situations. His dialogues were mostly theatrical and were of 'spurious literary quality'. But his plays are very readable and irresistibly amusing. Had Pinero been bold enough like Shaw to break the shackles of traditions he would have been a far greater dramatist. Had he been deep enough like Ibsen to lay bare the anguish of a sensitive soul he would have been among the world's great playwrights. But these are questions pertaining to the realms of genetics, descent, and religion. 'Why a man is what he is and not some one else', I do not know and perhaps no one does. Suffice it to say that for nearly twenty years Pinero was 'the playwright autocrat of the English Theatre'. Even the greatest actors of his time were in holy terror of him. If an actor was asked to scratch his chin he had to scratch his chin. So Pinero ruled supreme for over two decades. He 'deservedly held one of the chief positions in the world of what we may style 'pre-Modern' drama.' He was knighted in 1909 and that speaks of his social recognition as well as of his limitations. Sir Arthur Wing Pinero will always occupy an important place in any review of the dramatic revival in the later half of the 19th century. He was a link between the old and the new and as a craftsman he stands with the greatest. He dispensed with the 'soliloquy' and 'aside' and introduced several advances in the technique. Despite his

1. A. Nicoll - Late 19th Century Drama U.S.P. 181
2. A. Nicoll - British Drama P.32
3. Hesketh Pearson - Pinero - The Showman, P.71
Sentimentalism and conventional treatment of character Sir Arthur should get the credit of bringing back the drama to more natural realms. He was certainly a pioneer and if the revolution produced greater giants, it should rather enhance than diminish his importance.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950)

In late nineties, people considered the theatre to be a place of shallow amusement. They went there to be soothed after the enormous intellectual strain of a day in the city. In short, a playwright was thought to be a person whose business it was to make unwholesome confectionary out of cheap emotions. The man who revolutionised the very concept of drama and who succeeded to establish the claim of a dramatist as a thinker rather than an entertainer was George Bernard Shaw who became a legend in his own lifetime. Shaw sincerely believed that theatre should be regarded as an instrument of social reform. He asserted that all good plays should have a purpose and if they are to be anything more than the merest tissues of stage-effects, they should have a philosophy, even if it be no more than an unconscious expression of the author's temperament. Between 1895 and 1898, as dramatic critic of 'The Saturday Review' Shaw wrote the finest collection of dramatic criticism in English language. Every week the young, witty, fearless and iconoclastic Irishman emptied the vials of his virulent contempt on the old school of acting and play writing. For three and a half years he made mince-meat of the sentimentalities

1- Lynton Hudson - Twentieth Century Drama- P.19
and essential falsities that contemporary dramatists continued to offer to their convention-ridden audiences.

PLAYS UNPLEASANT

When he found that despite his criticism there were no signs of regeneration and the Pinero-School was making a mockery of realism in the field of drama, he decided to leave criticism and take up the vocation of a play-wright. After all, he should present an example before preaching and so on 1892 'Widowers' Houses' came on the English stage. Shaw had extraordinary creative powers and it was not difficult for him to write plays but he had the greatest difficulty for many years in persuading any manager at all to stage even one of his plays for a single performance. It was a time when Pinero ruled supreme. Hekeath Pearson has remarked that no manager dared to decline the honour of presenting one of Pinero's plays. But for Shaw there was hardly any opening. Pinero obeyed every rule but Shaw broke the lot. Shaw got the first opportunity of seeing 'Widowers' Houses' staged when J.T. Grein, who had established the 'Independent theatre' in 1891 needed a play to continue his programme of producing Ibsenite plays. 'Widowers' Houses' met with a very cold reception and the critics unanimously denounced it as a mere pamphlet. "The big fight was on G.B. Shaw versus the Social system."

Fall 1891 Shaw had not written a play although he had already tried his hand at novel-writing without success. He was now thirty-five years old and he was mature enough to take a big stride. He wrote

1- Hekeath Pearson - Pinero- The Showman, P.93
2- Lyton Hudson - Twentieth Century Drama, P.20
with a terrific speed and by 1901 he had more than a dozen great plays to his credit. Shaw had ideas on everything, ideas which no one had ever imagined as utterable in the theatre – ideas on slum land-lordism, on prostitution, on professional impostures, blood sports, husband-hunting, politics and religion. The public found his first plays – in so far as the censor permitted it to see them – merely horrid. 'The Star' called 'Sidewers' Houses' an exposition in dialogue of New economics'.

Another journal 'Black and White' thought it was 'a discussion with open doors, of the pros and cons of slum land-lordism'. 'Sidewers' Houses', Shaw's first drama was based on William Archer's unfinished play, 'Rhine Gold'. Archer's source is 'La Geinseure dorée' by Emile Augier. In order to see the distinctiveness of Shaw's realist approach we can compare the treatment of the problem and its suggested solution in the three plays. The problem is: when a young man discovers that his young lady's inherited money was acquired by her father in an immoral way, what does he do? William Archer's hero talked of pitching it into the Rhine. Quite a good number of spectators in the theatres would love to see such an end but they would like the pitching to be done on a convenient balcony beside that river so that they may have their share, too. Augier's hero can not marry the lady and depends on the ingenuity of the author to provide him and the play with an opportune accident. So that the tangle be solved. War breaks out and the heroine's father is reduced to poverty and is now honourable for the

1- Surendra Sahai – English Drama (1865–1900), P.144
2- Surendra Sahai – English Drama (1865–1900), P.144
3- R., J. Kaufmann – G.B. Shaw, P.59
hero to propose to the heroine. This is what was called the well-made play. Shaw was too much of a realist to offer a solution by sheer accident. Moreover, characters in a drama have got to be able to make decisions and these decisions have got to be real and rational. Shaw had no faith in well-made plays. In this connection he said, 'I avoid plots like the plague — my procedure is to imagine the characters and let them trip.' Characters in a well-made play are conventional, they behave not according to the laws of psychology but according to the expectations of an audience in a theatre. Augier's hero would not consider being the husband of a woman with tainted dowry Shaw created a hero who has the effrontery to ask the heroine to throw up her dowry for his sake — very natural and the heroine in a drama of Finero or for that matter any other dramatist of 19th century would have delivered a long speech on true love and would have come straight into the arms of the hero. All resistance must have come from the parental side. But Shaw's characters are different, and, perhaps, true to real life. The heroine refuses to be poor to preserve her innocence. There is a deadlock. What should be done. Should a disaster be introduced to provide a dramatic ending? That would be unreal. The heroine has inherited tainted money but is not the hero himself a victim of the vicious circle with all his pious intentions? It turns out that the source of the hero's own unearned income is the same as that of the girl's father. End of Act two. In the last Act the hero comes around and gets the girl by accepting the nature of capitalism. It was certainly socialist propaganda

1 — G. B. Shaw — Preface to 'Widowers' Houses'.
but Shaw did not make a secret of it. He boasted of it. 'But he boasted with equal reason that he was writing comedy in the most traditional sense.' Shaw's first play 'Widower's Houses' may not be great art but it was a great reversal of custom.

The play is an exposition of the evils of capitalism without any dramatic event. Trench, the hero, accepts the system without any effort to free himself of it because his self-glorification suffers a setback at the realisation of his own share in the Capitalist system. Perhaps, Shaw did not like to provide the play with any suggested solution because he thought that it was enough at this stage that people be brought to a realisation of their share in the injustice and wrong prevailing in society. English theatre was still thriving on Pinero and Jones and Ibsen had not found a welcome arch. Two years earlier his 'Ghosts' had been staged and it had shaken the upper class England to its bones and now there was Shaw to tell them the ugly truths they tried to hide from themselves all their lives. They were told in no uncertain terms that it was the callous indifference of the rich to the suffering of the people and it was their greed for more and more money that was responsible for the degradation of the poor.

'Widower's Houses' (1892) clearly marked the beginning of a new kind of drama in England. Success was a long time in coming. Many battles had yet to be fought. In order to make his view point clear Shaw embellished his plays by elaborate prefaces "through which he trained the evils who lacked his normal vision to get accustomed to the day-light". 'Widower's Houses' was

1- Eric Bentley - The Making of a Dramatist, P.6
2- Lynton Hudson - The Twentieth Century Drama, P.20
followed by 'The Philanderer' (1893). It is a satire on the out-moded character of marriage as an institution. But again, Shaw does not offer any solution. Marriage may be an out-moded institution but the answer to it is not philandering as 'advanced' individuals in the play seem to think. The play opens with charters in the arms of Grace Tranfield, a pretty young widow, living in a flat in Sleley Gardens. Charters wants to marry her, but she will not have him because marriage will give Charters too much advantage over her: "No woman is the property of man. A woman belongs to herself and to nobody else."

1. In 'The Philanderer' Shaw could not achieve anything great and perhaps it was only an attempt on the part of the author to show that he was "the first in England at grasping the contemporary trends in drama of which Ibsen was the new master". Twenty years after the production of the play 'The Philanderer's Shaw made it out that the theme of the play was based on his own personal experiences; charters, the leading character, is Shaw and the woman who got charters entangled Julie is based upon Mrs. Jenny Patterson, 'the enterprising widow, one of my mother's pupils who appealed successfully to my curiosity'. The quarrel between Grace and Julie is based on a similar quarrel between Mrs. Patterson, Shaw's first seducer and Florence Farr, his second love. 'The Philanderer' is certainly superior to 'Widower's Houses' so far as the technique is concerned. The true Shavian qualities appear in dialogue, characters and situation. There is a well-knit sub-plot from which the best humour of the play

1= G.B. Shaw - The Philanderer, P.23
2= Surendra Sahai - English Drama, (1868-1900), P.146
3= 
comes. When 'Paramore's disease' is found to be non-existent, Paramore is dejected and frustrated. It is a fling at too subtle schemes and projects in the scientific world and Charteris's description of medical science as 'the department of witchcraft' seems to be pretty convincing. Shaw developed this theme some twelve years later in 'The Doctor's Dilemma'. The last of the three 'Plays Unpleasant' 'Mrs. Warren's profession', 1893, is a play about a woman with a past who at present owns a chain of brothels on the continent. The first play as we have seen was about alms, the second about women and marriage and this the third, about prostitution. It is the best of the three and it shows the remarkable advance in Shaw's quality as a playwright in the short interval between 'The Philanderer' and this play. Shaw succeeds in drawing attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by under-paying, under-valuing, and male-treating women so shamefully that the poorer of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together. Society, and not individual, is the villain of the piece. 'Mrs. Warren's Profession' was too revolutionary for the time. The play was banned by the English censor of plays and when a licence was refused the otherwise enterprising Grein refused to produce it privately when performed publicly in New York in 1902, the police took action and hauled Arnold Daily and his company off to Jail. The magistrate, however, refused to convict and on appeal by the Police the judge decided that the play was not immoral. In England it was after twentyone

1= G.B. Shaw - The Philanderer, P-56
2= A.C. Ward - Bernard Shaw, P-59
years i.e. in 1914 that the play was permitted to be performed publicly. Mrs. Warren's daughter Vivie, who had been brought up without knowledge of her mother's business, is a twenty-two years old, highly educated woman. She is gifted with good looks and education has given her confidence. She was having a holiday before starting her professional career as an actuary in London when Mrs. Warren arrives and the circumstances lead to the disclosure of her mother's business. For a moment, the story of Mrs. Warren's suffering oversends Vivie, but she soon realises that she should not fall in the sentimental trap. She tells her lover Frank Gardner that she has finished with love's young dream. She says to her mother she comes to get a reconciliation "I don't want a mother; and I don't want a husband". She says goodbye to false happiness, for she is wholly competent and has a planned life. She decides to live alone. It is a hard play without sentiment because conscience is hard and Vivie's conscience is what the dramatic action is concerned with. Let us make a comparison and see in what way G.B. Shaw's approach towards problem differs from that of Sir Arthur Pinero. In the key scene in Act II Mrs. Warren and Vivie discuss their position and point of view. A similar situation in Pinero's 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray' comes to our mind where the discussion is between Eileen and Paula. Paula Tanqueray was defeated by circumstances. Mrs. Warren asserts herself and says 'The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her.' Here lies the basis

1. A.C.Ward, Bernard Shaw, p.61
difference between Pinero and Shaw. Pinero was too conservative to think of Mrs. Warren's independent step. To Pinero, a woman could not be anything more than a sacrifice to so called virtue, to Shaw she was capable of independent judgement. Pinero failed by a narrow margin in leading a new dramatic movement; Shaw grabbed the opportunity and made capital of it. Moreover, Shaw freed drama from theatricality and made it a drama of ideas. "His reliance on words as the chief - and often the sole - weapon in the field of mental conflict to which his plays were intentionally confined, inclined him to neglect, and - perhaps to despise opportunities for 'good theatre' which other playwrights would grasp thankfully." With Mrs. Warren's profession Shaw ended his apprenticeship and the new drama, as well as, the new woman was born. 'Plays Unpleasant' brought Shaw a considerable notoriety. But they were a dismal commercial failure. Shaw realised that he will have to create his audience side by side creating his plays. His superb command of words and his trick of turning conventional ideas inside out had earned him a reputation for perversity, but also for wit. 'He had no difficulty in making people laugh,' so Shaw decided to give a nice sugar-coating to his philosophical pills. He 'adopted waggery as medium.' He decided to win the favour of the audience by presenting a comic vision of life instead of serious and satiric outlook of 'plays unpleasant.'

PLAYS PLEASANT

The theme of 'Plays Pleasant' is one of conflict between romanticism and religion, between passion and reason. 'Pleasant

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1= A.C.Neale = Bernard Shaw, P=32
2= Lynton Hudson = The Twentieth Century Drama, P=21
plays' first showed the 'romantic side' and then the light of realism revealed the absurdity of idealism bringing disillusionment in its wake. The first of these 'pleasant plays' 'Arms and the Man' gets its title from Dryden's translation of Virgil's Aeneid with an unmistakable ironic twist. Bulgaria and Serbia are at war in the year 1866. The Serbian army is in flight, and a fugitive officer, Captain Bluntschill takes refuge in a Bulgarian house. It is night and he climbs up the front of the house, entering a bad room on the first floor. In this room lies the heroine, Raina Perkoff, dreaming of her lover, who had led a recent victorious charge of the Bulgarian Cavalry. The fugitive forces her to light a candle, threatens her with his revolver, takes her cloak, and when the pursuing Bulgarian troops enter the house and demand to search the room, he throws the cloak back to her and prepares for a struggle; on impulse she hides him. When the search is over she offers him the only food she has - chocolate creams - he says that he prefers them to cartridges. The romantic heroine is shocked. She had dreams of war-heroes made of a different stuff. Chocolate creams were good enough for pretty women as a lubricant to amorous romance but a soldier prefers them to cartridges - it was the shock of her life. Not only this 'the chocolate cream soldier' had said to her 'that nine soldiers out of ten are born fools.' Shaw is determined to shatter the glory of a warrior. Raina, the heroine bears a harsh truth about soldiering which shatters her romantic image of a war hero. 'Soldiering is the coward's art

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1. A.C.Ward - Bernard Shaw, P.68
of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak." Of course, in the end Shaw brings Raina and Bluntschili together and Raina's lover Sergius marries Louka, the maid servant who is a realist character. But the coming together of Raina and Bluntschili is not because of Scribean arrangement of incidents. It is because of deep psychological understanding: shorn off all cheap romantic trappings and here lies Shaw's novelty of treatment. Shaw does not depend so much on external action in drama as on the efficacy of words which have far more dramatic effect. Shaw used to remark that his plays were all words just as Raphael's paintings were all paint. To have an idea of the efficacy of Shavian words, let me quote a dialogue from 'Arms and the Man' between Bluntschili and Raina. Here is one of the decisive turns in the action.

Bluntschili: When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say.

Raina: Captain Bluntschili!

Bluntschili: Yes!

Raina: Do you mean what you said just now?

Bluntschili: I do.

Raina: I ! ! I !!! - How did you find me out?

With this last query, Raina passes over for ever from Sergius's world to Bluntschili's. Is Scribe or Pinero capable of this word-action? It is the Shavian effect par

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1= G.B. Shaw - Arms of the Man.
2= Eric Bentley - The Making of a Dramatist, P-6
excellence. No other modern English playwright has been able to achieve it. 'Candide' followed 'Arms and the Man' as the second in the 'Plays Pleasant' Volume. In this play Shaw shows considerable maturity in technique and characterization. \^ Reverend James Mayor Morell, a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England, takes for granted his wife's affection. He preaches sermons but he fails to understand his own wife. Morell has not the least inkling that Candide possesses a soul. Morell's complacency is shattered when he finds a youth of eighteen, slight effeminate and with haunted, tortured expression as a possible rival. In the famous play of Ibsen 'A Doll's House' we have a similar theme. Helmer has no notion that Nora has a soul of her own. In Ibsen's play the wife leaves her husband when she makes the discovery; In Shaw she holds to him for Candide has more wisdom than Nora. Candide, mother of two children and thirty-three, knew full well that the wife's decision to live with the husband was the real solution to the problem. Shaw was too original to be a follower of any great master of Ibsen could not sit too tightly over his creative gags. He outgrew Ibsen. Candide is anti-Ibsen in the sense that the wife knowing well the weakness and hollowness of Morell's love prefers to stay back. 'A Doll's House' and 'Ghosts' had their place but life was too vast and complex to follow a set pattern. It is possible that Shaw may have been unconsciously influenced by Sundermann's 'Das Gluck Unhinkle' played in England as the 'Vale of Content' in 1895. In this play the heroine, Elizabeth, when given a choice between the husband and lover.

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1. Surendra Sahai - English Drama (1865-1900), p. 185
2. Surendra Sahai - English Drama (1865-1900), p. 186
prefers to live with the former. Candida is highly interesting from technical point of view as a play of anti-climax. It is written with economy. The plot is well-defined and fully worked out and there are no loose ends.

In his earlier plays Shaw imposed the problem over the plot which impaired the artistic effect of the plays. In 'Candida' Shaw combined theme and technique without over-emphasising either.
'The Man of Destiny' is among the least indispensable of his plays. Napoleon is shown in a realistic light shorn of the glamour of war. The interest of the drama lies in the battle of wits between Napoleons and the unnamed lady who has managed to steal a private letter from Napoleon's dispatches. Napoleon, the soldier, a man all over, has pitted against him a lady, woman all over. Her only weapons are her woman's charm — her sex appeal. But the Man of Destiny has nothing great about it. It has not even the novelty of technique, and Henry Irving and Ellen Terry for whom it was written, refused it. Richard Masfield who had made a personal triumph in a play called 'Napoleon' by Lorimer Stoddard, also refused the play. "The only passages which excuse the presentation of "The Man of Destiny" are Napoleon's speech on fear, the 'one Universal-Passion', and the later conversation in which he explains the English satirically and at considerable length, saying inter-alia—-There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find an English man doing it; but you will never find an English man in the wrong. He does everything on Principle."

"You Can Never Tell" is the last of the four 'Plays Pleasant'. This is one of the Bernard Shaw's most popular plays. It was written to attract an audience of perfectly common place people. The theme is love, and it deals with the relations of husband and wife, parents and children, and lovers treated in comic manner. Shaw gets himself to tear down the veils of illusion and to present a naked picture of love. Intellectual rationalism fades away in the face of the life force of realism. He makes us understand that it is true love, however, therefore irrational; and he dissects it as an unsentimental artist. "Here", he says, "is love in its biological and essential
truth, and having looked at it in the vein of high comedy, he 
shows that it is to be valued none-the-less, and that no less 
lyrical ecstasy is in it when it becomes conscious love than 
when kept shrouded in pretence." Mrs. Glendon, an 'emancipated' 
woman, having lived for eighteen years in Madeira, comes with her 
three children to a fashionable watering place on the coast of 
Torbay in Devon. The eldest of the three, Gloria, is hardly 
past twenty and is the incarnation of naughty high mindedness 
because she is unaware of herself. She protects herself by a 
freezing coldness of manner. But valentine, the dentist, in no 
time at all, completely demolished Gloria's intellectual attitudini-
ing and she helplessly surrenders herself to her real nature. 
The mother, Mrs. Glendon, 'a veteran of the old guard of the Women's 
Rights Movement' and Crompton, the father, as an authoritarian, 
realise the meaninglessness of their ideals, renounce their preten-
sions and are reconciled to each other after a long forced separa-
tion. Pinero had also dealt with the theme of women agitators and 
he had made his heroines accept the truth that it was not 
through intellectualisation but love that gives life a meaning and 
a sense of fulfilment. In 'weaker sex' Lady Vivash and in 'The Ms 
Notorious Mrs. Ebbchurch' Agnes realise that intellectual and 
Cynical view about love. The manifestation of life-focus are 
only attempt towards self-deception and that knowledge is incomplete 
if it ignores the needs of the body. Of course Pinero presented it 
with a lot of sentimentality but in Shaw there is a cogent reasoning 
and, perhaps, a philosophy too. Shaw took up many good genius feature 
of Pinero's plays and handled them in a much better way to 

1- C.R. Purden-- C.R. Shaw P. 173.
establish his superiority over his contemporaries. 'You Never Can Tell' is a high comedy and the title is echoed from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' and to say that shaw was inspired by Shakespeare's is to place his play on a level it deserves.

The Third collection of plays that followed was published as 'Three Plays for Puritans.' In these plays Shaw put more emphasis on male characters. In the long Preface Shaw had given a call to the Puritans to rescue the English theatre again as they rescued it before when its foolish pursuit of pleasure sank it in profaneness and immorality. In fact, Shaw wanted the theatre to be frequented by high-brow section of the society.

'The Devil's Disciple', the first of the 'Three Plays for Puritans' is a melodrama but its spirit is romance or anti-romance, for Shaw once again takes the romantic hero and turns him inside-out. Shaw chose for this play the period of the American war of Independence once, in 1777. Richard Dudgeon, the hero, lets the soldiers arrest him when they mistake him for Anderson. The Devil's Disciple as Richard Called himself acted basically following an instinctively generous human impulse. He was to be executed and the punctilious Burgoyne was waiting for the stroke of the hour to get the execution affected when Anderson dashes in, empowered on behalf of the American Militia to make terms for evacuation of the town by the British.

Richard is saved. Both the important characters—Richard Dudgeon and Anderson undergo significant changes at critical moments in the play. There is hardly anything great except characterisation in 'The Devil's Disciple'. It is a melodrama of the most common variety. There are all the stage gimmicks of suspense and

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G.K. Chesterton—J.B. Shaw—P. 160
thrills. Actuality is thrown to the winds so far as the situations are concerned. The plot is mere theatre and stands no examination. But it was Shaw's first Box office success. He made so much money out of the American Production that he gave up his post as dramatic critic of 'The Saturday Review.'

Shaw's next play, 'Caesar and Cleopatra' may be taken as a counter-blast to the sensual romanticism of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. The play provides excellent entertainment for the idios of contemporary life. He declared that Shakespeare had not been equal to Caesar, he 'never knew human strength of the Caesarian type'. Antony 'Raining away from the battle of Actium for love of Cleopatra' was unbearable to him. He, therefore, chose Caesar, a man with a prodigious capacity for work, a leader who men could manage men and a conqueror whose conquests included the conquest of reason over passion. Shaw's Caesar is not the Caesar of history. It is an idealized portrait of a historical hero. In Hompsen's, 'The History of Rome' when Caesar met Cleopatra she was twenty one. But Shaw has shown her to be only a sixteen year girl. In the last Act Caesar is about to leave for Rome. He has forgotten Cleopatra. Of course, she appears and he tells her he will send her a man; Roman from head to heel and Roman of the

**Noblesse—Mark Antony*. But Cleopatra is no more than a play-thing to Caesar, a play-thing that could be forgotten. In the life of Shaw's Caesar romance has no place. His relationship with Cleopatra is only that of an old man toying with a little girl. Here was a play in which the theory of life-force was kept in check and in which Shaw rejected impulse and accepted reason to be the guiding force of life. It is true that technically Caesar and Cleopatra is not a thoroughly integrated work and therefore fails to achieve unity of effect. But it has much
numberous other commendable qualities and shows Shaw, at Bala, command of his powers as a dramatist. The last of 'Three Plays for Puritans' was 'Captain Brass-Bound and Conversion.' No other of Shaw's plays leans so heavily upon a single character as Captain Brass-Bound. Conversion does upon Lady Cicely. As the play was written for Ellen Terry, Shaw seems to have cared very little for the other characters. But Ellen Terry did not like it and considered it more fitted for the closet than the stage. In this play Shaw left socialist and Fabian controversies far behind and tried to fathom the depth of the human heart. Under the angelic spell of Lady Cicely, Captain Brass-Bound is completely changed. The impulsion to seek revenge is replaced by a new spirit of confidence, faith and service. The play is a powerful demonstration of the fact that Shaw can handle psychological themes with superb confidence. The play's weakness is that all attention is absorbed by Lady Cicely and the play flags when Lady Cicely is not dominating the stage. All the same it contains considerable Shawian quality.

MAN AND SUPERMAN

It was the end of Nineteenth century and by now Shaw had written ten plays. He was forty-four and was a recognised force in the field of English drama. He had demolished much and created too, but his demolition seemed to be weightier than his creation. Of course, there were voices hailing him to be the greatest dramatist since Shakespeare but the claim had yet to be established. He had left Finero, Jones and Gilbert far behind. He had out grown Ibsen and the opening years of the twentieth century saw first indubitable masterpiece of the intellectual drama, 'Man and Superman' which established this truth beyond doubt. By the end of 1900 the realistic drama had made the theatre a truthful, unflattering mirror of social life; it had advanced from the presentation of types whose

1st A. C. Ward-- Bernard Shaw-- p. 32.
actions were arbitrarily determined by the plot to the study of individual men and women whose characters shaped the action of the play; it had discarded rhetoric and substituted the natural speech of human intercourse. The time was ripe for presenting provocative themes with deep philosophic content drawn from myriad scientific advances in the field of knowledge. Shaw, as we know was not a systematic philosopher. He was a comic genius but he interpreted life in a particular way and gave it all the force of his learning make it convincing. He called 'Man and Superman' 'a comedy and a Philosophy'. In 'Man and Superman' Shaw propounded the doctrine of creative evolution. Later in 'Back to Methuselah' he continued this theme on a larger scale and he presented human life as the expression of the will to create. 'Man & Superman' deals with Life-force. The idea of Life-force was present in some of the earlier plays of Shaw but it was not that elaborate. 'A man should consciously live as an instrument of a will or Life Force that uses him for purposes wider than his own,' is Shaw's leading idea. Woman, Shaw holds, is the human channel of the evolutionary progress towards a higher creation and so instinctively she chooses a man who can help her create a better generation. There is the eternal chase of man by woman and this chase is the manifestation of Life-force to create better mankind. A woman should, therefore, set aside all false modesty and impose herself as wife upon the one man to whom her instinct drives her. If a woman fails in this, she may have all the respectability in the world, but she will have failed the next generation. So Ann Whitefield, the heroine of 'Man and Superman' sets herself upon the task of capturing John Tanner as

1- H.C. Duffield—Quintessence of Bernard Shaw F. 62.
husband and we all know that man is not victor in the duel of sex and that man is helpless in woman's hands and so Ann Whilefield triumphs and Tanner is forced to become the instrument of Nature to create some one greater than himself so that the evolutionary process towards the emergence of Shatter mankind superman—may be continued. Ann rejects Octavius, an uncommonly nice looking fellow because Octavius seemed to be just a perpetuator of human race and there was nothing of the creator, man—the artist and thinker in him. To Octavius Ann is 'the reality of romance, the revelation of all the mysteries and the sanctification of all the dogmas' and so Ann instinctively knows that Octavius stands on a lower level of mental evolution—the level of a stupidified worshipper whereas to Tanner she is the human counter-part of a boa-constrictor and so Ann or some power in Ann stronger than herself is determined to capture Tanner to help her to fulfill the highest purpose and greatest function of woman— to increase, multiply and replenish the earth. Tanner after all is also an instrument of the will of Nature and he is at one and the same time repelled and fascinated by Ann. He says—rather cries in despair 'I never feel safe with you; there is a devilish charm, a subtle interest.' He too, perhaps, knew instinctively that Ann could make him do or create something greater than himself and that there was no escape. In the third Act 'The Don Juan in Hell' scene is a masterpiece in rhetorical dialogue and stands alone in English dramatic literature; Don Juan negatives the life theory of death and damnation put forward by The Devil and says that the life force works in man to save him from the forces of death

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1— G. B. Shaw The Revolutionary Hand Book
( Man & Superman A. C. Ward Edition)
P. 212.
and degeneration. Man's task is to cooperate in the work of helping life in its struggle forward. In the last act Ann makes her capture of Turner complete and the life-force, adds one more name to the long-list of its prisoners. 'Man and Superman' established Shaw's position as the greatest master of the 'drama of ideas' and what was more as one of the foremost thinkers of modern times. 'Man and Superman' was a big success on the stage both in England and in the United States and it brought him a large fortune to Shaw and freed him from the necessity of writing pot-binders any more.

The plays that followed have little story interest and hardly any action but there is plenty of discussions on every thing under the sun and Shaw cared little for those who complained that his plays were just dramatised conversation. His report to these company which interests an audience for two hours and critics was 'A play is a half on the stage of a theatre. Shaw wrote fifty-three plays in all and covered a span of more than half a century as an active writer. Naturally, it would need many volumes to do justice to Shaw as a dramatist. His achievement is too great to be summed up in a sketchy work. Of the forty and odd plays that were written after 'Man and Superman', we will take only the ones that are outstanding and try to show how Shaw dealt with almost all the burning problems of his time. Some of these problems seem to demand an urgently a solution today as in Shaw's early days and so the problem part of Shaw's best plays is not in any way a hindrance to full enjoyment of his plays. 'Man and Superman' was followed by 'John Bull's Other Island'. The play presents the age long conflict between English and Irish. The play was written when Ireland was under English rule and the preface of the play

1. H.C. Duffin---Quintessence of Bernard Shaw P. 62
2. Lynton Henderson---The Twentieth Century Drama P. 31
was a passionate plea for Home Rule. Since then the Anglo-Irish political scene has changed completely and the question of Ireland has been settled but 'John Bull's Other Island' was not a political treatise. Shaw always looked beyond the temporary to the permanent. Its charm lies in its characters - Broadbent and Keegan and even in Larry Doyle. The play was a great success on the first occasion of its performance and is so still because it is concerned with fundamental human problems. Next came 'How He Lied to Her Husband' a farce touched with anti-romance. The little play was written at the request of Arnold Day who wanted a certain raider to the 'Man of Destiny'. The play is a smart piece of feeling. Major Barbara, which came next was in Desmond MacCarthy's opinion one of the most remarkable plays put upon the English stage. Barbara Underwood joins the Salvation Army out of love for the common people. But she finds that tainted money is being accepted to continue the work of the Salvation Army for the poor. The alternative is to stop the work for want of funds. Barbara cannot reconcile herself to taking tainted money; her conscience in the army can. The shock to Barbara's conscience is such that she ends her connection with the Army. She becomes convinced that 'there is no wicked side; life is all one'.

God's work is to be done for its own sake, not for the sake of bribes, either the Salvationists' promise of heaven or the employer's offer of bread. The play succeeds in making realise that poverty is the greatest of evils and worst of crimes, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor. Despite Barbara's problem of conscience, Shaw seems to suggest that all our money is tainted and there is no other money to be had, so let us relieve money from

1. A.C. Ward-Bernard Shaw P. 103
2. G.K. Chesterton G.B. Shaw. P. 193
it's taint and sanction it to be used for the poor.

Shaw called 'The Doctor's Dilemma' tragedy but it is written in a comic vein and is, in fact, a tragi-comedy. In the Preface, Shaw his hand against the medical profession which, according to him, has an infamous character. Members of medical profession, barring a few exceptions have no honour or conscience and exhibit specific lust for cruelty. Sir Colenso Hidgon's cure for tuberculosis makes him famous and he is persuaded by Jennifer, an arresting good looking young woman, to take her artist husband Isebiat under his treatment. But having noticed Isebiat's moral depravity, Sir Colenso refuses to take him under his treatment and instead decides to treat worthy Menkinop. The artist under the treatment of another doctor Moonfield, Donington moves towards death and accepts death in the fashion of an artist. In the Fifth Act Sir Colenso meets Jennifer in a Bond Street Picture gallery, where an exhibition of the artists' pictures is taking place. He tells her that it was because of her love that he did not treat her husband. But Jennifer had already re-married and Sir Colenso's last word are 'Then I have committed a purely disinterested murder.' The plot of 'The Doctor's Dilemma' is weak and it's weakness lies in Sir Colenso Hidgon's motive, but the brilliance of writing overcomes the weakness of the plot. Shaw crusaded against the doctrine of medical infallibility and opposed tendencies which appeared to him to be nothing more than scientific witchcraft. Shaw was much criticised for his treatment of the doctors but it cannot be denied that there is much truth in what he said.

1. A.E. Ward - Bernard Shaw P. 112
about the medical profession.

'Getting Married' is a play that is a single conversation from start to finish. Critics called Shaw's be plays 'mere talks' and Shaw took up the challenge and wrote a dramatic discourse on English marriage laws and customs, their absurdities, illogicalities and injustices. The discussion about marriage is lively, witty and with many elements of surprise. The play is not considered for a place among the best works of Shaw but its opening is one of Shaw's most enchanting scenes. 'Androcles and the Lion' deals with early Christianity. The central theme of the play is that men must have something worth dying for to make life worth living. Shaw felt annoyed at the adverse criticisms of his plays by London critics and so he decided that the continent should see his plays before London critics had condemned them. This is why, from 1912 onward, Shaw's plays were usually first produced abroad. The first performance of 'Androcles and the Lion' was at the Théâtre, Berlin in 1912. 'Pygmalion' was also first produced outside England—in Vienna on 16th Oct. 1913.

Pygmalion is one of Shaw's most successful plays and has been revived many times. It was made into an exceptionally popular and profitable film in 1938 by Gabriel Pascal. The play is a romantic comedy and although its background is phonetics, the central theme is human relations, in particular, love. It was in 'Pygmalion' that Shaw put into the mouth of his heroine the words 'Not Moody Likely' and it created a sensation. Shaw knocked solemn people off their perch. This was the first time when the infamous word 'Moody'

was used on the stage and, perhaps it was because of overnight

1. A. Nicoll—British Drama, p. 441
2. Lyton Hudson—The Twentieth Century Drama, p. 23
that the word had got past the watchful censorship of the Lord Chamberlain. It was not a permissible swear-word for the gentle folk at that time and its use produced devastatingly comic and dramatic effect. The deletion of the one word would have meant keeping 'Pygmalion' away from the common multitude to whom its title has become a household word. Today so many swear-words—some even from the underworld—are being used purposefully and enthusiastically by the playwrights but no one knows the secret of Shaw. 'Pygmalion' tells how a philosopher scientist creates an image that falls in love with him, and what to him is a scientific experiment turns out to be an exercise in the natural affection of the human heart. Higgins concentrates upon Eliza as a speech phenomenon and neglects Eliza the woman. He forgets that he has made a human being with a soul and not simply a beautiful statue capable of speaking wonderfully well. Shaw was too much of an anti-romanticist and he did not allow Eliza to be a captive of Higgins even though poetic justice demanded it.

'Heart Break House', a fantasia in Russian manner on English themes was undoubtedly influenced by Chekhov particularly his play, 'The Cherry Orchard'. But Shaw's mind was too original to take up some one else's theme in entirety and the resemblance between 'Heart Break House' and 'The Cherry Orchard' is very slight and remote. 'Heart Break House' is a play of democracy addressed to those who consider themselves to be 'self-ruled'. It is an allegory of national affairs in the hands of governors
who trust to chance, which they call Providence, without
troubling to learn their business. The play presents a
picture of cultured, leisured Europe before the war,¹ of
the leisured middle class people with whom pleasure of
music, art, literature and the theatre had supplanted hunting,
shooting and fishing. 'Heart Break House' is an idle home
inhabited by those who do not know how to live. Fifie Dunm
plans to marry Ross Mangan not for anything else but his
money and seeks captain Shotover's advice in the matter.
There is a lot of wisdom in captain Shotover's speeches in
this scene. He presents a true picture of the age when he
says to Fifie: 'I see you, the younger generation, turning
from their romance and sentiment and snobbery to money and
comfort and hard common sense. I was then times happier on
the bridge in the typhoon, or frozen into Arctic ice for months
in darkness, than you or I they have ever been. You are
looking for a rich husband. At your age I looked for hardship,
danger horror, and death, that I might feel the life in me
more intensely.'² A bomb from an enemy plane falls upon
Mangan as if to indicate the existence of some justice in
heaven. It was world war first but there is no reference to
the war in the play and the action is not fixed to time or
place. The play is international in its viewpoint and
encompasses all humanity. Fifie's symbolic marriage to
Captain Shotover—not a marriage in the flesh but in the
spirit—is Shaw's philosophy of wedding youth with wisdom to
invest life with purposiveness. 'Heart Break House' is

1. Preface to 'Heart Break House' P. 19
2. G.B. Shaw 'Heart Break House'
unnestably one of the great works of our age and one of the best, if not the best, of Shaw's Plays. 

BACK TO METHUSELAH (1921).

"Back to Methuselah" is Shaw's epic play based on the theme of creative evolution. Shaw had already dealt with this theme in "Man and Superman" but he felt that the comedic talent obscured the philosophic content in that drama and nobody noticed the new religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool. Shaw considered "Back to Methuselah" as his world-masterpiece and he propounded his new religion in the play and called it "a contribution to the modern Bible." It has often been stated that the Prefaces of Shaw's plays are more important than his plays but "Back to Methuselah" is far more alive than its Preface. Shaw seems to have written it under inspiration and at places he raises to height of eloquence unsurpassable in English drama. A Back to Methuselah" is five plays in one and can only be performed in parts. Shaw laboured at it for more than two years. The play opens in the Garden of Eden. Having found a dead form Adam learns what death is. So far Adam had not known of death and the only thought that troubled him was the thought of being with himself for ever. Now he had death to think about. The serpent whispers to Eve that there is a way of escape; that death can be overcome by birth, and in birth man can for ever renew himself. The question before

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1. A.C. Ward - Bernard Shaw  p. 134
Adam and Eve was whether to live externally or to exchange eternal life for continuance through generation. The two choose the alternative of recreation. The first part 'In the Beginning: 4004 B.C.' ends with Eve's words 'Man needn't always live by bread alone. There is something else.' The second part 'The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas' takes us to the first years after the first world war. Conrad Barnabas elaborates his discovery in a book that men could live as long as he pleased if he were to will it strongly enough. Barnabas brothers try to persuade the leading politicians to take up discovery as a national programme. A life of three hundred years is suggested to master any worthwhile vocation or to form a genuine conscience. The Third part takes us to the year A.D. 2170: 'The thing happens.' Two hundred and fifty years have passed since the discovery of Barnabas and two souls who took the idea seriously have survived the intervening 250 years. One is an archbishop and the other is the Domestic minister of Britain. The two young old people contemplate marriage when they meet. In the Fourth Part we move to A.D. 3000. By this time there are two races—short-lives and long-lives of mankind. This 'Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman' contains long speeches—one covering two and half pages—and Shaw's tendency to flippancy finds full scope in the Play. The Elderly Gentleman—one of the expiring race of short-lives—is permitted to stay in the land of the long-lives on his insistence—but he dies on the instant. 'As far as Thought Can Reach' the fifth and last part takes us to the year A.D. 31920. In this part there is much discussion of art, love, beauty and other matters. People are born fully developed from eggs. Death comes only by accidents. Old age or rather growing old takes them from pleasure to ecstasy. The Ancients are kept to be free from the

1. A.C. or B.C. Bernard Shaw. P. 192.
encumbrance of the Physical body. They wish for a day—which
seems not far off when there will be no people—only thought.
They have come to realise that the machinery of flesh and blood
can be dispensed with and life of thought—the life eternal—
would result in unceasing creativity. Lilith's famous speech
at the end is known to all lovers of literature and since there
is always a future for men the appeal of these lines will never
die.

"I am Lilith; I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and
compelled my enemy, matter, to obey a living soul. But in
enslaving life's enemy I made his life's master; for that is
the end of all slavery; and now I shall see the slave set free
and the enemy redeemed, the whirlpool become all life and no
matter. And because these infants that call themselves Ancients
are reaching out towards that, I will have patience with them
still; though I know well that when they attain it they shall become
one with me and supersede me, and Lilith will be only a legend
and a lay that has lost its meanings. Of life only there is no end;
and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many
still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably
desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its
uttermost confines, and for what may be beyond, the eye-sight
of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond."

"Back to Methuselah" was Shaw's favourite work and he
considered it to be his best work because it embodies his gospel
of creative evolution effectively. If propagation of a gospel
were the only criteria of the greatness of a dramatic work,

1. John Allen—Masters of British Drama— P. 152
2. C.B. Shaw— Back to Methuselah Part IV Lilith's final speech,
'Back to Methuselah' would certainly get first place among Shaw's works. But judged from literary and dramatic standards, 'Back to Methuselah' falls much below the best of Shaw's works. 1

There is no action in the play and the talk hardly moves it. Most of the characters fail to capture interest and it has no protagonist or single personal element, which is the essential element in drama. The theme is too impersonal and the play is a sprawling monster of uncoordinated parts. It has neither the single unity of St. Joan nor the wit and humour of 'Man and Superman'. But with all its defects, 'Back to Methuselah' will survive on the energy of its thought and the glittering language in which that thought is expressed. Only Shaw was capable of turning the world of thought upside-down and he never did it better than in 'Back to Methuselah'.

SAINT JOAN

Less than two years after 'Back to Methuselah' appeared 'Saint Joan'—considered by many as Shaw's greatest play. 2 It has been said of Shaw that his plays are inimitable and that he played hell with the plot. But 'St. Joan' is certainly a stage play with all the essentials that make a play popular. The play suggests that Shaw, had he so chosen, could have been one of the top conventional play-wrights of well-made stage plays but he had something more important to do— he had many gospel's and philosophies to propagate and so plays like 'St. Joan interested him only occasionally. The play tells us how Joan the peasant girl inspired her elders and social betters

led them triumphantly against her country's enemies. Nine months

1 R C Duffin- Quintessence of Bernard Shaw - P. 186.
after, she finds herself betrayed into hostile hands. During her trial she shows her heroic qualities and, at the last, endures martyrdom. Shaw added an Epilogue in which the course of history from Joan's martyrdom to her canonization was seen in a dream, twenty-five years after she was burned by Charles the Victorious. The epilogue was put to severe criticism on the plea that it interfered with the enjoyment of the play because it had more of brain than heart. The critics wanted the excision of the epilogue and all the references to the church and feudal system but it would have made the play just a tear-jerker and Shaw wants it to be something more than a sentimental melodrama. The Epilogue is one of the most beautiful scenes he ever wrote and without it the play would have lacked the greatness and purity it possesses. The play is a record of what mankind does to its geniuses and saints. Joan was a martyr for conscience and God's truth. She chose to put her conscience against the institutional pretensions of infallibility and Shaw himself a congenital heretic stood against all that crushed the individual soul.

St. Joan has always been popular on the stage. It has been revived dozens of times since its first production and every time it has proved to be a big success. If mastery of stagecraft were to be made the sole criteria of judgment St. Joan is certainly the best of Shaw's plays but it would be futile to dwell on the issue as to which of Shaw's plays should be called the best because superiority can be claimed by half-a-dozen plays in different respects and no true critics see the work of art from the same angle.

1. See Ward, Bernard Shaw, pp. 180-
THE APPLE CART

It would be rewarding to cast a glance on 'The Apple Cart', the last of Shaw's major plays, before we take a final stock of Shaw's achievements as a dramatist. In this play Shaw exposes the unreality of both democracy and royalty as our idealists conceive them. Democracy is no more immune to error and corruption than any other human institution. In the play, Shaw's monarch gets better of Shaw's democratically elected ministers but the victory is only a prelude to dictatorship which, even if enlightened, must end in the dictator's death or collapse. Shaw, therefore, desired sincere national efforts to train people both for Government and citizenship. King Magnus's independent attitude is disliked by the cabinet. The cabinet is in revolt. The King is asked to surrender his royal veto. The king decides to abdicate and enter politics by fighting for a seat in the Parliament at the forthcoming General Election. The decision unnerves the cabinet, the ultimatum of surrendering the veto is withdrawn and things remain as they are.

The play is in two acts and between these two long discussions there is interlude which although criticised as irrelevant and intrusive provides brilliant dramatic relief. The satirical episode which forms the subject matter of the interlude presents a glimpse of the personal life of the King. It is not germane to our topic to discuss the moral desirability or otherwise of king having a personal life besides a political one, but the piece does contain a lot of common sense and sound advice and is a masterpiece of high comedy.¹ Grintia calls herself a rose

¹ A. C. Ward - Twentieth Century Litt. - P. 100
and the queen. The King's wife a cabbage and to this the King says: 'What wiseman, if you force him to choose between doing without roses and doing without cabbages, would not secure the cabbages? King Magnus's words to Orinthia contain the wisdom of ages and only Shaw could have written them. The king tells Orinthia not to fall into the common mistake of expecting to become one flesh and one spirit. "Every star has its own orbit and between it and its nearest neighbour there is not only a powerful attraction but an infinite distance when the attraction becomes stronger than the distance the two do not embrace. They crash together in ruin. We two also have our orbits, and must keep an infinite distance between to avoid a disastrous collision, keeping our distance is the whole secret of good manners; and without good manners human society is intolerable and impossible." The interlude should, therefore, not be treated as an excrescence and in any performance it must be done for it strikes a note of relaxation and intimacy markedly different from the sustained artificiality of the rest of the play. Of course, there are other moments of relief in the play also - besides the amatory episode - such as the entry and amazing message of the American Ambassador. In fact Shaw's dramatic technique relies throughout on startling: In 'Misalliance' an aeroplane containing a Polish woman acrobat suddenly crashes into the conservatory of a middle class Surrey house. 'Heart Break House' is a house of many surprises and equally surprising is American Ambassador's entry in the Apple Cart. But these

1. G.B. Shaw - Apple Cart - Interlude.
unexpected possibilities are not fairy tales and on reflection seem reasonable. Shaw's use of humour and surprise is of a piece with his beliefs.

Shaw wrote more than dozen plays after the 'Apple Cart' but his plays written after 1930 could not reach the grandeur of his earlier works. At least, this is what the present critical opinion is and I think there is substantial truth in this opinion. But no one can predict the taste of posterity and Shaw's versatility may claim a better place for the plays written during the final period i.e. after 1930. The space does not permit me to take up the plays of Shaw's final period and for the purpose of this thesis his achievements as a playwright by 1930 provide sufficient material to determine his place among the problem playwrights of the world. We all know that Shaw is not only the greatest dramatist of the twentieth century but that as a playwright he is second only to Shakespeare.¹ And if poetic drama is excluded from our purview Shaw holds the foremost place among the dramatists of the world. The first thing that strikes one about his plays is the immense scope of his subject matter. There is hardly any problem of modern life he has not touched upon. Perhaps, no dramatist in the world has touched such a wide range² and a thorough study of Shaw's dramas can teach one more than all the University Curricula put together. Any serious student of politics, sociology, morals and religion must turn aside from the speed ways of contemporary speculation to contemplate the

¹ See C. B. Judd - Barnard Shaw - P. 36
² R. C. Duffin - The Quintessence of Barnard Shaw - P. 16
work of Shaw, in whose total achievement even the most original
Modern theory finds its source.

All great writers have some basic concepts to develop
and they can be better understood in context with these concepts.
For example, Browning can be better understood if we keep his
famous assertion in mind. 'Little else but the development of
the soul is worth study', and Keats is better appreciated if we
go to his keeping in mind that he had 'loved the principle of
beauty in all things'. Shaw provides such a key note in his
Preface to Pygmalion when he says 'that Art should never be
anything else but didactic'. Shaw preferred a pit of philosophers
to one of kings and he did not want to write a single sentence
for Art's sake alone. Shaw never wrote for entertainment alone
and even then if there is plenty of entertainment value in Shaw
it is because of wit-soaked fun with which he dresses his characters
and situations. But Shaw's fun is not hollow. It requires deep
scrutiny. Like the He-Ancient's advice to the Newly Born one
should search for a hidden truth when a thing is funny. What
makes Shaw's work outstanding is the penetrating vision of the
writer. It is not so much because of his philosophy but because
of his inimitable power of searching to the very roots of things
that Shaw's plays will always remain a favourite of the scholars
and above average readers. He gave his dramas some of the
descriptive power of the novel not only by writing long Prefaces
but by giving more details and past history of characters and in
this way created a wide circle of readers for the drama besides
the usual theatre goers. With the insurance of a double public
for the drama the author became bigger than the actor and a play

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got recognition for its worth and did not depend too much on the lusty tongued rhetorics of stars and actors. Shaw had to fight his way against the established playwrights of the second half of the 19th century – Dion Boucicault, Sydney Grundy, H.A. Jones and A.W. Pinero – for whom theatre was nothing but a place for whiling away two and a half hours. The threadbare stuff of stage convention was replaced by live material drawn from current problems by Shaw. He made a stage 'a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armory against despair and dullness and a temple of the Ascent of Man.'

Learned opinion all over the world has veered round to the conclusion that George Bernard Shaw is the greatest dramatic genius since Shakespeare and that at least half a dozen of his dramas, if not more, will be read and staged for so long as man does not relapse into barbarism. Two thousand five hundred years have elapsed since Plato put down his wisdom for generations and that wisdom is still the beacon star for the striving humanity. Two thousand five hundred years hence the same will be said of Shaw's wisdom contained in his plays and Prefaces. Not to have read Shaw is to miss the best food for thought that the modern age can offer.

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1. A.C. Ward – Twentieth Century Litt P. 102
St. John Ervine will be chiefly remembered for his four
realist plays namely 'Mixed Marriage' (1911), 'Jane Glegg' (1913),
John Ferguson (1915), and The Ship (1922). Of these four the first
three are certainly of high rank and deserve to be placed among the
best problem plays of English literature. Of course, his other plays
too, contain sparks of his genius, and proved quite successful on
the stage. 'The Lady of Belmont' (1927) a costume drama, although
based on remote times, has many relevant points for our age as well.
It tells us 'that might have happened to Shylock and Portia, Lorenzo
and Jessica, some years after the clashing words at the court scene
and the lyrical strains heard in the midst of moonlight at Portia's
pension'. 'Mary, Mary quite contrary' (1923) and 'The First Mrs Fraser'
are delightful comedies. They, like 'Robert's Wife', (1937) are a
little off the realist school and have Barrieque flavour. Ervine
continued to write as late as 1957 but so far as his association with
the realist trend is concerned it can safely be said that he did
not write anything worthwhile after 'The Ship' (1922). So for the
purpose of the study we will concentrate only on those plays which
are considered to be his best works. In these Belfast plays, John
Ervine takes up lower middle class life with all its conventions,
prejudices, narrowness as well as idealism and nobility.

MIXED MARRIAGE.

The first of his plays 'Mixed Marriage' presents modern
class-war side by side with the tension and conflict of Catholic
and Protestant faiths. In fact, in St. John Ervine, the class
struggle cuts across many other older prejudices. Industrialisation

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2. A. Nicoll English Drama 1800-1920 Page 409
3. Ibid.
has brought in its wake social disparities. On one side, there is the small class of bosses and on the other there is a much bigger class of 'have-nots.' The struggle between the masters and labourers is assuming serious proportions and despite tall talks of socialism the class war is in full swing. Today, having attained the ideal of a welfare state, England may not have that keen sense of class struggle which prevailed in the second decade of the twentieth century before the First World War. But in 1911, St. John Ervine was presenting a real picture of English society when he took up the theme of a strike and the living up of masters and labourers. The class war cuts across the struggle of the Catholics and Protestants so truthfully presented in the drama. The hero, John Reiny, comes to know that his son, Hugh, is engaged to a Catholic girl and this knowledge he hatred for Catholics who were behind the strike undergoes a change. Hugh's beloved, Nora Byrne, the Catholic girl, is killed by a stray bullet shot by one of the soldiers called in to suppress the civil discord. Reiny, the hero, finds nothing but the ruin about him and his last words are full of majestic grandeur and reflect the futility of dividing humanity into patent brands. 'Mixed Marriage' is a tragedy of human passions and this tragedy is all the more intensified because all efforts by sincere individuals to escape the hard conventions of a narrow society end in utter futility because of irrational and foolish prejudices. That 'Mixed Marriage' is a great play becomes clear when we compare it with another play on a similar theme written by Mr. L.J. Munkhouse in 1924. 'First Blood' also pits militant labourers against stern masters. The deaths of Phyllis and Lionel are more or less in the same pattern as the death of Nora by a stray bullet. But in Ervine's 'Mixed Marriage' the death
of Nora does not form a part of sentimental stuff, whereas in Mr. Monkhouse's 'First Blood' there is a lot of melodrama and sentimentality in the garb of realism. Mr. Irvine has the novelty of imagination and a surer grasp over his characters and situations whereas Mr. Monkhouse seems to be unconsciously imitating his.

JANE GLEGG

'Jane Glegg' which followed 'Mixed Marriage' again took up a piece of real life from lower middle class society. But there is no class-war or religious animosity in it. The play presents the greatness of a woman's character in contrast to the meanness of her husband's and in doing so it lays bare the monotony and ugliness of lower middle class with the objectivity of a great dramatist. The economic stranglehold having too tight a grip allows no care-free breathing and this results in diseased thinking and lopped development of personality. The play reveals a world of constant misery and all-round depression. The soul-destroying aspects of lower-middle class life become truthfully alive on the stage in the wretched existence of characters portrayed in the drama. But Jane Glegg the drama would have been too much of mental strain without a ray of light. The character of Jane Glegg is one of the best drawn characters of English Problem Plays because she is a stern realist and has the courage to stare life full in the face and rise to moral heights in the face of disaster. Her mean and weak-willed husband is not a patch on her. He is deprived to deserve any pity. The littleness of his character may partially have been the result of certain socio-economic factors but he makes no effort to rise above the circumstances and surrenders himself entirely to that evil.

2. A. Nicoll British Drama - P. 388
genius, 'the book'. Jane Glegg, having watched the vicious fall of her husband and having seen through his smallness of character adopts the only right course open to a woman of character who has the courage to face life. The cringing husband is sent from the house to live his own life and Jane Glegg decides to fight life afresh and refuses to be borne down into the mire that surrounds her.

But, it must be admitted that the play is so life-like, so naturalistic, that it had no theatrical excitement and only the character of Jane Glegg saved it. St. John Ervine does not depend much on incidents and novel situations for intensified dramatic effects. Many other dramatists do so because the characters drawn by them fail to carry conviction with us and so they make all efforts to create contrived plots to engage our attention. What is known as the subtlety of plot is, in fact, nothing but the cleverness of story-telling and this cleverness - admirable though it is - does not necessarily ensure literary greatness.

JULIA ELLIOTT

St. John Ervine can draw convincing characters of tremendous dignity and the forceful personality of these characters engages our attention so well that minor weaknesses in the plot are often overlooked. 'John Ferguson' whose name is based on the title of the play that followed 'Jane Glegg' is such a character. With all his rudeness he is a tower of strength and the blows of Fate may break but not bend him. His son being in America, he finds it hard to keep his head above water but he would not allow his daughter, Jennifer, to enter a loveless marriage with James Cessar even if it means dispensing with his farm. But Fate was not satisfied to give only a single blow because Hardy's concept of Fate must have some ground to stand upon and so fresh misery comes upon him then his

daughter is raped by his greatest enemy, Cicero. Caesar is arrested for the murder of Cicero although, despite his declared intention of murdering the seducer, his courage had failed him and he had come back without firing a shot. But the seducer was found murdered and John Ferguson was not convinced of Caesar's innocence. Andrew, Hannah's brother, has earned enough money in America to insure trouble free days for John Ferguson but then he is his father's son and cannot keep the secret too long because that would mean sending innocent Caesar to death. He announces that it was he who had killed Cicero and Ferguson. Tremendous dignity asserts itself when he sends Andrew on the terrible mission of confession. Thus we see that both 'Jane Glegg' and 'John Ferguson' are sustained by the force of their central characters. In 'Mixed Marriage' there is too much of class-war and the play deals with social forces and the resultant responses in the conventional grooves of thought. In 'John Ferguson' there is no diversion and no didactic element. It is a masterpiece of the domestic drama and should be placed with works like Heywood's 'A Woman Killed with Kindness' and Hasfield's 'The Tragedy of Man.'

**THE SHIP**

St. John Ervine could not keep the height reached in 'Jane Glegg' and 'John Ferguson' in his next play 'The Ship'. In this play he presents the problem of man's domination by modern gadgets and machinery. In 1922 when he wrote this drama the menace of over-mechanization had started its de-humanizing process and man was turning to be a clog or a screw in the gigantic mechanism of State-craft. He was getting devoid of all that is human and machines—his invented slaves—were forcing him to be a machine himself—cold, callous and

1. A. Nicoll—British Drama——P. 369
2. Ibid., P 369
computerised. The relevance of this theme to our day is all the more telling because during the last five decades machines have registered a clear victory over man and the pulsating warmth of intense relationship has changed to set patterns of impersonalised behaviour. Man must revolt against this tyranny or else be doomed for ever. This theme although quite timely and forceful has failed to make 'The Ship' as great as the earlier plays because it has brought too much of obstructive didacticism in the work. It is true that Shaw considered all art to be didactic and most of his plays are illuminating discussions on the stage. But, then, there was Shawian wit and humour to save them from becoming treatises - and 'The Ship' has not got much of it either. John Irvine's strong point - his masterly portrayal of stern and dignified characters - is missing from 'The Ship'. The stuff that went into the making of 'Jane Glegg' and 'Join Ferguson' has not been used here and the result is that 'The Ship' fails to be a drama and is more of an exercise in academic theorisation.

St. John Irvine's plays, despite the unrelieved middle-class misery they present, contain some element of hope and larger life and this is what makes them great. Modern civilisation has grown so big, so complex and so magnificent that it has lost all personalised touch and it grinds men under its weight slowly but surely. The word of romance fails to satisfy even children of our age whose scientific training shuns anything irrational and illogical. But even a realist of St. John Irvine's stature knows that life is neither a logic nor a formula and that men is too small to fight the social forces that operate with the fury and inevitability of Fate. The only thing a good man can do is to fight hard and not to allow himself to be borne down in the surrounding mire. And in doing this

even if he is defeated, he is even more triumphant because he inspires us to live for something higher than one's individual self. St. John Ervine has presented the joys, sorrows, failings and aspirations of lower-middle class life with the sure touch of a realist and in this respect he stands in the forefront of the 20th century dramatists. In his dramas, he however seems to glorify middle age at the expense of youth. The predatory instincts of the young have been presented with unsympathetic treatment and his plays would have, "carried more conviction if it had been made clearer that youth, even when most self-seeking, has a point of view that should in fairness, be ably and fully expressed in any play in which youth is a chief protagonist. St. Joan of Arc may, however, get support from a no of modern social thinkers who feel that the youth has lost all directions of that everything settled should not be sought to be unsettled. anyway, St. John Ervine's place among problem playwrights is secure.

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1. Lynton Hudson - The Twentieth Century Drama - P. 47.
HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER

H.G. Barker, an experienced actor and producer and an authority on Shakespeare, joined the front rank of realist playwrights in 1901 with his well known works 'The Marrying of ANN LETTIE'. He had done much to establish Shaw by producing Shaw's plays and in that process he realised that his creative talent was forceful enough to seek for itself some other outlet besides acting and stage management and so he decided to take to pen. Like Shaw, H.G. Barker believed in absolute realism in matter and form and in fact his belief in realism was a shade intenser than Shaw's because he thought a play to be an excerpt from life presented without partisanship or bias. It can be said that H.G. Barker like Galsworthy took to Naturalism rather than 'realism' and he tried to present life as it is 'both fair and foul no more, no less'. Realism, as we have seen, came as a reaction to the make-believe world of romanticism and it provided drama with the real stuff of life. But it was only an approximation to truth rather than truth itself because the representation of life and nature becomes are only through the process of concentration and selection. Naturalism, on the other hand, insists on photographic objectivity and advocates impersonal point of view. It is, however, impossible to be absolutely impersonal and a creative mind is not a camera. 'Naturalism' has, therefore, not been able to stand on its own legs although it has helped to provide realism with certain shades of the sterner aspects of life. Now, H.G. Barker, although an ardent Shavian, was not an imitator of Shaw and

1. Victor Hugo - Preface to Cromwell (1828), P. 11
2. Lynton Madison - The Twentieth Century Drama, P. 26
even if he chose to be one, he could not be because he had his own mind to speak and he could not put on the motley as Shaw did. But like Shaw, Parker revolted against the repression of the individual by the intimidation of Victorian conventions and in 'The Marrying of Ann Leete (1899) we find George and Ann Leete finding their wills and getting themselves freed from the convention and hypocrisy perpetrated in the name of culture. The gospel of 'life force' so amusingly yet forcefully presented in 'Man and Superman' forms, in a way the subject matter of 'The Marrying of Ann Leete. H.G. Parker makes George and Ann Leete break the convention of getting married according to the old settled set-up of status, convenience and class. They refuse to accept marriage as a well calculated piece of business to ensure material success in life. Instead, they desire marriage to be a soul satisfying experience. In Shawian terminology, they can be called to be the vigorous agents of life-force. Their elder sister fell a prey to the arranged marriage of convenience and, despite all material prosperity, knew no real happiness in life.³ She flaunted the big name of Lady Cotteshow and lived in the midst of all that money could offer and yet she never knew what fulfilment means. There was only misery and soul-barrenness for her. George and Ann Leete have a will of their own and refuse to be crushed under the cruel corporate will of the conventional set-up. George, shunning all considerations of class and status, woos a common farmer's girl Dolly Crowe. The gardener, John Abod, who was inclined towards Dolly Crowe, is beaten in the rivalry, because the girl's heart goes

³ A.C. Gupta - The Problem Play, P. 235
to George. There is a hell of protest and indignation but nothing stops George, and Dolly becomes his wife. George emerges victorious and asserts his individuality over the so called senseless sanctity perpetrated in the name of culture. Ann Leete is not to be beaten either. Her father desires her to marry Lord John Corp, a man of high status and immense riches. Ann is half-inclined but she does not know why her whole personality does not vibrate at the thought of marrying eminently desirable Lord John Corp. In fact, she is under the grip of something bigger than herself and she is on the look out for someone to make her understand the full meaning of love and life and there comes John Abod, the gardener, with the news that Dolly Crowe, George's wife, had become a mother. Something happens to Ann and in that moment she realises a truth which she had not realised in its fullness earlier. Forgetful of all conventional consideration, she persuades the gardener to marry her. John Abod had missed Dolly Crowe only to get a better partner and Ann Leete deals a deadly blow to cultural hypocrisy. They are the ideal match and through them life-force will continue its triumphant march upward.

'The Marrying of Ann Leete' was A.C. Parker's first serious attempt to depict 'the secret life', and he hit pretty hard on the shackles and prejudices that bound the human soul. The greatest problem in life is, perhaps, the problem of human relationship, especially the problem of love and sex and no where the strangle hold of convention crushes the human spirit so much as in this sphere.¹ A.C. Parker offers the correct

¹ Freud - Dreams - Origin & Interpretations, P. 31
solution in 'The Marrying of Ann Leete' and our only regret is that the tribe of young men and women, moulded on the pattern of George and Ann Leete has not become plentiful and foolish considerations still rule the freedom of the bed-chamber. If in 'The Marrying of Ann Leete' we find a few touches of fancifulness, it is only to make the realism more effective. In his next play 'The Voysey Inheritance', J.G. Barker takes up the question of absolute honesty. "He scored his first unequivocal success in the Voysey Inheritance." The theme of 'The Marrying of Ann Leete' is somewhat similar to the theme of life force dealt with so amusingly by Shaw and in 'The Voysey Inheritance', there is the same problem as in Shaw's 'Mrs. Warren's Profession'. The predicament of Edward Voysey is the same as that vivie Warren, Edward comes to know that all the money of his father Mr. Voysey has been earned through dishonest business and has, in a way, been stolen from the clients of the firm. Mr. Voysey tells Edward that these frauds were started by his father and that he inherited the firm he had no option but to continue in the line. Had he chosen to be honest, he would have gone bankrupt. Moreover, it would have meant exposing his father's dishonesty to the world. Edward is an idealist and believes in absolute honesty. This is what true christianity teaches and this is what all religions of the world stand for. Edward is appalled to think that every penny spent on the education of himself and his three brothers has been earned through dishonest business. Besides, the lavish style of living and the handsome provision made for the large family is the outcome of clever cheatings. What should Edward do? Should he consider his father to be worthy of respect? It

- Compton Dickett - A History of English Literature, P.37
is true that every successful businessman prides himself on his capacity to manipulate the funds in such a way as to get the dishonesty legalised, but is this the true and ideal way of life? Edward would have preferred to go to prison rather than continue the sham. But the tragedy of life is that our ideals die the moment they get down the pulpit and those who are exceptionally sincere have hardly anything to live by. E.G.
Barker beautifully presents the sense of crushing and the futility of higher ideals. It is not with one big stroke that the whole mansion of idealism cracks down but the strokes continue - mild yet persistent - and gradually the sharp edges of idealism are smothered. There remains only a vast dullness of what we call compromise which is another name for skillful dishonesty. Mr. Voysey dies and leaves a hundred thousand pounds and Edward decides to disclose the situation to all the members of the family who having returned from the funeral assemble in the home. There are Edward's three brothers the one cynical, self-interested barrister, the other a major in the army, and third an artist; the wives of the two latter, two sisters, one of whom - Beatrice Voysey is engaged to be married with the promise of a substantial dowry; Edward's fiancee, Alice Maillard; and, of course Mrs. Voysey. Edward tells them the reality and asks them to surrender their legacies. But books on morality do not govern human conduct and his invocation to duty has a mixed reception. The author fails to offer a clear-cut solution because even if he desired to offer one, there is none in real life. E.G. Barker presents every aspect of the problem and leaves the public to draw such moral

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1. A. Nicoll - British Drama, p.374
as it please. It is, however, in the words of Alice Maitland that we get the author's real sentiments. She comforts broken Edward Voysey and implores him to adopt a compromising attitude. In our present day set-up no one can claim absolute honesty and one who takes to extreme course is bound to suffer and perish. Edward's starry flights are pushed down to dash against the hard realities but then what else is the solution? The sacrifices of even the greatest individuals such as Socrates, Buddha or Christ have brought about hardly any change in the unprincipled pursuit of wealth. All idealists like Edward must learn to live with reality. The solution contains a ring of tragedy because it is the nullification of human ideals but E.G. Barker assumes no moralist stance and leaves things as they are. He lives up to his belief that the theatre should make its audience think.

That E.G. Barker, like his novelist-dramatist friend Galsworthy, was pushing 'realism towards Naturalism' becomes clear when we take up his next important work 'Waste' for our analysis. This play, as the title suggests, shows how the vast powers of Henry Trebell go waste because of his xen-attachment with Amy O'Connell. In fact, E.G. Barker presents the problem of two individuals with different instinctive make-ups coming together and in the process causing misery and destruction to each other. Amy O'Connell is a woman with a beautiful exterior but without any motherly instinct. Henry Trebell is a gifted individual with a public image. He loves to create and hopes for a future. He is a philoprogenitive man.

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1. Arvind Ghosh - The Mystery of Yoga, P.79
2. A. Nicoll - English Drama 1900-1930, P.393
The two come together under the grip of life-force and a child is to be born. A separated woman as she was, she thought of saving Trebell from any kind of social stigma. But life doesn't run the way we like it to run. Amy O'Connell is mentally unprepared for assuming the role of motherhood. She goes in for an operation—something considered illegal during those days without the knowledge of Henry Trebell who was to play a great political innings—and the quack's knife provides her freedom not from the duties of motherhood but from the world itself. Both the unborn and the would-be mother die because the operation proves fatal and Henry Trebell's career is ruined. How could a politician—all his mental brilliance notwithstanding—move up when there is a scandal to drag him down. Trebell faces cold looks all around. His heart is broken. How lovingly had her though of the child and what grand plans he had made for the future. All was ruined—not a ray of hope anywhere. Henry Trebell commits suicide. 'Waste' is all gone and the crowded do not allow even a fleeting sunshine. Henry Trebell—a fine specimen of mankind—is laid to waste in the prime of his life. What a pity! But whose fault it was? who should be called the Villain of the piece? Amy O'Connell—certainly not—she was helpless—she was made that way. Perhaps, it was all destined. It had to be 'Waste' is a tragedy on Shakespearean pattern with the change that the place of Fate has been taken by the monster of a ruthless social system which reveals in repressing the natural urges.

1. Sir Ifor Evans — A Short History of English Drama, P. 173
2. A. Nicoll — British Drama P. 375
Why should Trebell have his intellectual view of love and sexual intimacy? Trebell and Amy had yielded to the irresistible power of life-force, but the moral code cannot be allowed to be broken by cynical individuals. The society must have its toll of those who break its accepted moral code.

In 'The Madras House', a much more complex play, H.G. Parker takes up the problem of social forces. 'The Madras House' along with 'The Vesper Inheritance' exposes some of the most gruesome aspects of modern civilization. H.G. Parker's indictment of certain spheres of modern life is, however, not born of 'a holier than thou' attitude. He desires the theatre audience to ponder and seek a solution or at least to see things in their true perspective. The six grown up daughters Laura, Minnie, Clara, Emma, Julia and Jane - of Mr. Henry Huxtable home to live according to the 19th Century Middle class morality and this means a life of unrelied monotony and gloom. Of the six, the two youngest, Julia and Jane possess a tendency to keep out of the rut but they have no courage to break the accepted norms at least openly. The first Act of 'The Madras House' has been hailed as the masterpiece of craftsmanship. In the second Act we enter the large drapery establishment of Roberts and Huxtables.' Here, too, we find a large number of saleswomen, leading a life of frustration and misery. They have no idea of what Miss Chancellor desires them to live and Miss Chancellor is the personification of Edwardian middle class morality. Of course, there is Miss Yates - she prides herself on the uninhibited display of sex-instinct and its procreative function. Miss Yates is not Miss O'Connell, she considers...

1. A.C. Ward - Twentieth Century Literature, P.118
motherhood even as a result of chance acquaintance, as fulfilment.

The third Act of 'The Madras House' as well as the third Act of 'The Voysey Inheritance' are among the finest single acts of modern drama. The third Act of 'The Madras House' is a perfect example of the intellectual discussion play. It is in effect a debate on the status of woman her present and her future, considered morally, aesthetically and economically.

H.G. Barker did not write many dramas and his fame mainly rests on the four plays discussed here. Having written these four plays and a couple of one-acts he published his 'Farewell to the Theatre' in 1917. He wrote two dramas more - 'The Secret Life' (1922) and 'His Majesty' (1923) but these plays are not even a patch on his earlier works and they seem to have been written with no thought of theatrical presentation. In modern times even his much talked of plays 'The Voysey Inheritance' and 'The Madras House' have not proved much of a success on the stage. Perhaps, Barker has that rare quality which can be appreciated only by a selected few. It is, therefore, certain that H.G. Barker alongside Galsworthy will always occupy a prominent place as one of the Chief architects of the pure variety of the Problem Play.

JOHN GALSWORTHY.

Of the two problem play-wrights - G.B. Shaw and Galsworthy who got Nobel Prize G.B. Shaw was certainly prolific as a dramatist but Galsworthy was equally distinguished as both novelist and playwright. Shaw had failed as a novelist whereas Galsworthy attained rare excellence in that field. But as a dramatist Shaw's range was much wider than Galsworthy's. Galsworthy confined

1. A.C. Gupta - The Problem Play, P-941
2. Lynton Hudson - The Twentieth Century Drama, P-28
3. A. Nicoll - English Drama 1900-1930, P-362
himself to the presentation of stern aspects and grim realities of social life without introducing wit and humour to lighten the gloom. But the plays of Galsworthy have more of thematic unity and, perhaps, artistic objectivity than the plays of any other Problem Playwrights. According to Galsworthy a realist artist is he whose temperamental pre-occupation is with the revelation of the actual inter-relating spirit of life, character and thought with a view to enlighten himself and others, whereas a romantic artist's temperamental purpose is the invention of a tale or design with a view to delight himself and others. But Galsworthy's aim to enlighten rather than to delight himself and others, does not mean that Galsworthy was a preacher on the stage. Of course, like Shaw, Galsworthy, too, believed that art should be didactic but he knew full well that propaganda plays are seldom popular and that art is not the skill of drum beating. Shelley, the great romantic, knew this truth full well when he asserted that the business of Art is not to do good by moral precept but to invigorate the imagination to behave itself better in consequence. This is what Galsworthy's plays aim at. The wrong headedness of traditional beliefs and meaningless class prejudices have been exposed in his plays only to make people think that pity themselves for their littleness. Galsworthy's didasicism is not obtrusive and he believes in

1. Galsworthy - The Inn of Tranquility, P.23
2. Lynton Hudson - The Twentieth Century Drama, P.31
diagnosing the disease rather than prescribing a remedy. But
those who suffer and get crushed under the iron wheel of that
pitiless tyrant called society seem to lay a greater claim to
the author's sympathy. Galsworthy's training as a barrister
taught him to use the legal method in his plays. He pleads for
the prosecution as well as for the defence and in doing so he
tries to be absolutely honest devoid of the least emotional
involvement. Talking of the technique and purpose of the drama
he wrote: 'Let me try to eliminate any bias and see the whole
thing as should an umpire - one of those pure beings - in white
costs, purged of all prejudices, passions and predilections of
mankind. Only from an impersonal point of view, if there be
such a thing, am I going to get even approximately to the truth.'

SILVER BOX

Hundred percent objectivity in the field of art is a
myth but Galsworthy succeeded in good measure to live up to the
standard of dispassionate upholding. Let us have a look at his
important plays and see for ourselves how he performs the feat.
In 'Silver Box', Galsworthy's first play, he exposes the myth
that law has only one eye and that all equal before the eye of
law. Jones and Jack BarGhick should in a just society, have
received the same punishment but circumstances will it otherwise.
The first is a thief without money or connection whereas the
second is a rich man's son and so different standards of justice-
determined by social forces, are to be used and the pity is that
not much can be done about it. Despite all talk of idealism the
society has remained so and, perhaps, it will remain so.

1. A.Ward - Twentieth Century Literature, P.101
2. John Galsworthy - Quoted by Lynton Hudson - The
   Twentieth Century Drama, S.24-5
STRIKE

In 'Strike' the directors of the 'Trenartha Tin Plate Works' and its employees remain dead-locked in a bitter strife. Worker's families may starve but David Roberts, their leader, is too stubborn to consider any concession. The industry may collapse but John Anthony, the leader of directors, would not think of considering any concession. John Anthony's son, Edgar, himself one of the directors, wants that things should not be pushed too far. He protests before the meeting. There is great distress among those strikers - There's no necessity of pushing things so far in the face of all this suffering - It's cruel - - - This may mean starvation to men's wives and families.'

But his father, John Anthony, the dictatorial chairman of the Board of Directors, believes that if he gives in to the demands of the strikers - and he is not impasse to the misery the strike has brought the men - he and his co-directors will fail in the duty they owe to capital. Roberts, the leader of the strikers, despite his wife's plaintive request not to be too stubborn and think of the women and children - believes that capital is a heartless, stone-hearted monster that must be fought for the sake of all those who come after throughout all time. Even the death of Robert's wife - although introduced not for any logical demand of the drama fails to make him any the less stubborn. And what is the result - the directors vote to compromise and Anthony resigns his chairmanship saying very well, "I resign - - fifty years? - - you have disgraced me, gentlemen.
Bring in the Man. The delegation enters and the spokesman of the strikers is Harness and not Roberts. The terms are going to be settled when Roberts hurries into the room. He first apologizes for his delay, because of 'something that has happened,' and then, before Harness can speak, declares, 'Go ye back to London, gentlemen. We have nothing for you. By no jot or title do we abate our demands ... ye may break the body, but ye cannot break the spirit...'

But he learns that he is no longer speaking for the men; they have rejected him, just as the Directors have rejected Anthony, and he finds himself alone. With his humiliated face, says Roberts: 'An so they've done us both down, Mr. Anthony' struggles up from his chair and the two men face each other for a few minutes in mutual defiance and fanatic stubbornness, yet, at the same time, in grudging respect. Then Anthony, aided by Boid and Edgar, walks slowly from the room. Roberts goes. Says Harness to Anthony's Secretary, "A woman dead, and the two best men both broken!" The Secretary adds: 'D' you know, Sir, these terms are the very same we drew up together, you and I, and put to both sides before the fight began? All this ... and what for?" says Harness sarcastically: 'that's where the fun comes in." Thus we see that 'Strife' leaves on our minds that tremendous impression of waste which Professor Bradley so ably discerns in the Shakespearean drama.

1. John Galsworthy - Strife, Act-III P.70
2. Ibid. P.71
3. Ibid. P.73
4. Ibid. P.73
5. Ibid. P.74
6. Accidolli - British Drama, P.371
JUSTICE

But this should not be mistaken for pessimism. Galsworthy repeatedly points out that social structure needs a change and that very many of the rules are wrong. For example in Justice Fair's tragedy is a direct outcome of certain evil practices sanctioned in the name of law. William Fair, a twenty-three year old sensitive junior law clerk is trapped in a small embarrasement. He stole the money in a moment of aberration to help Muth Honey Will, wife of a drunken brute and her two children. He is sent to penal servitude for three years. The rigours of Solitary confinement break Fair's will to live because Fair is essentially a good man and surrounded by soulless criminals he finds life unbearable. Even after his release, circumstances go against him and Fair jumps breaking his neck. Muth Honey will kneels by Fair's body and cries endearments. At last Fair lies safe with gentle Jesus.

Thus we see that Fair is the victim of the clumsy mechanism of English Penal system. In fact, there is something of the power of Fate in the complex social structure and its supporting laws. The power of law may protect but it also crushes down the unfortunate and the innocent. From Fair's Lawyer, stresses this point beautifully when he says, 'Justice is machine that, when someone has given it the starting push, rolls on of itself. Is this young man to be ground to pieces - under this machine for an act which at the worst was one of weakness? Imprison him - - and I affirm to you that he will be lost' and Fair is certainly lost. It is not because of other characters

1- Galsworthy = Justice Act-IV, P.77
2- Galsworthy = Justice Act-II, P.35-7
in the drama that Falder's tragedy is climaxed but because he
is caught in a vicious system which transcends all characters
in the drama. Falder receiving a perfectly fair trial and
even his employer who handed him over to the police had no
special vindictiveness in him. The prison officials also treat
him with conscientious humanity. Who then is to be blamed for
Falder's tragedy? Galsworthy seems to convey the idea that
there is something of evil nature invisible yet omnipresent, in
the modern civilization itself. The will of the people has, in
a way assumed independent force and it tramples over many
innocent victims in its arrogant march. The fate of Falder
makes us contemplate the demonic presence of some unknown
spirit in the social set-up and we experience a feeling of awe.
Galsworthy's characters are all ordinary, common place men and
women and there is perfect naturalness of dialogue in his dramas.
He alone among the problem playwrights seem capable of creating
the illusion in the spectator of actually taking part in the
happenings of the drama. It is true that despite his talk to
the contrary, Galsworthy could not dispense with emotion in
his dramas but still the restraint of objectivity is very much
there. He succeeded in presenting certain aspects of real
life with utmost verisimilitude on the stage. This is how
Max Beerbohm has described the reaction of the audience on the
first production of Galsworthy's 'Justice. Regarding Trial
scene he writes: "The curtain rises on the second Act; and
presently we have forgotten the foot-light and are in a court

1- A. Nicoll - British Drama, P.70
of law. At a crucial moment in the cross examination of a witness, somebody at the reports table drops a heavy book on the floor. An angry murmur of 'SH!' runs through the court, and we ourselves have joined in it. The jury retires to consider its verdict and instantly throughout the court there is a buzz of conversation - aye, and throughout the auditorium, too, we are all of us, as it were, honorary 'supers'. This allusion to reality is Galsworthy's greatest contribution to English Drama. 'Justice' moved the then Home Secretary Mr. Winston Churchill so much that within short time he took steps to abolish the practice of solitary confinement in English Prison. Sir Churchill who was to become the most famous man in England after sometime, could not bear Falder's nervous break down caused by 'solitary confinement' and he saw, while watching the drama, that all those who sat around him were also similarly moved. So Galsworthy's art did bring about a change which would have taken pretty long to be effected had there been no staging of 'Justice'.

'THE PIGEON' AND 'THE ELDEST SON'

In 'The Pigeon' the writer takes up the question of the vagabonds and the poor. Here he 'puts the idea that we are all human beings and not physiological specimens, and all reform uninspired by sympathy and understanding is dead wood in our times'. 'The Eldest Son' deals with the problem of morality from different class-angles. Here, too, the atmosphere of gloom pervades and we come across tragic waste and suffering.

1- Max Beerbohm - Quoted by Lynton Hudson- 'The Twentieth Century Drama', P.25
2- A. Bigoll - 'English Drama 1900-1920', P.400
3- Eric Gillje - 'Introduction to the Ten Famous Plays by John Galsworthy', P.25
caused by the English laws and conventions. His plays expose the tyranny of society and tragic element is worked out by social injustice and human perversity.

**THE FUGITIVE**

In 'The Fugitive' he takes up the problem of ill-matched union. Galsworthy did not believe in orthodox sacramental view of marriage. He pleaded for liberalisation of the divorce law which required the proof of adultery as the basis of separation. Clare Bedmond the heroine of 'The Fugitive' feels her married life to be no better than the union of two animals, one of them unwilling. But all the attempt of the sensitive woman to break the laws and conventions of society prove futile. She fails to secure economic independence because she is soft and temperamentally unfit for routine drudgery. Clare is 'neither hardy nor coarse-fibred enough for the cross-winds of life.' Utter desperation drives Clare to drink poison with her wine and her tragedy symbolises the ill-effects of unhappy unions. In the hands of a sentimental dramatist Clare, perhaps, would have been spared the death and Kenneth Malise, whose protection she had accepted after deserting her husband, would have shed his subsequent coldness and accepted her as companion or there would have been some other contrived end. But the essence of the 'Fugitive' is that the wife does not go back to the husband with whom she has discovered her incompatibility. In the absence of economic independence for a woman who was not ready to be a

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plaything of man and who was too soft to stand against hard realities, death was, at least in Galsworthy's naturalism, the only course left. The play made all sensible people think afresh about the institution of marriage and necessity of liberalising the divorce-law. It left deep impression on thinkers like Joseph Conrad and Laurence Irving.

THE NOB

'The Mob' is Galsworthy's assertion of an individual's right to think and act freely. Stephen More stands for the high principles of international morality and justice. He would not support a civilised and powerful country like his swallow up a small and weak State. But his higher principles fail to convince any one, not even his wife. Katherine More holds that the more land and power her country has the better it would be for the world. The spirit of national chauvinism grips every one and support for military action stands synonymous with patriotism. Stephen More is caught in the Whirlpool of Mobocracy and he is driven to his doom. His connections cause him the loss of his career, reputation and domestic happiness. But the Mob-frenzy, once got in motion, does not stop halfway. Stephen More is killed in a scuffle. But once he departs from the scene for ever the public opinion undergoes a change. It has always been the way of the world. His ideas are now abstractions and his concept of internationalism a sweet pastime for intellectual discussion. Stephen More gets a monument and is raised to sainthood. 'The Mob' is indeed, a forceful presentation of the stupidity of what one may call unrighteous and blind devotion.

1. N.C. Gupta - Problem Play, p.312
to one's country or cause. This blind devotion devoid of all rationality expresses itself in the mob frenzy and demands the blood of those who show fidelity to high ideals. In the true Galsworthyan style it assures the power of Fate and crushes all that comes in its way. The martyrdom of Stephen More is scathing indictment of the concept of narrow nationalism which seeks sustenance from gun-powder. Of course, Galsworthy always avoided a propagandist attitude and he never considered himself to be a reformer. But all his plays do have not problems and resultant conflicts but definite indications of how these problems could have been avoided.

THE FOUNDATIONS

A large number of Galsworthy's plays such as 'The Skin Game', 'Loyalties', 'The Foundations' deal in one form or the other with class feelings and the grievous wrongs caused by this social prejudice. These plays clearly show how different moral considerations govern different classes in society. In 'The Foundations' Galsworthy suggests that society cannot be shaped denovo either by wholesale destruction or by adopting a patronising spirit towards the poor. The Lemmy's wait for a bloody revolution to set matters right and beginning again from the foundations is not convincing. Similarly Lord William's patronising attitude and his sentimental talk of being a bit more kind cannot help remove class prejudices. It is only through mutual understanding on equal footing that the caste feelings will be buried deep.

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1. A.C. Gupta - Problem Play, 1931.
THE SKIN GAME

'The Skin Game' takes up the theme of the social recognition of the neo-rich commercial class by the old established aristocracy. Galsworthy, however, seems to be sympathetically inclined towards Hillierist, the old established aristocratic landed proprietor, than Hornblower, the new rich manufacturer. Both the sides, however, have, however, been well represented and the theme still holds good and has not lost relevance with the time. The last words of Hillierist contain a lot of wisdom for all those who decide to settle issues of human relationship by taking up a fight.

'Hillierist - When we begin this fight, we had clean hands - are they clean now? What's gentility worth if it can't stand fire'?

LOYALTIES

'The Skin Game' and 'Loyalties' have been called 'pride and prejudice dramas.' 'Loyalties' is a study in social pride and social convention. It contains the point which Galsworthy stressed through his working life. It is only at the end of the play that this point emerges with its full force. 'Loyalty is not enough. There must also be understanding and charity in the absence of which loyalty stands ineffective.'

Galsworthy wrote a number of other plays - 'Joy', 'A Bit O' Love', 'Old English', 'Escape', 'Smiled', and 'The Roof'. These later plays possess most of the qualities for which Galsworthian plays are famous. But they do not add much

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1- John Galsworthy - The Skin Game - Act Three, Scene Two, P.90
2- J.C. Tremin - The Theatre since 1900, P.39
3- Eric Gillett - Introduction to Ten Famous Plays by John Galsworthy - P.14
to the stature of the dramatist. One can, however, see Galsworthy's greater emphasis towards naturalism in these plays. His treatment of the theme and the use of the language is denuded of all superfluity and there is greater economy of construction. This, however, takes away some of the human warmth of the characters presented in these plays. Whatever may be the case, the fact remains that Galsworthy's fame, as a dramatist, mainly rests on about half a dozen of his problem plays and the four names which will always be there in the list of these half dozen plays are 'Justice', 'Strife', 'The Silver Box' and 'The Skin Game' in this order.

The tragic appeal of Galsworthy's plays is not of the kind as that of Greek or Shakespearean tragedies. This is so because Galsworthy's characters do not possess the heroic dimensions of the past. This is quite natural because Galsworthy wrote for the twentieth century which refuses to acknowledge heroism as super-natural or divinely inspired and because the fault was to be traced not in stars but in social forces. There are critics who hold that Galsworthy's dramas will lose their appeal with the passage of time whereas ancient Greek dramas and the works of Shakespeare will live for ever. This may be partially true but no one can predict the future with certainty and Galsworthy is too great a dramatist to be completely ablated in the dust storm of future-march. Some of his plays are the finest specimens of the genre we call 'The Problem Play' and these plays will retain their interest and appeal for many centuries to come. 'Justice' and 'Strife' will undoubtedly enter the permanent repertoire of the English theatre.
Besides the big names that have already been dealt with there is a number of problem playwrights who contributed significantly to the growth of this genre of literature. Among these Stanley Houghton (1881-1913) and St. John Hankin (1869-1909) stand in the forefront. Houghton was a forceful writer and his plays show the impact of new ideas on the Orthodox ways of life. The theme of 'generation gap' is a permanent theme but it was perhaps more noticeable in the early years of the 20th Century because technology and industrialisation were hitting hard at orthodox religious beliefs and traditional views regarding sex morality. Three generations living together reflected three different attitudes towards life and Stanley Houghton's play 'The Younger Generation' is quite a success in depicting this attitudinal conflict. 'The holier than thou' attitude of the older generation towards the younger one proves to be nothing but hypocrisy in the last analysis. Houghton's plays deal with middle and lower class domestic life and are always placed in Lancashire setting. In 'Mistletoe Wakes' Houghton takes up the problem of casual lapse a lark - and creates a new woman who can defy the dictates of conventional morality. Allan Jeoffreys's spending a weekend at a sea-coast town with Fanny Hawthorn raises a hell of a hullaballoo. Allan, although reluctant till the end, is persuaded by his honourable factory owner father to agree to have Fanny as his wife. This was the only course open in conventional morality. The girl's parents are too glad to see their daughter well-

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1. A. Nicoll - English Drama 1900-1930, p.297
settled. But Fanny's views come as a shock to everyone. She
hates the mercenary view of marriage and desires to live her
own life. Allan is not, according to Fanny, "Man enough" to
be her husband although he may have been good enough for 'a
bit of fun.' The problem remains unsolved but Fanny's deter-
mination not to feel apologetic for her passing indulgence
strikes a new note in the field of sex-morality. If society
could look lightly on Allan's lapse why should Fanny be
considered a sinner? Here was a challenge to double standard
of morality so common in Victorian age. Indeed, Fanny
epitomises the new womanhood 'the spirit of the new
generation'. Although not a great play, 'Hindle Wakes' presents
vital issue very effectively and the problem-part of the play
is a living themes even in our own day. T. H. Dickinson has
rightly said that 'Hindle Wakes' exhibits a new world of youth
wherein the right to joy is no longer a burning issue.

Sir John Hankin

Sir John Hankin's four plays - The Two Mr. Wetherbys
(1903), The Return of the Prodigal (1905), The Cassilis
Engagement (1907), and 'The Last of the De Mallins' (1908), throw
a searching light upon the society of his age. The characters
in his plays are, however, not as a life-like as say in
Galsworthy's and his dialogue is also stagey. His treatment of
English life seems to be cynical rather than natural and that
is why his plays fail to shake us to the roots. But Hankin's
ideas speak through his central characters who invariably revolt

1. H. B. Anson - English Literature & Ideas in the 20th
   Century - - P. 102
3. A. Nicoll - British Drama, A-380
against conventional ethics and dogmas of a puritan set-up.

'The Last of the De. Mullins' is, perhaps, the finest of Hankin's plays and here like Fanny in Stanley Houghton's 'Hindle-Wakes' we meet the new woman in Janet. Unlike her elder sister Hester, Janet is glad to break the fetters of conventional morality. She believes in economic independence and feels that a woman should have her own will and should not be a victim of ever-lasting obedience - that is living a submissive life either under her father or under her husband. She goes away to London to earn her living, bears an illegitimate child and feels honoured in her motherhood. She would not have Monty Dunstead, her school boy lover - much younger to her and the father of the child, as her husband because that honour should go, if at all the necessity arose, to a more remarkable person. All that Mr. De. Mullins, Janet's father, stood for is shattered to the ground. His ancestral pride, his concept of morality and motherhood - all are exposed to the search-light of Janet's reasoning and nothing stands the test of time. In this play John Hankin emerges as a great artist and there is neither cynicism of earlier plays nor undue emphasis on projection of ideas. The theme of the emancipation of women is handled with the mastery of a superb artist 'in terms of art and not propaganda' in any survey of the 'drama of ideas' John Hankin's name must get a respectful treatment even if it does not figure among the top rankers.

There are a number of women writers of note who wrote good problem plays during the first quarter of the twentieth

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1. John Drinkwater - Introduction to the Plays of St. John Hankin - P. 12
century. Miss Elizabeth Baker's 'Chains' (1909) and 'The Price of Thomas Scott' (1913) deal with the un-relieved middle class misery and leave quite a depressing effect on the mind of spectators. Charles Wilson's all attempts to escape the dram surroundings - 'Chains' - are nullified by the circumstances and he has to live with the soul-crushing routine of 'dingy office desk'. Thomas Scott, the idealist, has no escape from the money of Sin even if he flings it back. The all-consuming misery and the barrenness of life presented in the plays offer hardly any ray of hope and one longs for certain relieving features in the dramas. Miss K. Githa Sowerby's, 'Ather Ford and Son' is certainly a good if not a great play. Industrialization has resulted in making men hard-hearted and soft emotions are getting associated with weakness. John Ather Ford's only love is his glass factory and he knows no other tenderness in life. His children - Richard, John and Janet leave him because they have got no respect for their individuality and they revolt against the crabbed age. The lonely old man, at least, realises the folly and futility of being dictatorial to his children. In the evening of his life he gets a little soft and seeks for someone who may provide him a sense of belonging. John Atherford's change of heart is indicative of the fact that youth is determined to live its own way and that it is only through love and understanding that Age can hope to win over it. The play 'Atherford and

1 - A. Nicoll - British Drama - - P.383
2 - Ibid - British Drama - - P.382
Son's succeeds in producing 'a strong impression of bleak misery and joylessness' which was common feature of middle class houses run on outdated notions of Victorian morality.

Arnold Bennett's 'Milestones', is a 'solid and brilliant achievement' and ranks with the great specimen of the problem play. He, however, could not touch the height attained in 'Milestones' in any other of his plays. Allen Monkhouse (1839–1926) wrote a few good plays, the two of which Mary Brooms (1911) and 'First Blood' (1926) are good attempts but fail to reach 'A' grade standard. In 'Mary Brooms' he creates a situation in which the eldest son of a respectable household has an affair with the housemaid. The father having come to know of it, forces his son to make an offer of marriage but is shocked when he finds that the girl rejects the forced offer. This theme was later taken up by many a dramatist with certain changes here and there. O.J.Hamlin's 'The Waldies' (1912) tells how a young man can take the theft by unimaginative and dictatorial handling on the part of a stern father. Too much of forbidding and sternness may breed guilt instead of virtue and so the parental authority should take a full note of it.

The period of forty years or so from 1890 to 1930 produced so many great dramatists that only Elizabethan period can be placed by its side for comparison.

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1. A.C. Gupta - The Problem Play - P.253
2. A.C. Ward - Twentieth Century Literature - P.129
3. A. R. Nicoll - English Drama (1900–1930) - P.877
both as regards the number of dramatists and the quality of work produced. The space does not allow me to take up all the works produced during the period for the purpose of our study. We have, therefore, taken up only works of lasting value and by analysing these works we have proved that the problem-play offered an altogether different variety of dramatic art both in content and technique and that English literature made immensely richer by the giant playwrights of this period.