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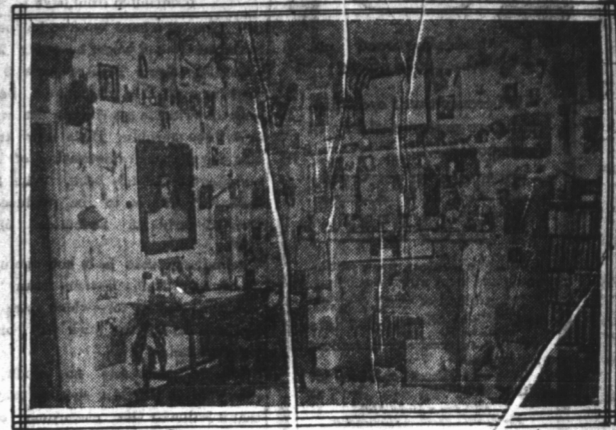
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Channing Pollock His Ideas and Methods



POLLOCK'S STUDY WHERE HIS PLAYS ARE WRITTEN



A SCENE FROM 'THE BISHOP'S CARRIAGE'
PHOTO BY HALL

A Chat With the Busy Young Playwright Would Found a New School

I elbowed my way through the group of smartly dressed people clustered around the big frame full of photographs of the cast of "Fantana" that stood in the lobby of the Lyric Theatre, New York. I ducked under a brass bar that guards the way to the executive offices above, climbed a flight of marble stairs, ran a gauntlet of stagefolk—mostly young women—waiting to be admitted to the presence of that dread one whose nod or shake means "job" or "no job" to anxious aspirants, climbed another flight of stairs and there, on the top floor, under the skylight, in a little cubby-hole of a room scarcely larger than himself and doubly guarded by stenographers and typewriters, I found Channing Pollock, play-

wright, novelist, lyricist, press representative and dramatic critic.

On the stool beside him perched a fresh young soubrette. She was pouring into his sympathetic ear some story later to be doled out as a "press agent's yarn" to the dramatic editors of the country. In the doorway a newspaper reporter lounged, and in the box-like ante-room I recognized a well-known writer on dramatic topics, doubtless come to replenish his stock of photographs of stage favorites.

"The Chesterfield of the Press Representatives" they call Channing Pollock, and as I watched him there in his office it was easy to understand how he had earned the title. The invariable courtesy with which he met every demand, the patience with which he gave his time to his callers, the cordiality of the smile

and nod with which he greeted each newcomer, all bespoke a courtesy, a graciousness that are deep-rooted, a part of the man himself.

At last the office was clear of visitors, and Pollock arose and extended his hand in cordial greeting.

"We can't talk here," he said, "come down to the Astor and get a bite of lunch." And to the Astor we went.

It was to ask some questions about several of his plays that I had sought this busy young man, whose rise to prominence as a playwright has been so rapid and so brilliant. He told me that he had written many plays, but that not until two years ago had he produced anything that he really thought worth considering.

"Why I have written plays ever since I was 10 years old," I used to write my early efforts in the copy books with which

we were supplied at school—you remember those greenback books, don't you? Well, I wrote them, one play to a book, that was the invariable length. And I took them very seriously, too. Oh, I thought they were fine, great plays, and I was ambitious to become a playwright. I still am," he added quickly, seriously.

Although the dream of becoming a great dramatist was with this man from his early boyhood, it was not to be followed with impunity. Reversals of the family fortune found Pollock at the age of 15 in Salvador, doing his first writing, that of a chance reporter and photographer during a South American war. A return to the world of drama was made some 10 years ago, when Channing Pollock was a well-known dramatic critic in the city of Washington, where he wrote successfully for the Post and the Times.

Shortly after this Pollock went to New York, and was five years with the theatrical manager, W. A. Brady. In 1903 Grace George was playing "Pretty Peggy" at a Chicago Theater. The last act seemed to mar the play, and one night, after the performance, Mr. Brady came to Pollock's room and told him of a scheme he had for bettering the effect of the act.

"Bully!" cried Pollock. "Bully! But who's to write it?"

"You are," said Mr. Brady.

"Me?" cried Pollock, delighted. "Oh, fine, I'd like to! I'll do it the first thing tomorrow."

"No you don't. Write it now," persisted Mr. Brady.

And so, sitting on his trunk in the little hotel "parlor," Pollock wrote the act. It went well, and the play became a popular success. That was only a begin-

ning. June of the same year saw produced at Proctor's Fifty-eighth Street Theater, New York. "A Game of Hearts," a comedy by Pollock in four acts. This was successful and it has paid well in royalties, although it brought its author but little notice. It is still being played in stock company repertoire.

But it was in the fall of 1903 that Pollock first tasted the flavor of real success. His dramatization of Frank Norris' novel, "The Pit," produced by W. A. Brady first at Parson's Theater, in Hartford, was a great, big success. Everywhere the play was praised as most remarkable to be the "first work" of a young dramatist. With Wilton Lackaye in the leading role, it came to New York and nightly drew great crowds to the theater where it was presented.

A good dramatization cannot follow the

novel closely, because the latter is too verbose, and the result would be a "talky play," the bane of both actors and public. In putting their novels into plays they would rather cut off their right hand than cut out one of their precious sentences.

"In dramatizing Miriam Michelson's novel, 'In the Bishop's Carriage,' for instance, I had to cut away from the story altogether. In fact, I disregarded the plot so entirely that the publishers wrote to me that the author had complained bitterly of the 'liberties' I had taken with her story."

In this way there was a development to the entire play, and to all the characters in it, just as there is to the real people who make up the plays of real life. All this, had I followed the book, I should have lost, and the play instead of being a big success would have been a flat failure.

Pollock feels that he has done his best work in his play, "The Little Gray Lady." This is not a dramatization, but is an original story of Washington life. The play was written for Annie Russell.

"It is a play," he told me, "of the ordinary things of life. There is nothing that the old dramatists would call 'dramatic' in it, yet it is vibrant with dramatic situations, tingling with the real essence of drama as we find it in life. Do you know," he asked me, with a laugh "that I cherish the hope of founding a new school of playwrighting? Yes, that is what I said—founding a new school; and I do."

"My school," he continued, "would be based on the principle that the truest, most vital drama must reflect the actions of everyday people in the course of their everyday life. The life around us is just teeming with situations, conditions and characters that would make the finest drama when translated to the stage. Already there have been several steps taken in the right direction by Mr. Pinero, in England; Mr. Fitch and Thomas, in this country, and by others. But the school I would found would go even further—its drama would be built absolutely of the life as it exists around us."

Pollock is a young man, still under 30, and is impressively earnest. He has been the carver of his own fortune, and finds himself, at his young age, prominent, sought after and in a fair way to become moderately wealthy—that is, as the wealth of authors and playwrights

Continued on page 2.

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