

# ART NEEDED IN DRAMA, POLLOCK

**Calls Human Nature a Naughty Trait**

Censorship does as much harm in the theater as it does good, Channing Pollock, author of "The Fool," told members of the Drama club recently. The author and playwright threw up his hands at human nature: it wants to see plays it should not see; and does not see plays that it should see. "The best thing that could happen to box receipts, I have found, is to have a play severely censored," he said. "Heretofore, such a play might have been doing a slow business. It is banned by the censors, and people flock to see it."

### Strangles Free Speech

"Censorship strangles free speech," he continued, following up his point. He told how facts meant for the information of New Yorkers about their government were immediately suppressed by the mayor of the metropolis.

Channing Pollock, author of 22 successful plays, deplored the fact that the people of the United States go to the theater to be entertained. In fifty-five first class theaters in New York two years ago he found the following types being offered theategoers: seven farces, 16 melodramas, 29 musical comedies, and three plays of actual value.

"Men have told me that literary or religious allusions do not make their mark in the average audience. One playwright said he seldom used a vocabulary of more than 500 words. In one play, the hero tells the girl's mother of his love. The mother in reply said, 'Why don't you speak for yourself, John?' The next day the author received several letters calling attention to the 'mistake,' the hero's name was 'Richard,' not 'John!' When I offered my own play, 'The Fool,' a man asked me why I referred to the 'Star of Bethlehem.' Don't you know what the 'Star of Bethlehem' is?' I asked. 'Sure,' he replied. 'It's a star in the Milky Way.' 'No, it isn't,' I said. 'It's the star which guided the Wise Men to Bethlehem of Judea.' 'Why didn't you say so, then?' he wanted to know."

### Want "Snappy Stuff"

He told how for several years past he had tried to secure a theater for his play, "The Fool." A. H. Woods on reading it said, "Why do you want a hero who tried to live the life of Christ? They can get that stuff in church! That sort of thing will not go in the theater." Then, reconsidering, he suggested that the playwright turn out some "snappy stuff," such as a woman with a past, a triangle love plot, or something of the kind.

"Is there nothing more interesting in life than women with a past?" Mr. Pollock demanded of his audience.

"If there were as many murders in real life as there are on the stage, we wouldn't need a stage at all—we'd be all dead!

"What a waste of a great institu-

tion," he lamented. "An institution which houses millions of people every night offers this class of 'drama'—it does not even expect the audience to be intelligent.

"If at Chicago libraries we found a few good books with hundreds of volumes of the Laura Jean Libbey type; if at our grand opera we heard Irving Berlin; and if at our art galleries we found sketches by Rube Goldberg, you would say we were not civilized. Yet Chicagoans, New Yorkers—people everywhere—do not expect to find art in the theater!

### Drama First Art

"Drama is the first of all arts, and makes use of all the arts," he continued.

"People deplore the fact that foreign plays may flood the American stage at any time. Water will not flow in if the level of your own stream is higher," was his answer.

He told how he tried for years to place his play, "The Fool." Managers discouraged him, and asked for snappy stuff. Finally, he acquiesced to their wishes, and wrote one—a labor of seven months. He read it to Mrs. Pollock one night after its completion. For a long time she said nothing. Then, "If you love the theater and its art, why do you write such commonplace plays?" she asked. That was the turning point in his life, he declared, and he vowed to write nothing more until "The Fool" was produced.

"The only thrill in life comes out of a beautiful truth—out of a beautiful sentiment," he said. "No good play is a dull play and no dull play is ever a good play. Thinking in this manner, I again approached managers with my play. It was finally produced in a small theater in Los Angeles. After a short time we brought it to New York. For two weeks, it was an apparent failure. Ministers saw it, and told about it from the pulpit. Soon crowds began to come. In four weeks we were playing to capacity houses, and held matinees every day."

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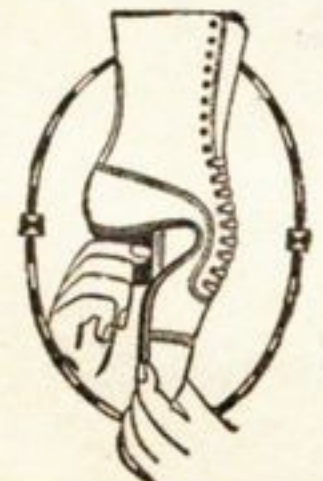
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