



BERNARD SHAW

A PROSE ANTHOLOGY

SELECTED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

H. M. BURTON

*A choice collection from the
great playwright's critical writings on
education, music, theater, religion,
politics, and his own childhood.*



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW was born in Dublin in 1856. He left school in his early teens to work in a Dublin land agent's office. In 1876 he went to London, where his mother supported herself as a music teacher. During the following nine years he wrote five novels, a few of which were published in socialist papers. In 1885 he became music critic of the *Star*, and, later, of the *World*. He then served as drama critic for the *Saturday Review* and reviewed art for the *World* and books for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. One of the founders of the Fabian Society, he was an active socialist during the 1880's and 1890's. He married Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend in 1898. His first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was produced in 1892. Another early play, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, in which the protagonist is a procuress, was banned in England until 1924. *Arms and the Man* was presented in 1894, and *Candida* in 1897. Shaw's major plays include *The Devil's Disciple* (produced in 1899); *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1899); *Man and Superman* (1905); *Major Barbara* (1905); *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906); *Androcles and the Lion* (1911); and *Pygmalion* (1912). *Saint Joan*, presented in 1924, is generally considered Shaw's masterpiece. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. Teetotaler, anti-vivisectionist, vegetarian, socialist, Wagnerian, Shaw wrote numerous essays reflecting his many and various preoccupations, expressing himself always with candor and incisiveness. His career as a playwright and litterateur spans sixty years, in the course of which he won himself a lasting reputation as an ironist and a wit, a social critic, and a philosopher.

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PREFACE BY
A. C. WARD

A PREMIER BOOK

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PREFACE

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, the greatest of the many Irishmen who have written fine plays in the English language, was born in Dublin on 26 July 1856. His father, George Carr Shaw, the youngest son in a family of thirteen children, became a minor official in the Dublin law courts, but after a few years he retired on a small pension and went into business unsuccessfully as a corn merchant. He married the daughter of an Irish landowner, who soon found that her husband was a drunkard and incapable of providing for her and the three children who were born to them, George Bernard Shaw and his two older sisters.

Mrs Shaw had a remarkably good singing voice, and from her and her friends young Bernard learned much good operatic music—which was to prove very useful to him afterwards. When he was sixteen his mother and sisters left Dublin and went to live permanently in London, where Mrs Shaw supported herself and her daughters by giving music lessons and by singing at concerts.

In the meantime Bernard Shaw, now left behind with his father, had been to school in Dublin until he was fifteen. He then became a clerk and cashier in a land agent's office there until April 1876, when he followed his mother to London. When he realized that his father was too unstable to be the controlling head of the family, and that his mother was more devoted to music than to her children, he developed that extraordinary independence of mind and spirit which impelled him, in later life, to consider mankind and its affairs without being swayed either by custom or by other people's fixed ideas of right and wrong.

Though he received little mother-love from Mrs Shaw, the love of music that he gained from her soon proved valuable in London, where one of his first regular positions when he took up journalism was as music critic on a London evening newspaper, *The Star*. Both as a critic of music and, a few

years later, as a critic of plays for *The Saturday Review*, a weekly periodical, he wrote essays of very high quality which are still read, enjoyed, and praised, more than half a century after they were first printed.

When Shaw himself turned to the writing of plays, he heard with the inner ear of a musician the words he set down to be spoken by the actors, and his sentences consequently run with a rhythmical ease that makes them easy and pleasant to speak and listen to. For this reason the many very long speeches in Shaw's plays hold our attention, whereas speeches of a similar length by other modern playwrights are often tedious, even though the subjects they deal with may be as important as Shaw's.

After settling in London, Bernard Shaw found it very difficult to live by writing, and for the first ten years he relied mainly on his mother for necessities. Yet during those years he was laying the foundations of a career by joining political societies and addressing public meetings, sometimes at street corners. One day in September 1884 he went to a lecture by the American economist Henry George (author of a well-known book, *Progress and Poverty*) who advocated that national revenue should be raised by a single tax on land values, instead of by numerous other taxes. Henry George's lecture converted Shaw to socialism, and almost at once he joined the newly-founded Fabian Society. The Fabians quickly modified their original revolutionary creed and turned to political education and propaganda designed to promote a gradual evolutionary change from capitalism to socialism, and they had a powerful influence on British political life during the next forty or fifty years.

As a socialist Bernard Shaw believed that if the condition of civilized societies was to be improved, it must be done by legislation aiming at equality, reducing in various ways the fortunes of the rich in order to help and uplift the poor, and he lived to see such legislation introduced. But though he continued to preach equality throughout his long life, as he grew older he had less confidence in the power of Acts of Parliament to increase human welfare and happiness. He became more apt to recognize that the first thing required in the making of a Good Society is not so much good laws as good men and women—men and women, that is, who are righteous in spirit and not merely well intentioned and kind-hearted. Good people will make good laws, but good laws passed by a few do not necessarily make a good society.

While he was still a boy, Shaw abandoned the Christian religion as practised by the churches, for he believed they had strayed far from the teachings of Christ. But though he would not call himself a Christian, many of his strongest convictions and most of his personal conduct were those of a religious man. His sense of the sacredness of life, animal as well as human; his purity of living—he ate no flesh, drank no alcohol, smoked no tobacco; his kindness and generosity to his fellows (though he opposed charity on the ground that it was usually only a cheap substitute for social justice); his insistence that it is the duty of all men to strive to leave the world a better place than they found it—to hand on to future generations the torch of life burning more brightly—all these beliefs, though Shaw would have claimed that they were based on reason, not on faith, were so powerful in him as a guide to conduct that they had the force of a religion. He became a vegetarian when he was twenty-five. His reading of Shelley had some influence in leading him to refrain from eating meat; but the stronger motive was his deep feeling that ‘animals are our fellow creatures’ and not to be slain for human food.

Politics and journalism occupied Bernard Shaw until 1898, when he reached the age of forty-two. His first attempts at creative literary work produced five unsuccessful novels between 1879 and 1883, and in 1885 he made his first attempt to write a play, but left it unfinished. Seven years later he completed it and on 9 December 1892 it was performed in London. Called *Widowers' Houses*, the play dealt with the evils of London slums, in which at that time many filthy and decaying houses were owned by landlords who lived at ease elsewhere on the rents squeezed from poor and wretched tenants.

A play on such a subject—on, that is, a genuine social evil—was something new in the English theatre. It had no success, and when in the following years Shaw went on to write other plays about real human problems, such as prostitution (*Mrs Warren's Profession*), war (*Arms and the Man*), religious intolerance (*The Devil's Disciple*), revenge (*Captain Brassbound's Conversion*), and so on, he became extremely unpopular, and years passed before his plays brought him money enough to live on. For a gradually increasing number of people, however, he became a leader in new ways of thought, and a champion of intellectual freedom and social equality.

Until Shaw began to write for the theatre, there had been no modern British dramatist who took current social, political, and religious problems as subjects for plays. Shaw started with the conviction that the emotional tangles of men and women had received far too much attention on the stage, and he determined to do in English what Henrik Ibsen had been doing in Norwegian since about 1875—namely, to write plays in which the interest was centred upon earnest yet lively discussion of public affairs which directly concerned very large numbers of people. Though he was incapable of the poetic symbolism and bitter irony that Ibsen used so powerfully, Shaw's penetrating wit and irrepressible fun were more effective in wearing down British antagonism to new ideas.

When a season of 'intellectual drama' was started at the Court Theatre in London in 1904 Bernard Shaw's plays were for the first time brought to the notice of a large audience. The experiment was so successful that it continued until 1907, by which time there had been 711 performances of eleven of Shaw's plays there: *John Bull's Other Island* (a comedy about Irish politics) being the first to become popular.

At the same theatre *Man and Superman* was produced on 23 May 1905. In the character of Henry Straker, the chauffeur, it introduced a new type of working man who understood and delighted in modern machinery and was destined to be more important in the technological age then approaching than the landed aristocracy who had for centuries been the ruling class. *Man and Superman*, called by Shaw 'A Comedy and a Philosophy', is full of ideas which were then new and startling. Most startling of all was the Hell scene in Act III which introduces three persons from the Spanish legend of Don Juan—Juan himself; Donna Anna, one of the many women he loved and betrayed; and the ghost of Anna's father, whom Don Juan had killed in a duel. They meet and converse with the Devil. The Devil tries to convince the others that human beings are so stupid and bad that nothing can save them from destruction. Don Juan claims that, on the contrary, there is in Man a spirit—the Life Force—which inspires him to struggle upward towards the evolution of the Superman, who will be far wiser and better.

The discussion between the Devil and Don Juan and the others is a serious philosophical argument that no other playwright would have believed any audience was patient and attentive enough to tolerate. Shaw succeeded, however, partly

because he was witty and amusing and made people laugh even while he was dealing with the most serious topics, and partly because he built up his great scenes as a composer builds up the music in an opera or a symphony. Shaw introduces a subject for discussion, then another subject a little later—as a composer brings in one melody or theme after another—and soon the several subjects are woven together into a discussion which is intellectually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing.

Shaw was always acutely sensitive to the *sound* of words as well as deeply concerned to preserve their sense and meaning. As a young man he learned shorthand and always wrote his plays in it for his secretary to type. This choice of shorthand as a working language was due both to its time-saving advantages and to its being based on phonetics, which always uses the same symbol for the same spoken sound. Ordinary written English is extremely illogical in spelling, and that makes English harder to learn than if a separate letter or symbol were used for each different sound. Shaw spent a good deal of time vainly trying to persuade English people to adopt an enlarged alphabet, and he wrote one of his most popular plays, *Pygmalion*, on the subject of correct pronunciation. He also directed that a considerable part of the large fortune he left when he died in 1950 should be used to finance any genuine scheme for bringing into common use his enlarged alphabet and reformed spelling. But the British still showed no inclination to adopt Bernard Shaw's system, and the provision made in his will was declared in 1957 not to be legally binding. The Public Trustee, however, as executor of the Shaw estate, later allocated a sum to enable experiments in a phonetic alphabet to be made.

From 1905, when *Man and Superman*, his first great play, was performed, Shaw was the world's most famous living playwright. He was in the widest sense an internationalist. In voluntary exile from his native Ireland and living in England (for whose people he had curiously mixed feelings of affection, respect, and derision), he was without racial prejudices and looked on all nations with a cool and impartial eye. He did not care particularly for any one nation as a political unit, but was benevolent to all humanity as a matter of principle. In his eyes most political leaders were blunderers, insufficiently educated in the art of ruling, which he regarded as the highest art of all.

Nevertheless, in spite of his intense interest in political

affairs Shaw will almost certainly be remembered in the future much more by his plays than by his ideas on government and public affairs. He wrote fifty plays, long and short, but his non-dramatic writings are of much greater total length.

Although most of the Prefaces he added to his plays when they came to be printed have little direct bearing on the plays to which they are attached, they embrace nearly all the subjects of outstanding public concern in the first half of the twentieth century. Because they were so closely bound up with current affairs in their time, the practical subject-interest of the Prefaces will dwindle as their historical and documentary interest for later generations becomes established. But in the quality of their prose they are of timeless merit.

The fact that Shaw was brought up in Dublin had a permanent influence on his prose style—but far less because Dublin is an Irish city than because the English he heard spoken there was still close to dignified and stately eighteenth-century English, not yet tainted by the vulgarizing and debasing speech-habits which were besetting the language in England as a by-product of mass industrialization and urbanization.

Yet, though Shaw's prose is basically of the Augustan Age, it is nevertheless free from those lapses into pomposity and circumlocution which not infrequently blemished eighteenth-century writings. The spoken English he heard in the land of Jonathan Swift was tempered by the written English he read in the books of John Bunyan. Like Swift's, Shaw's prose is forceful; like Bunyan's, it is plain; and like the prose of both it has the sinews of endurance.

A. C. WARD

INTRODUCTION

MANY books and essays have been written about Shaw as dramatist, as philosopher, as political theorist, as one of a number of things; but few attempts have been made to study Shaw the prose-writer, the artist in words—although critics who have thought about the matter rank him with Bunyan and Swift.

The most obvious explanation of this neglect is that Shaw's popularity, if not his permanent place in literature, owes most to his work as a playwright. The essence of prose drama is in action, conflict, character, and dialogue, and although it is sometimes argued that Shaw's plays mostly lack the first three of these essentials and are distinguished only in the vigour and wit of their dialogue, the fact remains that the excellence of his dialogue—whatever may be said about the other three factors—is so exactly right for the job that it can easily be overlooked.

It is possible, also, that what Shaw had to say was so overwhelming in its content that few critics have paused to consider the way he said it. His penetration, his wit, his impudence, his gift for paradox—these qualities have so bemused his readers and his audiences that they have no judgment in reserve with which to appraise his style. When you have just been laid flat on your back by a straight left to the jaw you are in no position to appreciate the skill and artistry of your adversary as a pugilist.

A third explanation often submitted by the critics—from a recumbent position, so to speak—is that Shaw had no prose style worthy of serious criticism. Did he not himself say more than once that he was not interested in style?

The first argument is based on a miscalculation. George Bernard Shaw was not only a playwright; indeed, it is possible to show that he was not primarily a playwright. Of the thirty-four volumes of his collected works only fifteen are devoted to plays, and of these fifteen a large section of each volume is filled with prose essays called 'Prefaces'. In sum,

therefore, not more than one-third of his vast literary output was dramatic. It may be that the verdict of posterity will be that this one-third is not only the most important part of his work but that the other two-thirds is little more than ephemeral pamphleteering and should be forgotten. But it is unlikely that posterity will be so foolish. The brilliant musical and dramatic criticism and the closely-reasoned—if often perverse—social and political analysis are surely as permanent a contribution to literature as any but the ten or twelve best plays; and even the early novels have their value as shrewd pictures of a section of English life at the end of the nineteenth century. So in any case a verdict on Shaw's prose based only on his plays can have little validity.

The second argument—that the impact of what Shaw had to say was so violent as to dull the senses and to prohibit appreciation of the way he said it—ignores one important principle of literary criticism. It is impossible to separate in this way what a man says from the way he says it. It is just because Shaw's style was the ideal instrument for its purpose that the impact of what he had to say was so violent. It is true that he said some foolish things for the sake of effect and that as he grew older his blows were sometimes less effective because they were ill-directed. But at its best Shaw's prose style was so much a matter of instinct, and he had practised it for so long and with such single-mindedness, that it became the most perfect vehicle imaginable for his kind of writing.

Finally, the suggestion that he had no style worth considering may be dismissed as the petulant complaint of critics who have failed to find in his work something they could identify as 'beauty', 'imagery', 'balance', or some other attribute which they think all good prose should exhibit. The fact that Shaw said more than once that he was not interested in style means nothing; he said everything, unfortunately, more than once.

But although it is easy enough to show that Shaw wrote perfect prose for his purpose it is another and more difficult matter to discover just wherein the perfection lies. One critic writing in 1916 said: 'It is clear, hard and bright, like varnished wood. By some miraculous and deadly chemistry he has emptied his vocabulary of all but obvious meanings, and denuded his sentences of every associative value. Never did words so serviceable serve their master so meanly.'¹

¹ John Freeman, *The Moderns*.

Shaw himself would have disapproved the first sentence of this criticism. Such a picturesque comparison as that between a man's style and varnished wood would have struck him as fanciful and meaningless because it defies close examination. He would have indignantly denied the allegation in the last sentence, declaring that far from his words serving him meanly they not only did all that he asked of them but brought him stupendous worldly wealth. But the middle sentence—apart from the reference to 'miraculous and deadly chemistry'—would have appealed to him. Words and sentences, he would have replied, *ought* normally to be emptied of all but their obvious meanings and associations; a man should say what he has to say in such a manner that his meaning is at once obvious to the normal intelligence. That is the function of prose and if a writer thinks clearly and logically, and has command of a vocabulary wide enough to match his ideas, then he will write clearly and logically. The words will automatically fall into their 'correct' order because that is the only order in which they will accurately convey the thoughts and ideas to be expressed. The writer who uses words and sentences with meanings other than the 'obvious' and with values that are 'associative'—*i.e.* that suggest or imply other ideas, more or less irrelevant—not only clouds his own intentions but leaves his readers (or his audience) with the onus of disentangling the correct meaning.

In the theatre, of all places, there is no scope for the allusive word or the associative sentence. The swift-thinking sophisticated minority may be able to appreciate hidden meanings and verbal subtleties but they are the exceptions—and there were fewer such exceptions among the theatre audiences of Shaw's England than there are today or, surprisingly enough, than there were in Shakespeare's England. The majority find that while they are puzzling over the inner significance of one speech another character has spoken and the development of the play has taken another small step forward. Rather than risk irritating his audiences by verbal subtleties and literary exhibitionism, therefore, Shaw preferred to use simple direct prose which meant only what it seemed to mean. After all, he was giving them enough to bite on with his subject-matter. If it was subtlety his audiences wanted, the rapid interplay of ideas, the 'associative value' of theories and arguments, he was ready to give them all they could take, and sometimes more; but he would not blunt the edge of his attack by using emotive or figurative language.

It is this serviceable functionalism of his prose that confronts us in all he wrote. Although only a third of his work was dramatic, in the sense of being written to be spoken on the stage, his preference for the kind of writing most suitable, in his view, for stage delivery affected everything he set down. The close reasoning of his argumentative and polemical writings is exactly the same as the close reasoning in the long serious speeches in plays like *Saint Joan*, *Major Barbara*, and *The Apple Cart*. The easier, less packed writing of his more relaxed stage dialogue is exactly mirrored in his autobiographical work and in much of his musical and dramatic criticism. But it is all 'clear, hard and bright'. To take almost any sentence from any of his books or plays and try to recast it without altering the meaning or shifting the emphasis is an interesting and chastening exercise. It can seldom be done because the way Shaw wrote the sentence is the 'naturally' best way, if not the only way.

This is not to say that he was unable to appreciate poetic writing. No Irishman who could feel so deeply about, say, music could at the same time be deaf to the poetry of words. Here and there in his autobiographical writing, in *Saint Joan*, in Mrs George's speeches in *Getting Married*, in Lilith's great speech at the end of *Back to Methuselah*, and elsewhere, one catches a glimpse of the poet that was in G.B.S. But normally he kept that particular Muse in chains—which, incidentally, throws some doubt on his own claim that he never gave conscious thought to the way he wrote. And even if that was so, there must at least have been unconscious inhibitions at work all the time.

Here and there, also, one detects something more than instinct in his choice of words. In the Preface to *Immaturity* he writes of his uncles: 'They had an impression that the Government should give them employment, preferably sinecure.' This use of 'sinecure' as an adjective or an adverb is so rare as to strike the reader as odd. 'One of Shaw's little idiosyncrasies', one concludes. But it is not. Elsewhere, even in the same Preface, he uses 'sinecure' in its usual accepted sense as a noun; clearly the first adjectival use was deliberate. A small point, perhaps, but not without significance; it reveals the 'unconscious' writer exercising the kind of careful choice normally associated with self-conscious artistry.

Other exceptions may be discovered by careful search but

they are admittedly exceptions and do not affect the main contention—that Shaw wrote, as Mr A. C. Ward has said, mainly ‘to open people’s minds to new ideas, not to stir their feelings’; and a writer with such intentions does not labour fruitlessly after verbal felicities and nicely-turned phrases.

Some justification for an anthology of this kind may be thought necessary. It can be found in the thirty-four volumes themselves. The effect of Shaw in the mass is intimidating, to say the least. It is not that he is ever dull; even when one is most strongly angered by his views one must go on reading. And he has the Ancient Mariner’s gift of holding the attention on subjects in which the reader is not normally interested. But he *is* repetitive; and he can be so confoundedly knowing! It is not the patronizing knowingness of a writer like Kipling, who offers to admit you to his inner circle provided you will learn the secret signs and can speak the right language. It is rather the knowingness of the schoolmaster, or of the Irish hedge-priest, who is willing and anxious to teach anybody who cares to listen and who will make things as easy as possible for his pupils by expressing everything with crystal clarity. In small doses it is invigorating; in thirty-four volumes it becomes irritating. A modern critic has described it as ‘the screech of chalk on the blackboard, the unending lecture of someone who has got a captive audience’.¹

But the chief justification for making an anthology of Shaw’s prose is not just the desirability of saving the reader from irritation; it is rather to begin by indicating the width and depth of the territory which G.B.S. explored and then to lure the reader into following him farther in his explorations—in short, to change the metaphor, it is to whet the appetite. Shaw’s admirers and disciples must be the most varied assortment that ever acknowledged one and the same master. Lovers of music admire and chuckle over his musical criticism; students of the drama enjoy his plays and relish his dramatic criticism; philosophers and theologians read him for his challenging ideas about the spirit of man; political scientists squabble over his political theories and economists over his economics; vegetarians and other minorities find that he puts their particular views more forcibly and more persuasively than their established experts; and each of

¹ *New Statesman and Nation*, 1 June 1957.

these groups may be completely uninterested in the ideas and aspirations of any of the others.

Only a selection from his writings can show the many-sidedness of the man, for the obvious reason that the bulk of his work is so vast that few people have the leisure to read more than that fraction of it in which their particular interest lies. Yet some picture of the whole man is desirable, not merely for the sake of completeness but because the whole man in this case is so much more interesting and attractive than the sum of his parts. Although he pretended to tell the world everything about himself (in *Sixteen Self Sketches*, the Preface to *Immaturity*, and elsewhere), that same suspicion of the artist in him which led him to keep his poetic inspiration so severely in check led him also to keep his true nature, his ultimate personal self, out of his written work. When he reached the age of ninety a number of his friends collaborated in a book of tributes to him—*G.B.S.—90*, it was called—and the dominant theme of the book was the kindly, lovable nature of the man himself. Few of the general public had suspected the existence of this G.B.S. whom his friends so touchingly set on record, partly no doubt because he had been at such pains to build in the public mind the picture of G.B.S. as a grumpy, rude, unsentimental curmudgeon. Yet the man himself does appear in his writings despite his efforts to keep him out. He is not to be found by a determined attack on the Collected Works; his persistent lecturing and his determination to say everything at least twice come too often and too discouragingly between him and his readers. But it is at least possible that he may emerge now and then from the pages of some such collection as this.

H. M. BURTON

I

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH

From Sixteen Self Sketches

1898; 1949

... It says a great deal for my mother's humanity that she did not hate her children. She did not hate anybody, nor love anybody. The specific maternal passion awoke in her a little for my younger sister, who died at 20; but it did not move her until she lost her, nor then noticeably. She did not concern herself much about us; for she had never been taught that mothering is a science, nor that it matters in the least what children eat or drink; she left all that to servants whose wage was £8 a year and could neither write nor read. . . . As we grew up and had to take care of ourselves unguided, we met life's difficulties by breaking our shins over them, gaining such wisdom as was inevitable by making fools of ourselves. . . . Letting a calf stray into every china shop is not the only alternative to goading it along the street. In short, my mother was, from the technical point of view of a modern welfare worker, neither a mother nor a wife, and could be classed only as a Bohemian anarchist with ladylike habits.

My father was impecunious and unsuccessful: he could do nothing that interested her; and he did not shake off his miserable and disgraceful tippling (he did eventually) until it was too late to make any difference in their relations. Had there not been imagination, idealization, the charm of music, the charm of lovely seas and sunsets, and our natural kindness and gentleness, it is impossible to say what cynical barbarism we might not have grown into.

My mother's salvation came through music. She had a mezzo-soprano voice of extraordinary purity of tone; and to cultivate it she took lessons from George John Vandaleur Lee, already well established in Dublin as an orchestral conductor, an organizer of concerts, and a teacher of singing so heterodox and original that he depended for his performances on amateurs trained by himself, and was detested by his professional rivals, whom he disparaged as voice wreckers,

as indeed they mostly were. He extended this criticism to doctors, and amazed us by eating brown bread instead of white, and sleeping with the window open, both of which habits I acquired and have practised ever since. His influence in our household, of which he at last became a member, accustomed me to the scepticism as to academic authority which still persists in me.

He not only made my mother sing by a method that preserved her voice perfectly until her death at over eighty but gave her a Cause and a Creed to live for. . . .

.

My father was an Irish Protestant gentleman of the downstart race of younger sons. He had no inheritance, no profession, no manual skill, no qualification of any sort for any definite social function. He must have had some elementary education; for he could read and write and keep accounts more or less inaccurately; and he spoke and dressed like an Irish educated gentleman and not like a railway porter. But he certainly had not a university degree; and I never heard him speak of any school or college of which he could claim to be an alumnus. He had, however, been brought up to believe that there was an inborn virtue of gentility in all Shaws as partisans of William the Conqueror (the Dutch William of glorious pious and immortal memory, not the Norman adventurer) and owners of landed estates in Ireland or their relatives. Such younger sons as had outstanding ability made for Dublin, where one of them founded the Royal Bank, which old people in my boyhood still called Shaw's Bank. He was made a baronet, and founded the Dublin Shaws in a family seat called Bushy Park out Rathfarnham way. My father was a second cousin of the baronet, and was privileged to hire a carriage and attend the Bushy Park funerals, besides having a right to an invitation to certain family parties there. Necessarily all the Shaws were Protestants and snobs.

On the strength of his snobbery my father, after condescending to a clerkship or two, managed to assert his family claim on the State with sufficient success to obtain a post in the Four Courts (the Irish *Palais de Justice*). The post was abolished; and he was pensioned off. He sold the pension, and embarked with the proceeds in the corn trade, of which he had not the slightest knowledge; nor did he acquire much,

as far as I can judge, to the day of his death. There was a mill a little way out in the country, which perhaps paid its own rent, since the machinery was kept in motion. But its chief use, I believe, was to amuse me and my two boon companions, the sons of my father's partner.

I believe Ireland, as far as the Protestant gentry is concerned, to be the most irreligious country in the world. I was christened by my uncle; and as my godfather was intoxicated and did not turn up, the sexton was ordered to promise and vow in his place, precisely as my uncle might have ordered him to put more coals on the vestry fire. I was never confirmed; and I believe my parents never were either. Of the seriousness with which English families took this rite I had no conception; for Irish Protestantism was not then a religion: it was a side in political faction, a class prejudice, a conviction that Roman Catholics are socially inferior persons who will go to hell when they die and leave Heaven in the exclusive possession of Protestant ladies and gentlemen. In my childhood I was sent every Sunday to a Sunday-school where genteel little children repeated texts, and were rewarded with cards inscribed with them. After an hour of this we were marched into the adjoining church (the Molyneux in Upper Leeson Street), to sit round the altar rails and fidget there until our neighbors must have wished the service over as heartily as we did. I suffered this, not for my salvation, but because my father's respectability demanded it. When we went to live in Dalkey we broke with the observance and never resumed it.

What helped to make "church" a hotbed of all the social vices was that no working folk ever came there. In England the clergy go among the poor, and sometimes do try desperately to get them to come to church. In Ireland the poor are Roman Catholics (Papists my Orange grandfather called them). The Protestant Church has nothing to do with them. I cannot say that in Ireland in my time there all the Protestants were the worse for what they called their religion. I can only answer for those I knew.

Imagine being taught to despise a workman, and to respect a gentleman, in a country where every rag of excuse for gentility is stripped off by poverty! Imagine being taught that there is one God, a Protestant and a perfect gentleman, keeping Heaven select for the gentry against an idolatrous imposter called the Pope! Imagine the pretensions of the English peerage on the incomes of the English middle class! I

remember Stopford Brooke one day telling me that he discerned in my books an intense and contemptuous hatred for society. No wonder!

If I had not suffered from these things in my childhood, perhaps I could keep my temper about them. To an outsider there is nothing but comedy in the spectacle of a forlorn set of Protestant merchants in a Catholic country, led by a petty plutocracy of stockbrokers, doctors, and land agents, and camouflaged by that section of the landed gentry who, too heavily mortgaged to escape to London, play at being a Court and aristocracy reigned over by a Vice-Regal exile persuaded to accept the post of Lord-Lieutenant at a salary of £20,000 a year, leaving him heavily out of pocket but making his wife a deputy queen. To such pretences, involving continual lying as to incomes and social standing, were sacrificed all the realities of life.

And now, what power did I find in Ireland religious enough to redeem me from this abomination of desolation? Quite simply, the power of Art. My mother, as it happened, had a considerable musical talent. In order to exercise it seriously, she had to associate with other people who had musical talent. My first doubt as to whether God could really be a good Protestant was suggested by the fact that the best voices available for combination with my mother's in the works of the great composers had been unaccountably vouchsafed to Roman Catholics. Even the Divine gentility was presently called in question; for some of these vocalists were undeniably shopkeepers. If the best tenor, undeniably a Catholic, was at least an accountant, the buffo was a frank stationer.

There was no help for it: if my mother was to do anything but sing silly ballads in drawing rooms, she had to associate herself on an entirely unsectarian footing with people of like artistic gifts without the smallest reference to creed or class. She must actually permit herself to be approached by Roman Catholic priests, and at their invitation to enter that house of Belial, the Roman Catholic chapel, and sing the Masses of Mozart there. If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sunders, then must I testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius, and its irreligion in its churches and drawing rooms.

AN ANECDOTE

*From 'Who I am, and What I Think'
(Sixteen Self Sketches)*

[1901]

...LET me tell you a story of my father. When I was a child, he gave me my first dip in the sea in Killiney Bay. He prefaced it by a very serious exhortation on the importance of learning to swim, culminating in these words "When I was a boy of only fourteen, my knowledge of swimming enabled me to save your Uncle Robert's life." Then, seeing that I was deeply impressed, he stooped, and added confidentially in my ear "and, to tell you the truth, I was never so sorry for anything in my life afterwards." He then plunged into the ocean, enjoyed a thoroughly refreshing swim, and chuckled all the way home.

Now I have never aimed consciously at anti-climax: it occurs naturally in my work. But there is no doubt some connection between my father's chuckling and the enjoyment produced in the theatre by my comedic methods.

SHAW ON SHAW

*From 'How Frank ought to have done it'
(Sixteen Self Sketches)*

1919

HE justifies his refusal to use apostrophes and inverted commas in printing his books on the ground that they spoil the appearance of the page, declaring that the Bible would never have attained its supreme position in literature if it had been disfigured with such unsightly signs. He is interested in phonetics and systems of shorthand; and it is to his pedantic

articulation that he owes his popularity as a public speaker in the largest halls, as every word is heard with exasperating distinctness. He advocates a combination of the metric system with the duodecimal by inserting two new digits into our numeration, thus: eight, nine, dec, elf, ten, and eighteen, nineteen, decteen, elfteen, twenty, and so forth. He likes machines as a child likes toys, and once very nearly bought a cash register without having the slightest use for it. When he was on the verge of sixty he yielded to the fascination of a motor bicycle, and rode it away from the factory for seventy-seven miles, at the end of which, just outside his own door, he took a corner too fast and was left sprawling. He has been accused of being one of the band of devoted lunatics who bathe in the Serpentine throughout the year, rain or shine; but this is an invention, founded on his practice of swimming in the bathing pool of the Royal Automobile Club every morning before breakfast, winter and summer, his alleged reason being that as an Irishman he dislikes washing himself, but cannot do without the stimulus of a plunge into cold water. He is, as all the world knows, a vegetarian, valuing health highly but declaring that men who are any good trade on their stocks of health to the utmost limit, and therefore live on the verge of a breakdown. All really busy men, he holds, should go to bed for eighteen months every forty years to recuperate. I could easily fill another page with his fads; but I forbear.

Shaw's gallantries are for the most part non-existent. He says, with some truth, that no man who has any real work in the world has time or money for a pursuit so long and expensive as the pursuit of women. . . . Nobody knows his history in this respect, as he is far too correct a person to kiss and tell. To all appearances he is a model husband; and in the various political movements in which his youth was passed there was no scandal about him. Yet a popular anecdote describes a well known actor manager as saying one day at rehearsal to an actress of distinguished beauty "Let us give Shaw a beefsteak and put some red blood into him." "For heaven's sake dont" exclaimed the actress: "he is bad enough as it is; but if you give him meat no woman in London will be safe." . . .

FAMILY MATTERS AND EARLY DAYS IN LONDON

From the Preface to Immaturity

1921

I CAME to London from Dublin in the spring of 1876, and found my mother and my one surviving sister (I had no brothers) established in No. 13 Victoria Grove, trying to turn their musical accomplishments to account: my mother by teaching, my sister by singing. My father, left in Dublin, spared us a pound a week from his slender resources; and by getting into debt and occasionally extracting ourselves by drawing on a maternal inheritance of £4000 over which my mother had a power of appointment, and which therefore could be realized bit by bit as her three children came of age, we managed to keep going somehow. . . .

Our ridiculous poverty was too common in our class, and not conspicuous enough in a poor country, to account wholly for our social detachment from my father's family, a large and (for Ireland) not unprosperous one. In early days the baronet, being a bachelor, was clannishly accessible: he entertained even his second cousins at Bushy Park, and was specially attentive to my mother. I was never at Bushy Park myself except once, on the occasion of his funeral (the Shaw funerals were prodigies of black pomp); but if my father had been able to turn his social opportunities to account, I might have had a quite respectable and normal social training. My mother, socially very eligible, was made welcome in all directions. She sang very well; and the Shaws were naturally a musical family. All the women could "pick out tunes" on the piano, and support them with the chords of the tonic, subdominant, dominant, and tonic again. My father played the trombone, and could vamp a bass on it to any tune that did not modulate too distractingly. My eldest uncle (Barney: I suppose I was called Bernard after him; but he himself was Uncle William) played the ophicleide, a giant keyed brass bugle, now superseded by the tuba. Berlioz has described it as a chromatic bullock; but my uncle could make it moo and

bellow very melodiously. My aunt Emily played the violoncello. Aunt Shah (Charlotte), having beautiful hands, and refinements of person and character to match them, used the harp and tambourine to display them. Modern readers will laugh at the picture of an evening at Bushy Park, with the bachelor Sir Robert and his clan seated round an ottoman on which my uncle Barney stood, solemnly playing Annie Laurie on the ophicleide. The present distinguished inheritor of the title may well find it incredible. But in those days it was the fashion for guests to provide their own music and gentlemen to play wind instruments as a social accomplishment: indeed that age of brass is still remembered and regretted by the few makers of musical instruments whose traditions go back far enough.

And now you will ask why, with such unexceptional antecedents and social openings, was I not respectably brought up? Unfortunately or fortunately (it all depends on how you look at it) my father had a habit which eventually closed all doors to him, and consequently to my mother, who could not very well be invited without him. If you asked him to dinner or to a party, he was not always quite sober when he arrived; and he was invariably scandalously drunk when he left. Now a convivial drunkard may be exhilarating in convivial company. Even a quarrelsome or boastful drunkard may be found entertaining by people who are not particular. But a miserable drunkard—and my father, in theory a teetotaler, was racked with shame and remorse even in his cups—is unbearable. We were finally dropped socially. After my early childhood I cannot remember ever paying a visit at a relative's house. If my mother and father had dined out, or gone to a party, their children would have been much more astonished than if the house had caught fire.

How my mother rescued herself from this predicament by her musical talent I will tell elsewhere. My father reduced his teetotalism from theory to practice when a mild fit, which felled him on our doorstep one Sunday afternoon, convinced him that he must stop drinking or perish. It had no worse effect; but his reform, though complete and permanent, came too late to save the social situation; and I, cut off from the social drill which puts one at one's ease in private society, grew up frightfully shy and utterly ignorant of social routine. My mother, who had been as carefully brought up as Queen Victoria, was too humane to inflict what she had suffered on

any child; besides, I think she imagined that correct behaviour is inborn, and that much of what she had been taught was natural to her. Anyhow, she never taught it to us, leaving us wholly to the promptings of our blood's blueness, with results which may be imagined. . . .

It may be asked here how I came by my heterodox opinions, seeing that my father's alcoholic neurosis, though it accounts for my not going into society, does not account for my not going to church. My reply, if put in the conventional terms of that day, would be that I was badly brought up because my mother was so well brought up. Her character reacted so strongly against her strict and loveless training that churchgoing was completely dropped in our family before I was ten years old. In my childhood I exercised my literary genius by composing my own prayers. I cannot recall the words of the final form I adopted; but I remember that it was in three movements, like a sonata, and in the best Church of Ireland style. It ended with the Lord's Prayer; and I repeated it every night in bed. I had been warned by my nurse that warm prayers were no use, and that only by kneeling by my bedside in the cold could I hope for a hearing; but I criticised this admonition unfavorably on various grounds, the real one being my preference for warmth and comfort. I did not disparage my nurse's authority in these matters because she was a Roman Catholic: I even tolerated her practice of sprinkling me with holy water occasionally. But her asceticism did not fit the essentially artistic luxurious character of my devotional exploits. Besides, the penalty did not apply to my prayer; for it was not a petition. I had too much sense to risk my faith by begging for things I knew very well I should not get; so I did not care whether my prayers were answered or not: they were a literary performance for the entertainment and propitiation of the Almighty; and though I should not have dreamt of daring to say that if He did not like them He might lump them (perhaps I was too confident of their quality to apprehend such a rebuff), I certainly behaved as if my comfort were an indispensable condition of the performance taking place at all.

The Lord's Prayer I used once or twice as a protective spell. Thunderstorms are much less common in Ireland than in England; and the first two I remember frightened me horribly. During the second I bethought me of the Lord's Prayer, and steadied myself by repeating it.

I continued these pious habits long after the conventional compulsion to attend church and Sunday School had ceased, and I no longer regarded such customs as having anything to do with an emancipated spirit like mine. But one evening, as I was wandering through the furze bushes on Torca Hill in the dusk, I suddenly asked myself why I went on repeating my prayer every night when, as I put it, I did not believe in it. Being thus brought to book by my intellectual conscience I felt obliged in common honesty to refrain from superstitious practices; and that night, for the first time since I could speak, I did not say my prayers. I missed them so much that I asked myself another question. Why am I so uncomfortable about it? Can this be conscience? But next night the discomfort wore off so much that I hardly noticed it; and the night after I had forgotten all about my prayers as completely as if I had been born a heathen. It is worth adding that this sacrifice of the grace of God, as I had been taught it, to intellectual integrity synchronized with that dawning of moral passion in me which I have described in the first act of *Man and Superman*. Up to that time I had not experienced the slightest remorse in telling lies whenever they seemed likely to help me out of a difficulty: rather did I revel in the exercise of dramatic invention involved. Even when I was a good boy I was so only theatrically, because, as actors say, I saw myself in the character; and this occurred very seldom, my taste running so strongly on stage villains and stage demons (I painted the whitewashed wall in my bedroom in Dalkey with watercolor frescoes of Mephistopheles) that I must have actually bewitched myself; for, when Nature completed my countenance in 1880 or thereabouts (I had only the tenderest sprouting of hair on my face until I was 24), I found myself equipped with the upgrowing moustaches and eyebrows, and the sarcastic nostrils of the operatic fiend whose airs (by Gounod) I had sung as a child, and whose attitudes I had affected in my boyhood. Later on, as the generations moved past me, I saw the fantasies of actors and painters come to life as living men and women, and began to perceive that imaginative fiction is to life what the sketch is to the picture or the conception to the statue. The world is full of ugly little men who were taken to the theatre to see the Yellow Dwarf or Rumpelstiltskin when they were children; and we shall soon have women in all directions with the features of Movie Vamps because in childhood they were

taken to the picture palaces and inspired with an ambition to be serpents of Old Nile.

My father disapproved of the detachment of his family from the conventional observances that were associated with the standing of the Shaw family. But he was in the grip of a humorous sense of anticlimax which I inherited from him and used with much effect when I became a writer of comedy. The more sacred an idea or a situation was by convention, the more irresistible was it to him as the jumping-off place for a plunge into laughter. Thus, when I scoffed at the Bible he would instantly and quite sincerely rebuke me, telling me, with what little sternness was in his nature, that I should not speak so; that no educated man would make such a display of ignorance; that the Bible was universally recognized as a literary and historical masterpiece; and as much more to the same effect as he could muster. But when he had reached the point of feeling really impressive, a convulsion of internal chuckling would wrinkle up his eyes; and (I knowing all the time quite well what was coming) would cap his eulogy by assuring me, with an air of perfect fairness, that even the worst enemy of religion could say no worse of the Bible than that it was the damndest parcel of lies ever written. He would then rub his eyes and chuckle for quite a long time. It became an unacknowledged game between us that I should provoke him to exhibitions of this kind.

With such a father my condition was clearly hopeless as far as the conventions of religion were concerned. In essential matters his influence was as good as his culture permitted. One of my very earliest recollections is reading *The Pilgrim's Progress* to him, and being corrected by him for saying grievous instead of grievous. I never saw him, as far as I can remember, reading anything but the newspaper; but he had read Sir Walter Scott and other popular classics; and he always encouraged me to do the same, and to frequent the National Gallery, and to go to the theatre and the opera when I could afford it. His anticlimaxes depended for their effect on our sense of the sacredness he was reacting against: there would have been no fun whatever in saying that the *Adventures of Munchausen* (known to us as *Baron Mun Chawzon*) were a parcel of lies. If my mother's pastors and masters had had a little of his humor, she would not simply have dropped the subject of religion with her children in silent but implacable dislike of what had helped to make her childhood miserable, and resolved that it should not do the

same to them. The vacuum she left by this policy had, I think, serious disadvantages for my two sisters (the younger of whom died just before I came to London); but in my case it only made a clear space for positive beliefs later on.

My mother, I may say here, had no comedic impulses, and never uttered an epigram in her life: all my comedy is a Shavian inheritance. She had plenty of imagination, and really lived in it and on it. Her brother, my uncle Walter, who stayed with us from time to time in the intervals of his trips across the Atlantic as a surgeon on the Inman Liners, had an extraordinary command of picturesque language, partly derived by memory from the Bible and Prayer Book, and partly natural. The conversation of the navigating staffs and pursers of our ocean services was at that time (whatever it may be today) extremely Rabelaisian and profane. Falstaff himself could not have held his own with my uncle in obscene anecdotes, unprintable limericks, and fantastic profanity; and it mattered nothing to him whether his audience consisted of his messmates on board ship or his schoolboy nephew: he performed before each with equal gusto. To do him justice, he was always an artist in his obscenity and blasphemy, and therefore never sank to the level of incontinent blackguardism. His efforts were controlled, deliberate, fastidiously chosen and worded. But they were all the more effective in destroying all my inculcated childish reverence for the verbiage of religion, for its legends and personifications and parables. In view of my subsequent work in the world it seems providential that I was driven to the essentials of religion by the reduction of every factitious or fictitious element in it to the most irreverent absurdity. . . .

The institution of the family, which is the centre of reverence for carefully brought-up children, was just the opposite for me. In a large family there are always a few skeletons in the cupboard; and in my father's clan there were many uncles and aunts and cousins, consequently many cupboards, consequently some skeletons. Our own particular skeleton was my father's drunkenness. It was combined with a harmlessness and humaneness which made him the least formidable of men; so that it was impossible for him to impress his children in the manner that makes awe and dread almost an instinct with some children. It is much to his credit that he was incapable of deliberately practising any such impressiveness, drunk or sober; but unfortunately the drunkenness was so humiliating that it would have been unendurable if we had

not taken refuge in laughter. It had to be either a family tragedy or a family joke, and it was on the whole a healthy instinct that decided us to get what ribald fun was possible out of it, which, however, was very little indeed. If Noah had made a habit of drinking, his sons would soon have worn out the pious solicitude which they displayed on the occasion of his single lapse from sobriety. A boy who has seen "the governor," with an imperfectly wrapped-up goose under one arm and a ham in the same condition under the other (both purchased under heaven knows what delusion of festivity), butting at the garden wall in the belief that he was pushing open the gate, and transforming his tall hat to a concertina in the process, and who, instead of being overwhelmed with shame and anxiety at the spectacle, has been so disabled by merriment (uproariously shared by the maternal uncle) that he has hardly been able to rush to the rescue of the hat and pilot its wearer to safety, is clearly not a boy who will make tragedies of trifles instead of making trifles of tragedies. If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance.

Then there was my Uncle William, a most amiable man, with great natural dignity. In early manhood he was not only an inveterate smoker, but so insistent a toper that a man who made a bet that he would produce Barney Shaw sober, and knocked him up at six in the morning with that object, lost his bet. But this might have happened to any common drunkard. What gave the peculiar Shaw finish and humor to the case was that my uncle suddenly and instantly gave up smoking and drinking at one blow, and devoted himself to his accomplishment of playing the ophicleide. In this harmless and gentle pursuit he continued, a blameless old bachelor, for many years, and then, to the amazement of Dublin, renounced the ophicleide and all its works, and married a lady of distinguished social position and great piety. She declined, naturally, to have anything to do with us; and, as far as I know, treated the rest of the family in the same way. Anyhow, I never saw her, and only saw my uncle furtively by the roadside after his marriage, when he would make hopeless attempts to save me, in the pious sense of the word, not perhaps without some secret Shavian enjoyment of the irreverent pleasantries with which I scattered my path to perdition. He was reputed to sit with a Bible on his knees, and an opera glass to his eyes, watching the ladies' bathing place in Dalkey; and my sister, who was a swimmer, con-

firmed this gossip as far as the opera glass was concerned.

But this was only the prelude to a very singular conclusion, or rather catastrophe. The fantastic imagery of the Bible so gained on my uncle that he took off his boots, explaining that he expected to be taken up to heaven at any moment like Elijah, and that he felt that his boots would impede his celestial flight. He then went a step further, and hung his room with all the white fabrics he could lay hands on, alleging that he was the Holy Ghost. At last he became silent, and remained so to the end. His wife, warned that his harmless fancies might change into dangerous ones, had him removed to an asylum in the north of Dublin. My father thought that a musical appeal might prevail with him, and went in search of the ophicleide. But it was nowhere to be found. He took a flute to the asylum instead; for every Shaw of that generation seemed able to play any wind instrument at sight. My uncle, still obstinately mute, contemplated the flute for a while, and then played *Home Sweet Home* on it. My father had to be content with this small success, as nothing more could be got out of his brother. A day or two later my uncle, impatient for heaven, resolved to expedite his arrival there. Every possible weapon had been carefully removed from his reach; but his custodians reckoned without the Shavian originality. They had left him somehow within reach of a carpet bag. He put his head into it, and in a strenuous effort to decapitate or strangle himself by closing it on his neck, perished of heart failure. I should be glad to believe that, like Elijah, he got the heavenly reward he sought; for he was a fine upstanding man and a gentle creature, nobody's enemy but his own, as the saying is.

Still, what sort of gravity could a boy maintain with a family history of this kind? However, I must not imply that all my uncles were like that. They were mostly respectable normal people. I can recall only two other exceptions to this rule. One of my uncles married an elegant and brilliant lady, from whom he separated after scandalizing the family by beating her; but as Job himself would have beaten her when she lost her very unstable temper, nobody who knew her intimately ever blamed him. Though the neurosis which produced my father's joyless craving for alcohol had the same effect, with the same curious recalcitrance and final impermanence, in one or two other cases, and was perhaps connected with occasional family paroxysms of Evangelical piety, and some share of my father's comedic love of anticlimax, yet on

the whole our collection of skeletons was not exceptionally large. But as, compared with similar English families, we had a power of derisive dramatization that made the bones of the Shavian skeletons rattle more loudly; and as I possessed this power in an abnormal degree, and frequently entertained my friends with stories of my uncles (so effectively, by the way, that nobody ever believed them), the family, far from being a school of reverence for me, was rather a mine from which I could dig highly amusing material without the trouble of inventing a single incident. What idle fancy of mine could have improved on the hard facts of the Life and Death of Uncle William? . . .

. . . I was painfully shy, and was simply afraid to accept invitations, with the result that I very soon ceased to get any. I was told that if I wanted to get on, I must not flatly refuse invitations—actually dinner invitations—which were meant to help me, and the refusal of which was nothing short of a social outrage. But I knew very well that introductions could be of no use to one who had no profession and could do nothing except what any clerk could do. I knew I was useless, worthless, penniless, and that until I had qualified myself to do something, and proved it by doing it, all this business of calling on people who might perhaps do something for me, and dining out without money to pay for a cab, was silly. Fortunately for me, the realism that made me face my own position so ruthlessly also kept before me the fact that if I borrowed money I could not pay it back, and therefore might more candidly beg or steal it. I knew quite well that if I borrowed £5 from a friend and could not pay it back, I was selling a friend for £5, and that this was a foolish bargain. So I did not borrow, and therefore did not lose my friends; though some of them, who could have had no illusions about my financial capacity, hinted that they were quite willing, and indeed anxious, to call a gift a loan.

I feel bound to confess here, in reference to my neglect of the few invitations and offers of introductions that reached me, that behind the conviction that they could lead to nothing that I wanted lay the unspoken fear that they might lead to something I did not want: that is, commercial employment. I had had enough of that. No doubt it would have been a great relief to my mother if I could have earned something. No doubt I could have earned something if I had really meant to. No doubt if my father had died, and my mother been struck dumb and blind, I should have had to go

back to the office desk (the doom of shabby gentility) and give up all hope of acquiring a profession; for even the literary profession, though it exacts no academic course and costly equipment, does exact all one's time and the best of one's brains. As it was, I dodged every opening instinctively. With an excellent testimonial and a unexceptionable character, I was an incorrigible Unemployable. I kept up pretences (to myself as much as to others) for some time. I answered advertisements, not too offensively. I actually took a berth in a telephone Company (then a sensational novelty) and had some difficulty in extricating myself from the Company which bought it up. I can remember an interview with a bank manager in Onslow Gardens (procured for me, to my dismay, by an officious friend with whom I *had* dined) with a view to employment in the bank. I entertained him so brilliantly (if I may use an adverb with which in later years I was much plagued by friendly critics) that we parted on the best of terms, he declaring that, though I certainly ought to get something to do without the least difficulty, he did not feel that a bank clerkship was the right job for me.

I have said that I had an excellent testimonial as an employee in a business office. I had, as a matter of fact, spent four and a half years at a desk in Dublin before I emigrated. . . .

. . . I decided, at thirteen or thereabouts, that for the moment I must go into business and earn some money and begin to be a grown-up man. There was at that time, on one of the quays in Dublin, a firm of cloth merchants, by name Scott, Spain, and Rooney. A friend of ours knew Scott, and asked him to give me a start in life with some employment. I called on this gentleman by appointment. I had the vaguest notion of what would happen: all I knew was that I was "going into an office." I thought I should have preferred to interview Spain, as the name was more romantic. Scott turned out to be a smart handsome man, with moustachios; and I suppose a boy more or less in his warehouse did not matter to him when there was a friend to be obliged; at all events, he said only a few perfunctory things and was settling my employment, when, as my stars would have it, Rooney appeared. Mr Rooney was much older, not at all smart, but long, lean, grave and respectable.

The last time I saw the late Sir George Alexander (the actor) he described to me his own boyhood, spent in a cloth warehouse in Cheapside, where they loaded him with bales,

and praised him highly for his excellent conduct, even rewarding him after some years to the extent of sixteen shillings a week. Rooney saved me from the bales. He talked to me a little, and then said quite decisively that I was too young, and that the work was not suitable to me. He evidently considered that my introducer, my parents, and his young partner, had been inconsiderate; and I presently descended the stairs, reprieved and unemployed. As Mr Rooney was certainly fifty then at least, he must be a centenarian if, as I hope, he still lives. If he does, I offer him the assurance that I have not forgotten his sympathy.

A year later, or thereabouts, my uncle Frederick, an important official in the Valuation Office, whom no land agent or family solicitor in Dublin could afford to disoblige, asked a leading and terribly respectable firm of land agents, carrying on business at 15 Molesworth Street, to find a berth for me. They did so; and I became their office boy (junior clerk I called myself) at eighteen shillings a month. It was a very good opening for anyone with a future as a land agent, which in Ireland at that time was a business of professional rank. It was utterly thrown away on me. However, as the office was overstaffed with gentlemen apprentices, who had paid large fees for the privilege of singing operatic selections with me when the principals were out, there was nothing to complain of socially, even for a Shaw; and the atmosphere was as uncommercial as that of an office can be. Thus I learnt business habits without being infected with the business spirit. By the time I had attained to thirty shillings a month, the most active and responsible official in the office, the cashier, vanished; and as we were private bankers to some extent, our clients drawing cheques on us, and so forth, someone had to take his place without an hour's delay. An elder substitute grumbled at the strange job, and, though an able man in his way, could not make his cash balance. It became necessary, after a day or two of confusion, to try the office boy as a stopgap whilst the advertisements for a new cashier of appropriate age and responsibility were going forward. Immediately the machine worked again quite smoothly. I, who never knew how much money I had of my own (except when the figure was zero), proved a model of accuracy as to the money of others. I acquired my predecessor's very neat handwriting, my own being too sloped and straggly for the cash book. The efforts to fill my important place more worthily slackened. I bought a tailed coat, and

was chaffed about it by the apprentices. My salary was raised to £48 a year, which was as much as I expected at sixteen and much less than the firm would have had to pay to a competent adult: in short, I made good in spite of myself, and found, to my dismay, that Business, instead of expelling me as the worthless impostor I was, was fastening upon me with no intention of letting me go.

Behold me therefore in my twentieth year, with a business training, in an occupation which I detested as cordially as any sane person lets himself detest anything he cannot escape from. In March 1876 I broke loose. I gave a month's notice. My employers naturally thought I was discontented with my salary (£84, I think, by that time), and explained to me quietly that they hoped to make my position more eligible. My only fear was that they should make it so eligible that all excuse for throwing it up would be taken from me. I thanked them and said I was resolved to go; and I had, of course, no reason in the world to give them for my resolution. They were a little hurt, and explained to my uncle that they had done their best, but that I seemed to have made up my mind. I had. After enjoying for a few days the luxury of not having to go to the office, and being, if not my own master, at least not anyone else's slave, I packed a carpet bag; boarded the North Wall boat; and left the train next morning at Euston, where, on hearing a porter cry, in an accent quite strange to me (I had hardly ever heard an h dropped before) "Ensm' faw weel?" which I rightly interpreted as "Hansom or four wheel?" I was afraid to say hansom, because I had never been in one and was not sure that I should know how to get in. So I solemnly drove in a growler through streets whose names Dickens had made familiar to me, London being at its spring best, which is its very best, to Victoria Grove, where the driver accepted four shillings as a reasonable fare for the journey. . . .

For the first couple of years of my life in London I did nothing decisive. I acted as ghost for a musician who had accepted a berth as musical critic; and as such ghosts must not appear, and I was therefore cut off from the paper and could not correct proofs, my criticisms, mostly very ruthless ones, appeared with such misprints, such mutilations and venal interpolations by other hands, so inextricably mixed up with other criticisms most offensive to my artistic sense, that I have ever since hidden this activity of mine as a guilty secret, lest someone should dig out these old notices and imagine that I was

responsible for everything in them and with them. Even now I can hardly bring myself to reveal that the name of the paper was *The Hornet*, and that it had passed then into the hands of a certain Captain Donald Shaw, who was not related to me, and whom I never met. It died on his hands, and partly, perhaps, at mine.

Then my cousin, Mrs Cashel Hoey, a woman of letters, daughter of the aunt who played the tambourine with her beautiful hands, gave me an introduction to Arnold White, then secretary to the Edison Telephone Company. He found a berth for me in the Way Leave Department of that short-lived company; and I presently found myself studying the topography of the east end of London, and trying to persuade all sorts of people to allow the Company to put insulators and poles and derricks and the like on their roofs to carry the telephone lines. I liked the exploration involved; but my shyness made the business of calling on strangers frightfully uncongenial; and my sensitiveness, which was extreme, in spite of the brazen fortitude which I simulated, made the impatient rebuffs I had to endure occasionally, especially from much worried women who mistook me for an advertisement canvasser, ridiculously painful to me. But I escaped these trials presently; for I soon had to take charge of the department, and organize the work of more thick-skinned adventurers instead of doing it myself. Further particulars will be found in the preface to my second novel, *The Irrational Knot*. The Edison Telephone Company was presently swallowed up by the Bell Telephone Company; and I seized the opportunity to recover my destitute freedom by refusing to apply for the employment promised by the amalgamation to the disbanded staff. This was the end of my career as a commercial employee. I soon dropped even the pretence of seeking any renewal of it. Except for a day or two in 1881 when I earned a few pounds by counting the votes at an election in Leyton, I was an Unemployable, an able-bodied pauper in fact if not in law, until the year 1885, when for the first time I earned enough money directly by my pen to pay my way. My income for that year amounted to £112; and from that time until the war of 1914-18 momentarily threatened us all with bankruptcy, I had no pecuniary anxieties except those produced by the possession of money, not by the lack of it. My penury phase was over.

The telephone episode occurred in 1879; and in that year I had done what every literary adventurer did in those days,

and many do still. I had written a novel. My office training had left me with a habit of doing something regularly every day as a fundamental condition of industry as distinguished from idleness. I knew I was making no headway unless I was doing this, and that I should never produce a book in any other fashion. I bought supplies of white paper, demy size, by sixpennorths at a time; folded it in quarto; and condemned myself to fill five pages of it a day, rain or shine, dull or inspired. I had so much of the schoolboy and the clerk still in me that if my five pages ended in the middle of a sentence I did not finish it until next day. On the other hand, if I missed a day, I made up for it by doing a double task on the morrow. On this plan I produced five novels in five years. It was my professional apprenticeship, doggedly suffered with all the diffidence and dissatisfaction of a learner with a very critical master, myself to wit, whom there was no pleasing and no evading, and persevered in to save my self-respect in a condition of impecuniosity which, for two acute moments (I still recall them with a wry face), added broken boots and carefully hidden raggedness to cuffs whose edges were trimmed by the scissors, and a tall hat so limp with age that I had to wear it back-to-front to enable me to take it off without doubling up the brim.

I had no success as a novelist. I sent the five novels to all the publishers in London and some in America. None would venture on them. Fifty or sixty refusals without a single acceptance forced me into a fierce self-sufficiency. I became undiscourageable, acquiring a superhuman insensitiveness to praise or blame which has been useful to me at times since, though at other times it has retarded my business affairs by making me indifferent to the publication and performances of my works, and even impatient of them as an unwelcome interruption to the labor of writing their successors. Instead of seizing every opportunity of bringing them before the public, I have often, on plausible but really trivial pretexts, put off proposals which I should have embraced with all the normal author's keenness for publicity.

Thus, after five years of novel writing, I was a complete professional failure. The more I wrote and the better I wrote the less I pleased the publishers. This first novel of mine, though rejected, at least elicited some expressions of willingness to read any future attempts. Blackwood actually accepted and then revoked. Sir George Macmillan, then a junior, not only sent me a longish and evidently considered report

by the firm's reader, John (afterwards Lord) Morley, but suggested to him that I might be of some use to him in his capacity as editor of the Pall Mall Gazette.

All such responses ceased with my second novel; and I had no means of knowing, and was too young and inexperienced to guess, that what was the matter was not any lack of literary competence on my part, but the antagonism raised by my hostility to respectable Victorian thought and society. I was left without a ray of hope; yet I did not stop writing novels until, having planned my fifth effort on a colossal scale, I found at the end of what were to me only the first two sections of it, that I had no more to say and had better wait until I had educated myself much farther. And when, after an interval of critical journalism, I resumed the writing of fiction, I did so as a playwright and not as a novelist. . . .

AN ANECDOTE

From the Preface to Back to Methuselah

1921

... I FOUND myself one day towards the end of the eighteen-seventies in a cell in the old Brompton Oratory arguing with Father Addis, who had been called by one of his flock to attempt my conversion to Roman Catholicism. The universe exists, said the father: somebody must have made it. If that somebody exists, said I, somebody must have made him. I grant that for the sake of argument, said the Oratorian. I grant you a maker of God. I grant you as long a line of makers as you please; but an infinity of makers is unthinkable and extravagant: it is no harder to believe in number one than in number fifty thousand or fifty million; so why not accept number one and stop there, since no attempt to get behind him will remove your logical difficulty? By your leave, said I, it is as easy for me to believe that the universe made itself as that a maker of the universe made himself: in fact much easier; for the universe visibly exists and makes itself as it goes along, whereas a maker for it is a hypothesis. Of

course we could get no further on these lines. He rose and said that we were like two men working a saw, he pushing it forward and I pushing it back, and cutting nothing; but when we had dropped the subject and were walking through the refectory, he returned to it for a moment to say that he should go mad if he lost his belief. I, glorying in the robust callousness of youth and the comedic spirit, felt quite comfortable and said so; though I was touched, too, by his evident sincerity.

LEARNING TO PLAY THE PIANO

From the Preface to London Music

1935

... WHEN my mother sold the Hatch Street furniture, it never occurred to her to sell our piano, though I could not play it, nor could my father. We did not realize, nor did she, that she was never coming back, and that, except for a few days when my father, taking a little holiday for the first time in his life within my experience, came to see us in London, she would never meet him again. Family revolutions would seldom be faced if they did not present themselves at first as temporary makeshifts. Accordingly, having lived since my childhood in a house full of music, I suddenly found myself in a house where there was no music, and could be none unless I made it myself. I have recorded elsewhere how, having purchased one of Weale's Handbooks which contained a diagram of the keyboard and an explanation of musical notation, I began my self-tuition, not with Czerny's five-finger exercises, but with the overture to Don Giovanni, thinking rightly that I had better start with something I knew well enough to hear whether my fingers were on the right notes or not. There were plenty of vocal scores of operas and oratorios in our lodging; and although I never acquired any technical skill as a pianist, and cannot to this day play a scale with any certainty of not fozzling it, I acquired what I wanted: the power to take a vocal score and learn its contents as if I had heard it rehearsed by my mother and her

colleagues. I could manage arrangements of orchestral music much better than piano music proper. At last I could play the old rum-tum accompaniments of those days well enough (knowing how they *should* be played) to be more agreeable to singers than many really competent pianists. I bought more scores, among them one of Lohengrin, through which I made the revolutionary discovery of Wagner. I bought arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies, and discovered the musical regions that lie outside opera and oratorio. Later on, I was forced to learn to play the classical symphonies and overtures in strict time by hammering the bass in piano duets with my sister in London. I played Bach's Inventions and his Art of Fugue. I studied academic textbooks, and actually worked out exercises in harmony and counterpoint under supervision by an organist friend named Crament, avoiding consecutive fifths and octaves, and having not the faintest notion of what the result would sound like. I read pseudo-scientific treatises about the roots of chords which candidates for the degree of Mus.Doc. at the universities had to swallow, and learnt that Stainer's commonsense views would get you plucked at Oxford, and Ouseley's pedantries at Cambridge. I read Mozart's Succinct Thoroughbass (a scrap of paper with some helpful tips on it which he scrawled for his pupil Sussmaier); and this, many years later, Edward Elgar told me was the only document in existence of the smallest use to a student composer. It was, I grieve to say, of no use to me; but then I was not a young composer. It ended in my knowing much more about music than any of the great composers, an easy achievement for any critic, however barren. For awhile I must have become a little pedantic; for I remember being shocked, on looking up Lee's old vocal score of Don Giovanni, to find that he had cut out all the repetitions which Mozart had perpetrated as a matter of sonata form. I now see that Lee was a century before his time in this reform, and hope some day to hear a performance of Mozart's Idomeneo in which nothing is sung twice over.

When I look back on all the banging, whistling, roaring, and growling inflicted on nervous neighbors during this process of education, I am consumed with useless remorse. But what else could I have done? Today there is the wireless, which enables me to hear from all over Europe more good music in a week than I could then hear in ten years, if at all. When, after my five years office slavery, I joined my mother in London and lived with her for twenty years until my

marriage, I used to drive her nearly crazy by my favorite selections from Wagner's Ring, which to her was "all recitative", and horribly discordant at that. She never complained at the time, but confessed it after we separated, and said that she had sometimes gone away to cry. If I had committed a murder I do not think it would trouble my conscience very much; but this I cannot bear to think of. If I had to live my life over again I should devote it to the establishment of some arrangement of headphones and microphones or the like whereby the noises made by musical maniacs should be audible to themselves only. In Germany it is against the law to play the piano with the window open. But of what use is that to the people in the house? It should be made felony to play a musical instrument in any other than a completely soundproof room. The same should apply to loud speakers on pain of confiscation.

II

EDUCATION

G.B.S. AT SCHOOL

From the Preface to Misalliance

1910

... WHAT private amateur parental enterprise cannot do may be done very effectively by organized professional enterprise in large institutions established for the purpose. And it is to such professional enterprise that parents hand over their children when they can afford it. They send their children to school; and there is, on the whole, nothing on earth intended for innocent people so horrible as a school. To begin with, it is a prison. But it is in some respects more cruel than a prison. In a prison, for instance, you are not forced to read books written by the warders and the governor (who of course would not be warders and governors if they could write readable books), and beaten or otherwise tormented if you cannot remember their utterly unmemorable contents. In the prison you are not forced to sit listening to turnkeys discoursing without charm or interest on subjects that they dont understand and dont care about, and are therefore incapable of making you understand or care about. In a prison they may torture your body; but they do not torture your brains; and they protect you against violence and outrage from your fellow-prisoners. In a school you have none of these advantages. With the world's bookshelves loaded with fascinating and inspired books, the very manna sent down from Heaven to feed your souls, you are forced to read a hideous imposture called a school book, written by a man who cannot write: a book from which no human being can learn anything: a book which, though you may decipher it, you cannot in any fruitful sense read, though the enforced attempt will make you loathe the sight of a book all the rest of your life. With millions of acres of woods and valleys and hills and wind and air and birds and streams and fishes and all sorts of instructive and healthy things easily accessible, or with streets and shop windows and crowds and vehicles and all sorts of city delights at the door, you are forced to sit, not

in a room with some human grace and comfort of furniture and decoration, but in a stalled pound with a lot of other children, beaten if you talk, beaten if you move, beaten if you cannot prove by answering idiotic questions that even when you escaped from the pound and from the eye of your gaoler, you were still agonizing over his detestable sham books instead of daring to live. And your childish hatred of your gaoler and flogger is nothing to his adult hatred of you; for he is a slave forced to endure your society for his daily bread. You have not even the satisfaction of knowing how you are torturing him and how he loathes you; and you give yourself unnecessary pains to annoy him with furtive tricks and spiteful doing of forbidden things. No wonder he is sometimes provoked to fiendish outbursts of wrath. No wonder men of downright sense, like Dr Johnson, admit that under such circumstances children will not learn anything unless they are so cruelly beaten that they make desperate efforts to memorize words and phrases to escape flagellation. It is a ghastly business, quite beyond words, this schooling.

And now I hear cries of protest arising all round. First my own schoolmasters, or their ghosts, asking whether I was cruelly beaten at school? No; but then I did not learn anything at school. Dr Johnson's schoolmaster presumably did care enough whether Sam learned anything to beat him savagely enough to force him to lame his mind—for Johnson's great mind *was* lamed—by learning his lessons. None of my schoolmasters really cared a rap (or perhaps it would be fairer to them to say that their employers did not care a rap and therefore did not give them the necessary caning powers) whether I learnt my lessons or not, provided my father paid my schooling bill, the collection of which was the real object of the school. Consequently I did not learn my school lessons, having much more important ones in hand, with the result that I have not wasted my life trifling with literary fools in taverns as Johnson did when he should have been shaking England with the thunder of his spirit. My schooling did me a great deal of harm and no good whatever: it was simply dragging a child's soul through the dirt; but I escaped Squeers and Creakle just as I escaped Johnson and Carlyle. And this is what happens to most of us. We are not effectively coerced to learn: we stave off punishment as far as we can by lying and trickery and guessing and using our wits; and when this does not suffice we scribble impositions, or suffer extra imprisonments—"keeping in" was the

phrase in my time—or let a master strike us with a cane and fall back on our pride at being able to bear it physically (he not being allowed to hit us too hard) to outface the dishonor we should have been taught to die rather than endure. And so idleness and worthlessness on the one hand and a pretence of coercion on the other became a despicable routine. If my schoolmasters had been really engaged in educating me instead of painfully earning their bread by keeping me from annoying my elders they would have turned me out of the school, telling me that I was thoroughly disloyal to it; that I had no intention of learning; that I was mocking and distracting the boys who did wish to learn; that I was a liar and a shirker and a seditious little nuisance; and that nothing could injure me in character and degrade their occupation more than allowing me (much less forcing me) to remain in the school under such conditions. But in order to get expelled, it was necessary to commit a crime of such atrocity that the parents of the other boys would have threatened to remove their sons sooner than allow them to be schoolfellows with the delinquent. I can remember only one case in which such a penalty was threatened; and in that case the culprit, a boarder, had kissed a housemaid, or possibly, being a handsome youth, been kissed by her. She did not kiss me; and nobody ever dreamt of expelling me. The truth was, a boy meant just so much a year to the institution. That was why he was kept there against his will. That was why he was kept there when his expulsion would have been an unspeakable relief and benefit both to his teachers and himself.

It may be argued that if the uncommercial attitude had been taken, and all the disloyal wasters and idlers shewn sternly to the door, the school would not have been emptied, but filled. But so honest an attitude was impossible. The masters must have hated the school much more than the boys did. Just as you cannot imprison a man without imprisoning a warder to see that he does not escape, the warder being tied to the prison as effectually by the fear of unemployment and starvation as the prisoner is by the bolts and bars, so these poor schoolmasters, with their small salaries and large classes, were as much prisoners as we were, and much more responsible and anxious ones. They could not impose the heroic attitude on their employers: nor would they have been able to obtain places as schoolmasters if their habits had been heroic. For the best of them their employment was provisional: they looked forward to escaping from

it into the pulpit. The ablest and most impatient of them were often so irritated by the awkward, slow-witted, slovenly boys: that is, the ones that required special consideration and patient treatment, that they vented their irritation on them ruthlessly, nothing being easier than to entrap or bewilder such a boy into giving a pretext for punishing him.

The results, as far as I was concerned, were what might have been expected. My school made only the thinnest pretence of teaching anything but Latin and Greek. When I went there as a very small boy I knew a good deal of Latin grammar which I had been taught in a few weeks privately by my uncle. When I had been several years at school this same uncle examined me and discovered that the net result of my schooling was that I had forgotten what he had taught me, and had learnt nothing else. To this day, though I can still decline a Latin noun and repeat some of the old paradigms in the old meaningless way, because their rhythm sticks to me, I have never yet seen a Latin inscription on a tomb that I could translate throughout. Of Greek I can decipher perhaps the greater part of the Greek alphabet. In short, I am, as to classical education, another Shakespear. I can read French as easily as English; and under pressure of necessity I can turn to account some scraps of German and a little operatic Italian; but these I was never taught at school. Instead, I was taught lying, dishonorable submission to tyranny, dirty stories, a blasphemous habit of treating love and maternity as obscene jokes, hopelessness, evasion, derision, cowardice, and all the blackguard's shifts by which the coward intimidates other cowards. And if I had been a boarder at an English public school instead of a day boy at an Irish one, I might have had to add to these, deeper shames still.

From Sixteen Self Sketches

... There must be law in large families and in all schools. This complicates the problem beyond any cut and dried solution that I can suggest. Schools at present make a worse mess of it than households. As I write I have before me a letter from a clever little girl in an Irish convent school. She proudly gives me a list of her nine simultaneous school classes in different languages and branches of education, the acquirement of each of which would be a whole time job for

many months for a budding Newton. Such a curriculum leaves me speechless. Yet it must not be inferred that I am on the side of those who agitate against what they call premature educational pressure. John Stuart Mill was taught the classical dead languages when he was a child by his father James Mill. I have heard James denounced as a monster for this by William Morris. But I am not so sure. John himself was not so sure. I am not defending the current assumption in the plutocratic public schools that a man is educated when he can read Latin and solve quadratic equations. Obviously he may be able to do both and remain dangerously ignorant as a citizen. And mostly, when he has been crammed and coached into a university degree on this assumption, he may never again look at a page of Latin or think of it without loathing, nor keep his accounts in any but the simplest arithmetic. Yet I am faced with the flat fact that most of us (including myself) remember only the paradigms we have been taught in our childhood, however deeply we may philosophize in later life. My memory of the multiplication and pence tables I learnt before I was six, and the Latin declensions and conjugations I learnt before I was ten, I still remember in my ninetysecond year, whereas my efforts as an adult to memorize similar paradigms in modern languages were so unsuccessful that I advise students of them not to waste time in trying to learn irregular verbs (the Spanish ones, for instance) but to speak them as regular. Spaniards may laugh; but they will understand, which is all that is necessary. When an English child says "I thinked" and "I goed" it is just as well understood as if it said "I thought" and "I went." Pidgin is as useful as the English of Milton, and much more concise. Our craze for standards of correctness, pushed as it is to make any departure from them a punishable moral delinquency, wastes years of our lives. However many ways are open before us we refuse to move until two of them are labelled respectively right and wrong, with the right as difficult as we can make it and the wrong the shortest and easiest.

THE MODERN EDUCATION WHICH JOAN ESCAPED

From the Preface to Saint Joan

1924

IF Joan were reborn today she would be sent, first to a convent school in which she would be mildly taught to connect inspiration and conscience with St Catherine and St Michael exactly as she was in the fifteenth century, and then finished up with a very energetic training in the gospel of Saints Louis Pasteur and Paul Bert, who would tell her (possibly in visions but more probably in pamphlets) not to be a superstitious little fool, and to empty out St Catherine and the rest of the Catholic hagiology as an obsolete iconography of exploded myths. It would be rubbed into her that Galileo was a martyr, and his persecutors incorrigible ignoramuses, and that St Teresa's hormones had gone astray and left her incurably hyperpituitary or hyperadrenal or hysteroid or epileptoid or anything but asteroid. She would have been convinced by precept and experiment that baptism and receiving the body of her Lord were contemptible superstitions, and that vaccination and vivisection were enlightened practices. Behind her new Saints Louis and Paul there would be not only Science purifying Religion and being purified by it, but hypochondria, melancholia, cowardice, stupidity, cruelty, muckraking curiosity, knowledge without wisdom, and everything that the eternal soul in Nature loathes, instead of the virtues of which St Catherine was the figure head. As to the new rites, which would be the saner Joan? the one who carried little children to be baptized of water and the spirit, or the one who sent the police to force their parents to have the most villainous racial poison we know thrust into their veins? the one who told them the story of the angel and Mary, or the one who questioned them as to their experiences of the Edipus complex? the one to whom the consecrated wafer was the very body of the virtue that was her salvation, or the one who looked forward to a precise and convenient

regulation of her health and her desires by a nicely calculated diet of thyroid extract, adrenalin, thymine, pituitrin, and insulin, with pick-me-ups of hormone stimulants, the blood being first carefully fortified with antibodies against all possible infections by inoculations of infected animals, and against old age by surgical extirpation of the reproductive ducts or weekly doses of monkey gland?

It is true that behind all these quackeries there is a certain body of genuine scientific physiology. But was there any the less a certain body of genuine psychology behind St Catherine and the Holy Ghost? And which is the healthier mind? the saintly mind or the monkey gland mind? Does not the present cry of Back to the Middle Ages, which has been incubating ever since the Pre-Raphaelite movement began, mean that it is no longer our Academy pictures that are intolerable, but our credulities that have not the excuse of being superstitions, our cruelties that have not the excuse of barbarism, our persecutions that have not the excuse of religious faith, our shameless substitution of successful swindlers and scoundrels and quacks for saints as objects of worship, and our deafness and blindness to the calls and visions of the inexorable power that made us, and will destroy us if we disregard it? To Joan and her contemporaries we should appear as a drove of Gadarene swine, possessed by all the unclean spirits cast out by the faith and civilization of the Middle Ages, running violently down a steep place into a hell of high explosives. For us to set up our condition as a standard of sanity, and declare Joan mad because she never condescended to it, is to prove that we are not only lost but irredeemable. Let us then once for all drop all nonsense about Joan being cracked, and accept her as at least as sane as Florence Nightingale, who also combined a very simple iconography of religious belief with a mind so exceptionally powerful that it kept her in continual trouble with the medical and military panjandrums of her time.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

*From The Intelligent Woman's Guide to
Socialism and Capitalism*

1928

... WHEN schooling is made a national industry, and the Government sets up schools all over the country, and imposes daily attendance on the huge majority of children whose parents cannot afford to send their children to any but the State school, a conflict arises over the souls of the children. What religion is to be taught in the State school? The Roman Catholics try to keep their children out of the State school (they must send them to some school or other) by subscribing money themselves to maintain Roman Catholic schools alongside the State schools; and the other denominations, including the Church of England, do the same. But unless they receive State aid: that is, money provided by taxing and rating all citizens indiscriminately, they cannot afford to take in all the children, or to keep up to a decent standard the schooling of those whom they do take in. And the moment it is proposed to give them money out of the rates and taxes, the trouble begins. Rather than pay rates to be used in making Roman Catholics or even Anglo-Catholics of little English children, Nonconformist Protestant ratepayers will let themselves be haled before the magistrates and allow their furniture to be sold up. They would go to the stake if that were the alternative to paying Peter's Pence to the Scarlet Woman and setting children's feet in the way to eternal damnation. For it is not in Ireland alone that Protestants and Roman Catholics believe each that the other will spend eternity immersed in burning brimstone. Church of England zealots hold that belief even more convincingly about village Dissenters than about Roman Catholics.

The opinions of the parties are so irreconcilable, and the passion of their hostility so fierce, that the Government, when it is once committed to general compulsory education, either directly in its own schools or by subsidies to other schools, finds itself driven to devise some sort of neutral religion that

will suit everybody, or else forbid all mention of the subject in school. An example of the first expedient is the Cowper-Temple clause in the Education Act of 1870, which ordains that the Bible shall be read in schools without reference to any creed or catechism peculiar "to any one denomination." The total prohibition expedient is known as Secular Education, and has been tried extensively in Australia.

The Cowper-Temple plan does not meet the case of the Roman Catholics, who do not permit indiscriminate access to the Bible, nor of the Jews, who can hardly be expected to accept the reading of the New Testament as religious instruction. Besides, if the children are to learn anything more than the three Rs they must be taught Copernican astronomy, electronic physics, and evolution. Now it is not good sense to lead a child at ten o'clock to attach religious importance to the belief that the earth is flat and immovable, and the sky a ceiling above it in which there is a heaven furnished like a king's palace, and, at eleven, that the earth is a sphere spinning on its axis and rushing round the sun in limitless space with a multitude of other spheres. Nor can you reasonably order that during the religious instruction hour the children are to be informed that all forms of life were created within six days, including the manufacture of a full-grown woman out of a man's rib, and, when the clock strikes, begin explaining that epochs of millions of years were occupied in experiments in the production of various forms of life, from prodigious monsters to invisibly small creatures, culminating in a very complicated and by no means finally satisfactory form called Woman, who specialized a variety of herself, in some respects even less satisfactory, called Man. This would not matter if the teacher might explain that as the astronomy and biology of the Bible are out of date, and we think we know better nowadays, they have been discarded like the barbarous morality of the Israelitish kings and the idol to which they made human sacrifices. But such explanations would frustrate the Cowper-Temple clause, under which the children were to be left to make what they could of the contradictions between their religious and secular instruction. They usually solve it by not thinking about it at all, provided their parents let them alone on the subject, which is not always the case.

As to the alternative of giving no religious instruction, and confining school teaching to what is called Secular or Matter-of-Fact Education, it is not really a possible plan,

because children must be taught conduct as well as arithmetic, and the ultimate sanctions of conduct are metaphysical, by which imposing phrase I mean that from the purely matter-of-fact point of view there is no difference between a day's thieving and a day's honest work, between placid ignorance and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, between habitual lying and truth-telling: they are all human activities or inactivities, to be chosen according to their respective pleasantness or material advantages, and not to be preferred on any other grounds. When you find your children acting, as they often do (like their elders), quite secularly, and lying, stealing, or idling, you have to give them either a matter-of-fact or a religious reason for ceasing to do evil and learning to do well. The matter-of-fact reason is temptingly easy to manufacture. You can say "If I catch you doing that again I will clout your head, or smack your behind, or send you to bed without your supper, or injure you in some way or other that you will not like." Unfortunately these secular reasons, though easy to devise and apply, and enjoyable if you have a turn that way, always seem avoidable by cunning concealment and a little additional lying. You know what becomes of the pseudo-morality produced by whipping the moment your back is turned. And what is your own life worth if it has to be spent spying on your children with a cane in your hand? Hardly worth living, I should say, unless you are one of the people who love caning as others love unnatural sensualities, in which case you may fall into the hands of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which will make short work of your moral pretensions. In any case you will find yourself strongly tempted to whack your children, not really to compel them to conduct themselves for their own good, but to conduct themselves in the manner most convenient to yourself, which is not always nor even often the same thing.

Finally, if you are not selfish and cruel, you will find that you must give the children some reason for behaving well when no one is looking, and there is no danger of being found out, or when they would rather do the forbidden thing at the cost of a whacking than leave it undone with impunity. You may tell them that God is always looking, and will punish them inevitably when they die. But you will find that posthumous penalties are not immediate enough nor real enough to deter a bold child. In the end you must threaten it with some damage to a part of it called its soul, of the

existence of which you can give it no physical demonstration whatever. You need not use the word soul: you can put the child "on its honor." But its honor also is an organ which no anatomist has yet succeeded in dissecting out and preserving in a bottle of spirits of wine for the instruction of infants. When it transgresses you can resort to scolding, calling it a naughty, dirty, greedy little thing. Or you may lecture it, telling it solemnly that "it is a sin to steal a pin" and so forth. But if you could find such a monster as an entirely matter-of-fact child, it might receive both scoldings and lectures unmoved, and ask you "What then? What is a sin? What do you mean by naughty, greedy? I understand dirty; but why should I wash my hands if I am quite comfortable with them dirty? I understand greedy; but if I like chocolates why should I give half of them to Jane?" You may retort with "Have you no conscience, child?"; but the matter-of-fact reply is "What is conscience?" Faced with this matter-of-fact scepticism you are driven into pure metaphysics, and must teach your child that conduct is a matter, not of fact, but of religious duty. Good conduct is a respect which you owe to yourself in some mystical way; and people are manageable in proportion to their possession of this self-respect. When you remonstrate with a grown-up person you say "Have you no self-respect?" But somehow one does not say that to an infant. If it tells a lie, you do not say "You owe it to yourself to speak the truth," because the little animal does not feel any such obligation, though it will later on. If you say "You must not tell lies because if you do nobody will believe what you say," you are conscious of telling a thundering lie yourself, as you know only too well that most lies are quite successful, and that human society would be impossible without a great deal of goodnatured lying. If you say "You must not tell lies because if you do you will find yourself unable to believe anything that is told to you," you will be much nearer the truth; but it is a truth that a child cannot understand: you might as well tell it the final truth of the matter, which is, that there is a mysterious something in us called a soul, which deliberate wickedness kills, and without which no material gain can make life bearable. How can you expect a naughty child to take that in? If you say "You must not tell a lie because it will grieve your dear parents," the effect will depend on how much the child cares whether its parents are grieved or not. In any case to most young children their parents are as gods, too

great to be subject to grief, as long as the parents play up to that conception of them. Also, as it is not easy to be both loved and feared, parents who put on the majesty of gods with their children must not allow the familiarity of affection, and are lucky if their children do not positively hate them. It is safer and more comfortable to invent a parent who is everybody's Big Papa, even Papa's papa, and introduce it to the child as God. And it must be a god that children can imagine. It must not be an abstraction, a principle, a vital impulse, a life force, or the Church of England god who has neither body, parts, nor passions. It must be, like the real papa, a grown-up person in Sunday clothes, very very good, terribly powerful, and all-seeing: that is, able to see what you are doing when nobody is looking. In this way the child who is too young to have a sufficiently developed self-respect and intelligent sense of honor: in short, a conscience, is provided with an artificial, provisional, and to a great extent fictitious conscience which tides it over its nonage until it is old enough to attach a serious meaning to the idea of God.

In this way it was discovered in the nursery, long before Voltaire said it, that "if there were no God it would be necessary to invent him." . . .

SCHOOLMADE MONSTERS

From Everybody's Political What's What

1944

UP to a certain age children are as nervous and cowardly as mice, dreading darkness and ghosts, dogs and cows, and imaginary dangers of all sorts from robbers to rattlesnakes. In this phase they can be spoilt for life, as spaniels can, by a domestic reign of terror, whether the terror is of physical cruelty or of a supernatural hell, or of both combined.

If not so spoiled they later on become pugnacious, ashamed of cowardice, and thoughtlessly cruel and mischievous in mere bravado. They love authority for its own sake; witness

or inflict with pleasure the punishments that intimidate them; make ridiculous rules of conduct, dress, and deportment which they enforce violently and mercilessly; slave as fags and rule as prefects; and make it possible for housemasters in boarding schools to leave the most onerous part of their work to their pupils with the certainty that the result will be, not destructive anarchy, but ruthless and irresistible tyranny.

This phase has political importance because, though it is not an adult phase, it can by systematic cultivation and abortion be prolonged for the entire lifetime. This is done by the more expensive public schools in England with surprising success, considering that it is quite unnatural. In Germany under the Hohenzollerns it was practised even more intensely; and since the fall of the Hohenzollerns, has been carried to still greater lengths by the Nazis. Take a boy in this phase whose parents are rich. Graft on to him a tradition that trade and manual labor are degrading; that service in the commissioned ranks of the army or in diplomacy are the only occupations worthy of a gentleman, and hunting and shooting, riding and racing, his only recreations; accustom him to regard religion as a matter of church going in his best clothes on Sunday mixed up with ordering God to confound the politics and frustrate the knavish tricks of his enemies, and with devotion to an idolized sovereign or Leader who is the living symbol of his country; and you get not only the familiar non-adult plutocrat whose ideas rule this distressful country, but a national God with imperial instincts and a completely prejudiced conviction that the expensive public school is the supreme triumph of divine education; so that under its rule truth, honesty, and justice are spontaneous and automatic, and comparatively benighted foreigners better off than they could possibly be under their own rule. This is what such schools as Eton and Harrow, with their preparatories, do in England to the children of her ruling plutocrats; and as the same thing occurs in all the plutocratic States, we get as many rival patriotisms as there are languages and nations, making the peace in our time for which we pray impossible.

This is partly a degenerate survival from the feudal system, in which class stratification was a necessary moral basis. It exists wherever a feudal system has flourished and retains its property, privileges, titles, riches and prestige whilst gladly surrendering its onerous political duties to middle-class prefects. But the popular notion that at its present pitch it is a

venerable tradition from the ages of faith and chivalry is a delusion. Not until the nineteenth century, when the feudal aristocracy finally handed over its rulership to, and associated and intermarried with, the purse-proud snob tradesmen enriched by the industrial revolution, were the children of the rich sent to school, not to get scholarship, culture, and such knowledge as they were capable of, but solely to be hall-marked as members of "the upper class." It was the fifty years following the Reform Act of 1832 that produced the curious monster we know now as the Old School Tie, who excels at cricket, tennis, and golf; has class manners and a class accent; knows nothing of the world he is living in or knows it all wrong; and is equipped mentally with the ideas of a seventeenth-century squire.

When I describe the Old School Tie as a nineteenth-century monster, which he literally is, I must not be taken to imply that the opposite product of the industrial revolution, the proletarian, is not, in his way, also a monster. It is true that as he works for his living he may be a productive and serviceable monster, not a predatory and parasitical one. But he is a perverted and distorted creature all the same. I am not a friend of the poor and an enemy of the rich as ignorant people expect a Socialist to be. When I was a child the nursemaid who took me out to exercise me just as she might have taken a dog, took me into the slums where she had friends instead of into handsomer and more salubrious places. Naturally I hated the slums and the dwellers therein. I still want to have the slums demolished and the dwellers exterminated, and am writing this book with this end in view in my second childhood. And I have in my time elicited thunders of applause from slum audiences by expressing these sentiments. But as I grew out of the hands of the nursemaid and associated more with ladies and gentlemen, I did not find them any more bearable morally. In their dreary snobbery and carefully guarded ignorance of the slum life on which they were battenning and into which I had been clandestinely introduced I could find no comradeship: they also, I finally concluded, must be exterminated. Only the fictions of fine art gave me any satisfaction; and it became my chosen job to bring these fictions to life, and meanwhile to live as a Bohemian, as a rebel, as an enemy, not of mankind, but of the perversions of mankind produced by private property plus the industrial revolution. The precept "Love one another" was impossible with human society divided into detestably

unlovable classes. It cannot be too thoroughly understood that Socialism is not charity nor lovingkindness, nor sympathy with the poor, nor popular philanthropy with its something-for-nothing almsgiving and mendicity, but the economist's hatred of waste and disorder, the aesthete's hatred of ugliness and dirt, the lawyer's hatred of injustice, the doctor's hatred of disease, the saint's hatred of the seven deadly sins: in short, a combination of the most intense hatreds against institutions which give economists a strong pecuniary interest in wasteful and anarchic capitalism, artists in venality and pornography, lawyers in injustice, doctors in disease, and saints in catering for the seven deadly sins or flattering them instead of denouncing them.

This being understood, let us return to the cult of the Etonian rival of the Loch Ness monster, the Old School Tie. He is a mischievous anachronism now that he has lost his ancient Christian Catholicism and substituted an unholy commercial Alsatia for the Holy Roman Empire.

When feudalism was in its heyday Western Europe had one supernational God, one heaven for all mankind, and one hell, the hell of Dante, into which all souls, rich or poor, gentle or simple in life, would be cast after death if they were too wicked. Nowadays the British gentleman believes in an insular English God, the German Junker in a god as Nordic as Wotan, the French in a materialistic but thoroughly French No-God, whilst none of them believes in any sort of hell. Wars have become fanatical crusades waged with millions of soldiers, millions of money, and million-fold-multiplied means of destruction and slaughter. The wars of the Roses exterminated only the old feudal nobility, and gave its powers to a new self-ennobled plutocracy. But modern war, which has just produced the suicidal outrage of the conscription of women for military service, threatens to exterminate the human race and destroy civilization to the point at which its powers of destruction are exhausted, and decent people die of discouragement, which is a very fatal disease.

Now these and many cognate nuisances are the result of an educational system which, instead of guiding the natural change from childhood to adolescence and maturity, arrests juvenile development at its most mischievous stage, and forces the experienced statesman to treat the country as an orphanage in which the age limit is fourteen, and the orphans as its mentally defective inmates.

Of course this system, like all other out-of-date systems,

does not enjoy complete integrity in practice: the facts are too strong for it. When the schools are invaded by the successful men of business and the professions they are forced to develop, however reluctantly and contemptuously at first, a scientific side and then a business side; and these new sides encroach on the classic routine until it too becomes only a side and a losing one. Rugby, for instance, is not what it was a hundred years ago; and Oundle was turned upside down and inside out by Sanderson, who was not himself an Old School Tie. But the older schooling still prevails enough to make sure that the class enriched by our property system is the one which commands the ruling majority in Parliament, in the Upper Division of the Civil Service, in diplomacy, and, except when there is a world war on, in the commissioned ranks of the fighting services.

The worst of it is that our sincere educationists are unanimous in pressing everybody to be kept at school until they are eighteen, and prepared for three years at the university if they have a taste that way. This will satisfy the parents who wish their children to be ladies and gentlemen with the manners and speech and class prejudices proper to that condition. But the object of a sane State is to make good citizens of its children: that is, to make them productive or serviceable members of the community. The two objects are opposite and incompatible; for there is no advantage in wearing an old school tie if you have to share the social burden of labor and service. If there are no schools available except schools for the poor in which a slave mentality is inculcated, and schools for the rich in which children are trained for a life of leisure, luxury, and privilege, or at best a monopoly of commercial, professional, and political opportunity which is politely called leadership, then the hasty conclusion is that children had better be kept out of school at all costs, and Eton and its liked razed to the ground, and their foundations sown with salt.

But untutored ignorance does not make for good citizenship: any system of instruction and training is better than none at all. Our system must go on until we provide a better one. Meanwhile, however, it is clearly no remedy for our present bad citizenship to impose Etonian education on the multitudinous proletariat, including its impecunious middle class section, by scholarships entitling the holders to "places" at the expensive schools, with extension of the age for compulsory schooling to eighteen, and the rest of the "ladders to

the university." To abolish schools altogether and make teaching a crime, as Butler's Erewhonians abolished machinery and imprisoned the explorer because they found a watch in his pocket, would only drive education underground as it did in Tsarist Russia, where women, for teaching peasants to read, were imprisoned for twenty years, not quite unreasonably; for peasants who could read encouraged the others to burn country houses. Our Etonian system must die a natural death through the expropriation of its present plutocratic patrons, and the competition of a new organization of non-adult life.

III

MUSIC

MOZART

From London Music

1890

... THERE is no shadow of death anywhere on Mozart's music. Even his own funeral was a failure. It was dispersed by a shower of rain; and to this day nobody knows where he was buried or whether he was buried at all or not. My own belief is that he was not. Depend on it, they had no sooner put up their umbrellas and bolted for the nearest shelter than he got up, shook off his bones into the common grave of the people, and soared off into universality....

From Music in London

9 December 1891

The Mozart Centenary has made a good deal of literary and musical business this week....

The word is, of course, Admire, admire, admire; but unless you frankly trade on the ignorance of the public, and cite as illustrations of his unique genius feats that come easily to dozens of organists and choir-boys who never wrote, and never will write, a bar of original music in their lives; or pay his symphonies and operas empty compliments that might be transferred word for word, without the least incongruity, to the symphonies of Spohr and the operas of Offenbach; or represent him as composing as spontaneously as a bird sings, on the strength of his habit of perfecting his greater compositions in his mind before he wrote them down—unless you try these well-born dodges, you will find nothing to admire that is peculiar to Mozart: the fact being that he, like Praxiteles, Raphael, Molière, or Shakespear, was no leader of a new departure or founder of a school.

He came at the end of a development, not at the beginning

of one; and although there are operas and symphonies, and even pianoforte sonatas and pages of instrumental scoring of his, on which you can put your finger and say, "Here is final perfection in this manner; and nobody, whatever his genius may be, will ever get a step further on these lines," you cannot say, "Here is an entirely new vein of musical art, of which nobody ever dreamt before Mozart." Haydn, who made the mould for Mozart's symphonies, was proud of Mozart's genius because he felt his own part in it: he would have written the E flat symphony if he could, and, though he could not, was at least able to feel that the man who had reached that pre-eminence was standing on his old shoulders. Now, Haydn would have recoiled from the idea of composing—or perpetrating, as he would have put it—the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica*, and would have repudiated all part in leading music to such a pass.

The more far-sighted Gluck not only carried Mozart in his arms to within sight of the goal of his career as an opera composer, but even cleared a little of the new path into which Mozart's finality drove all those successors of his who were too gifted to waste their lives in making weak dilutions of Mozart's scores, and serving them up as "classics." Many Mozart worshippers cannot bear to be told that their hero was not the founder of a dynasty. But in art the highest success is to be the last of your race, not the first. Anybody, almost, can make a beginning: the difficulty is to make an end—to do what cannot be bettered.

For instance, if the beginner were to be ranked above the consummator, we should, in literary fiction, have to place Captain Mayne Reid, who certainly struck a new vein, above Dickens, who simply took the novel as he found it, and achieved the feat of compelling his successor (whoever he may be), either to create quite another sort of novel, or else to fall behind his predecessor as at best a superfluous imitator. Surely, if so great a composer as Haydn could say, out of his greatness as a man, "I am not the best of my school, though I was the first," Mozart's worshippers can afford to acknowledge, with equal gladness of spirit, that their hero was not the first, though he was the best. It is always like that. Praxiteles, Raphael and Co., have great men for their pioneers, and only fools for their followers.

So far everybody will agree with me. This proves either that I am hopelessly wrong or that the world has had at least half a century to think the matter over in. And, sure enough,

a hundred years ago Mozart was considered a desperate innovator: it was his reputation in this respect that set so many composers—Meyerbeer, for example—cultivating innovation for its own sake. Let us, therefore, jump a hundred years forward, right up to date, and see whether there is any phenomenon of the same nature in view today. We have not to look far. Here, under our very noses, is Wagner held up on all hands as the founder of a school and the arch-musical innovator of our age. He himself knew better; but since his death I appear to be the only person who shares his view of the matter. I assert with the utmost confidence that in 1991 it will be seen quite clearly that Wagner was the end of the nineteenth-century, or Beethoven school, instead of the beginning of the twentieth-century school; just as Mozart's most perfect music is the last word of the eighteenth century, and not the first of the nineteenth. . . .

For my own part, if I do not care to rhapsodize much about Mozart, it is because I am so violently prepossessed in his favor that I am capable of supplying any possible deficiency in his work by my imagination. Gounod has devoutly declared that Don Giovanni has been to him all his life a revelation of perfection, a miracle, a work without fault. I smile indulgently at Gounod, since I cannot afford to give myself away so generously (there being, no doubt, less of me), but I am afraid my fundamental attitude towards Mozart is the same as his. In my small-boyhood I by good luck had an opportunity of learning the Don thoroughly, and if it were only for the sense of the value of fine workmanship which I gained from it, I should still esteem that lesson the most important part of my education. Indeed, it educated me artistically in all sorts of ways, and disqualified me only in one—that of criticizing Mozart fairly. Everyone appears a sentimental, hysterical bungler in comparison when anything brings his finest work vividly back to me. Let me take warning by the follies of Oulibicheff, and hold my tongue.

The people most to be pitied at this moment are the unfortunate singers, players, and conductors who are suddenly called upon to make the public *hear* the wonders which the newspapers are describing so lavishly. At ordinary times they simply refuse to do this. It is quite a mistake to suppose that Mozart's music is not in demand. I know of more than one concert-giver who asks every singer he engages for some song by Mozart, and is invariably met with the plea of excessive difficulty. You cannot "make an effect" with Mo-

zart, or work your audience up by playing on their hysterical susceptibilities.

Nothing but the finest execution—beautiful, expressive, and intelligent—will serve; and the worst of it is, that the phrases are so perfectly clear and straightforward, that you are found out the moment you swerve by a hair's breadth from perfection, whilst, at the same time, your work is so obvious, that everyone thinks it must be easy, and puts you down remorselessly as a duffer for botching it. Naturally, then, we do not hear much of Mozart; and what we do hear goes far to destroy his reputation. But there was no getting out of the centenary: something had to be done. Accordingly, the Crystal Palace committed itself to the Jupiter Symphony and the Requiem; and the Albert Hall, by way of varying the entertainment, announced the Requiem and the Jupiter Symphony.

The Requiem satisfied that spirit of pious melancholy in which we celebrate great occasions; but I think the public ought to be made rather more sharply aware of the fact that Mozart died before the Requiem was half finished, and that his widow, in order to secure the stipulated price, got one of her husband's pupils, whose handwriting resembled his, to forge enough music to complete it. Undoubtedly Mozart gave a good start to most of the movements; but suggestive as these are, very few of them are artistically so satisfactory, as the pretty Benedictus, in which the forger escaped from the taskwork of cobbling up his master's hints to the free work of original composition. There are only about four numbers in the score which have any right to be included in a centenary program. As to the two performances, I cannot compare them, as I was late for the one at the Albert Hall. . . .

From Music in London

19 April 1893

Last week an unexpected event occurred—nothing less than a concert. I had been for a long time wishing to hear a little music; so I went off to Prince's Hall and found Miss Dora Bright wasting a very good program on a very bad audience, with the help of Messrs Willy Hess, Kreuz, and Whitehouse. They began with Mozart's pianoforte quartet in G minor, to

my delight, as all my musical self-respect is based on my keen appreciation of Mozart's works. . . .

In the ardent regions where all the rest are excited and vehement, Mozart alone is completely self-possessed: where they are clutching their bars with a grip of iron and forging them with Cyclopean blows, his gentleness of touch never deserts him: he is considerate, economical, practical under the same pressure of inspiration that throws your Titan into convulsions. This is the secret of his unpopularity with Titan fanciers. We all in our native barbarism have a relish for the strenuous: your tenor whose B flat is like the bursting of a boiler always brings down the house, even when the note brutally effaces the song; and the composer who can artistically express in music a transport of vigor and passion of the more muscular kind, such as the finale to the seventh symphony, the *Walkürenritt*, or the Hailstone chorus, not to mention the orgies of Raff, Liszt, and Berlioz, is always a hero with the intemperate in music, who are so numerous nowadays that we may confidently expect to see some day a British Minister of the Fine Arts introducing a Local Option Bill applied to concert rooms.

With Mozart you are safe from inebriety. Hurry, excitement, eagerness, loss of consideration, are to him purely comic or vicious states of mind: he gives us *Monostatos* and the *Queen of Night* on the stage, but not in his chamber music. Now it happens that I have, deep in my nature, which is quite as deep as the average rainfall in England, a frightful contempt for your *Queens of Night* and *Titans* and their like. The true Parnassian air acts on these people like oxygen on a mouse: it first excites them, and then kills them. Give me the artist who breathes it like a native, and goes about his work in it as quietly as a common man goes about his ordinary business. Mozart did so; and that is why I like him. Even if I did not, I should pretend to; for a taste for his music is a mark of caste among musicians, and should be worn, like a tall hat, by the amateur who wishes to pass for a true Brahmin. . . .

HOW TO WRITE AN OPERA

From Music in London

1892

THE other day an actor published a book of directions for making a good play. His plan was a simple one. Take all the devices which bring down the house in existing plays; make a new one by stringing them all together; and there you are. If that book succeeds, I am prepared to write a similar treatise on opera composition. I know quite a lot of things that would be of great use to any young composer. For instance, when two lovers are on the stage together, be sure you make them catch sight of the moon or stars and gaze up rapturously whilst the violins discourse ravishing strains with their mutes on. Mutes are also useful for spinning-wheel business and for fires, as in *Marta* and *Die Walküre*.

For dreamy effects, tonic pedals as patented by Gounod and Bizet are useful. When large orchestras are available, broad melodies on the fourth string of the violins may be relied on for a strong and popular impression. When the heroine is alone on the stage, a rapid, agitated movement, expressive of her anticipation of the arrival of her lover, and culminating in a vigorous instrumental and vocal outburst as he rushes on the stage and proceeds without an instant's loss of time to embrace her ardently, never fails to leave the public breathless. The harmonic treatment of this situation is so simple that nobody can fail to master it in a few lessons. The lady must first sing the gentleman's name on the notes belonging to the chord of the dominant seventh in some highly unexpected key; the gentleman then vociferates the lady's name a peg higher on the notes of a more extreme discord; and, finally, the twain explode simultaneously upon a brilliant six-four chord, leading, either directly through the dominant chord, or after some pretty interruption of the cadence, to a flowing melody in which the gentleman either protests his passion or repeatedly calls attention to the fact that at last they meet again.

The whole situation should be repeated in the last act, with the difference that this time it is the gentleman who must be alone at the beginning. Furthermore, he must be in a gloomy dungeon, not larger at the outside than the stage of Covent Garden Theatre; and he must be condemned to die next morning. The reason for putting the gentleman, rather than the lady, in this situation is to be found in the exclusion of women from politics, whereby they are deprived of the privilege of being condemned to death, without any reflection on their personal characters, for heading patriotic rebellions. The difficulty has nevertheless been successfully got over by making the lady go mad in the fourth act, and kill somebody, preferably her own child. Under these circumstances she may sing almost anything she pleases of a florid nature in her distraction, and may take the gentleman's place in the prison-cell in the next act without forfeiting the moral approval of the audience. Florid mad scenes, though they are very pretty when the lady's affliction is made to take the playful turn of a trial of skill with the first flute, which should partly imitate the voice and partly accompany it in thirds, is now out of fashion; and it is far better, in dramatic opera, to be entirely modern in style. . . .

. . . But I am neglecting my week's work. Although I repeat that "How to write a good opera" might be written as easily as "How to write a good play," I must not set about writing it myself in this column, although the above sample will shew every learned musician how thoroughly I am qualified for the task. The fact is, I had been reading the reviews of Mr Frank Archer's book; and it set me thinking of what are called actors' plays, meaning plays which are not plays at all, but compilations consisting of a series of stage effects devised *ad hoc*. Indeed, stage effects is too wide a term: actors' effects would be more accurate. I thought of how hopelessly bad all such works are, even when, as in the case of Cibber's Richard III and Garrick's Katharine and Petruchio, they are saved from instant perdition by a mutilated mass of poetry and drama stolen from some genuine playwright.

And then I fell to considering which would be the worst thing to have to sit out in a theatre—an actor's play or a singer's opera. Before I could settle the point the clock struck; and I suddenly realized that if I lost another moment I should miss the one-fifty-five train to the Crystal Palace, where I was due at two-forty-five to witness the performance

of Mr George Fox's new opera, Nydia. And when I sat down just now to write an account of Nydia, it naturally reminded me of Mr Frank Archer, and led to the above tremendous digression on the subject of operatic composition in general.

Nydia is founded on Bulwer Lytton's Last Days of Pompeii, a novel which I read when a boy. I remember nothing of it except the name Arbaces, and the Roman sentinel, and Pliny—though, indeed, I am not sure that I did not get the last two out of Chambers's Miscellany. At all events, I found the libretto of Nydia as new to me as it is in the nature of any libretto to be to a musical critic of my age. It began with a bustling crowd, singing:

Water melons, rich and rare,
None excel them we declare;
Olives, figs, and honey sweet,
You will find them hard to beat;
Here is game, wild mountain boar,
Oysters too from Britain's shore,
Come and buy, come and buy.

This was out of Carmen, tune and all, except the oysters; and even their freshness must have been severely tried by hawking them in the full blaze of an Italian sun.

Then we had a blind girl with a Leitmotif, also rather like the jealousy motive in Carmen, with a heroine, lover, and villain, in due course. The villain, a Pompeian archbishop, held a service in a temple on the lines of the one in Aïda; and the lover came in and dashed him down the steps of the altar, for which exploit he was haled away to prison—very properly, as I thought—in spite of the entreaties of the heroine. In prison he shared his cell with a Nazarene, who strove hard, not without some partial success, to make him see the beauty of being eaten by a lion in the arena. Next came the amphitheatre, with a gladiator fight which only needed a gallery full of shrieking vestals with their thumbs turned down to be perfectly *à la* Gérôme. Then the hero, kept up to the mark by the Nazarene, was thrown to the lion, whereupon Vesuvius emitted clouds of spangles and red fire. A scene of terror and confusion in the streets followed, the crowd standing stock-still, with its eyes on the conductor, and the villain falling, slain by lightning, and then creeping off on all-fours behind the calves of the multitude.

Finally the clouds parted; and we had a pretty pictorial composition of the hero and heroine at sea in a galley with the blind girl, who presently took a deliberate header into the waves, to the intense astonishment of everybody except the hero, who, without making the smallest attempt to save her, set up a thundering *Salve eternum* just as I was expecting him to break into

Rosy lips above the water,
Blowing bubbles soft and fine;
As for me, I was no swimmer,
So I lost my Clementine.

Mr Durward Lely sustained the tenor part with great heroism: and Madame Valda, after innumerable high C's, finished the third act with a big big D which brought down the house.

Mlle de Rideau did her best with the part of the blind girl; and Messrs Clifford, Pyatt, King, Joyce, and the rest did, I imagine, much what the composer expected them to do. The Crystal Palace orchestra played through the score with deadly skill at a serene *mezzo-forte*, not paying the smallest attention, as far as I could perceive, to any of the composer's numerous *pianos* and *pianissimos*, though some of his *fortissimos*, notably an astounding series of double knocks on the drum in the second act, received rather more attention than I should have bargained for had I been the conductor. On the whole, though I must compliment Mr George Fox on his industry, his ambition, and his energy, I find that the point of view from which he regards operatic composition is so far remote from mine that I shall continue to esteem him rather as a singer than as a composer.

PARRY'S 'JOB'

From Music in London

1893

FOR some time past I have been carefully dodging Dr Hubert Parry's 'Job'. I had presentiments about it from the first. I foresaw that all the other critics would cleverly imply that they thought it the greatest oratorio of ancient or modern times—that Handel is rebuked, Mendelssohn eclipsed, and the rest nowhere. And I was right: they did. The future historian of music, studying the English papers of 1892-3, will learn that these years produced two entire and perfect chrysolites, *Job* and *Falstaff*, especially *Job*. I was so afraid of being unable to concur unreservedly in the verdict that I lay low and stopped my ears. The first step was to avoid the Gloucester Festival. That gave me no trouble: nothing is easier than not to go to Gloucester.

I am, to tell the truth, not very fond of Festivals. It is not that the oratorios bore me, or even the new works "composed expressly," the word "expressly" here indicating the extra-special dullness supposed to be proper to such solemn occasions. These things are the inevitable hardships of my profession: I face them as the soldier faces fire, feeling that it is the heroic endurance of them that raises criticism from a mere trade to a profession or calling. But a man is expected to have the courage of his own profession only. The soldier must face cold steel; but he may without derogation be afraid of ghosts. The doctor who braves fever may blench from shipwreck, and the clergyman who wars daily against the Prince of Darkness is permitted to quit a field in which he unexpectedly meets a mad bull. The musical critic is ready at duty's call to stand up fearlessly to oratorios, miscellaneous concerts, requiems, and comic operas; but it is no part of his bargain to put up with the stewards at a provincial festival. It is not that these gentlemen intend to be uncivil, or are by nature more evilly disposed than their fellow-creatures; but they have no manners, no *savoir vivre*: they are unsocial-

ly afraid of the public, snobbishly afraid of being mistaken for professional attendants, unaccustomed to their work (which requires either experience or tact and self-possession), and inflated with a sense of their importance instead of sobered by a sense of their responsibility.

Consequently they are fussy, suspicious, rude or nervous, as the case may be, constantly referring helplessly to the one or two of their number who have their wits about them, and not unfrequently blundering unintentionally to within a perilous distance of the point at which the more choleric and muscular sort of visitor will threaten violence and execute profanity, and the more subtly malicious will patronizingly offer the blunderer a tip. By good luck, I have never myself been outraged by a festival steward; but the mere flavor of irresponsible and incompetent officialism poisons the artistic atmosphere for me.

It brings before me the appalling centralization of English intellectual and artistic life, and therefore of social grace, with the consequent boorification of the provinces. It will never be merrie England until every man who goes down from London to a festival or other provincial function will frankly say to his host, "My friend: your house is uncommonly comfortable, and your grub of the best. You are hospitable; and you gratify my vanity by treating me, who am a Nobody at home, as a Somebody from London. You are not bad company when you go out into the fields to kill something. But owing to the fact that you have been brought up in a town where the theatre, the picture-gallery, and the orchestra count for nothing, and the exchanges count for everything, you are, saving your presence, a hopelessly dull dog; and your son is growing up as dull a dog as you." Not a polite speech maybe; but you cannot make revolutions with rosewater; and what is wanted in English provincial life is nothing short of a revolution.

Such being my sentiments, it will be understood that I forewent Gloucester and Job last autumn without regret. I have explained the matter at some length, not because I have not said all the above before, but solely to put off for awhile the moment when I must at last say what I think of Dr Parry's masterpiece. For I unluckily went last Wednesday to the concert of the Middlesex Choral Union, where the first thing that happened was the appearance of Dr Parry amid the burst of affectionate applause which always greets him. That made me uneasy; and I was not reassured when he

mounted the conductor's rostrum, and led the band into a prelude which struck me as being a serious set of footnotes to the bridal march from Lohengrin. Presently up got Mr Bantock Pierpoint, and sang, without a word of warning, There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. Then I knew I was in for it; and now I must do my duty.

I take Job to be, on the whole, the most utter failure ever achieved by a thoroughly respectable musician. There is not one bar in it that comes within fifty thousand miles of the tamest line in the poem. This is the naked, unexaggerated truth. Is anybody surprised at it? Here, on the one hand, is an ancient poem which has lived from civilization to civilization, and has been translated into an English version of haunting beauty and nobility of style, offering to the musician a subject which would have taxed to the utmost the highest powers of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, or Wagner. Here on the other is, not Bach nor Handel nor Mozart nor Beethoven nor Wagner, not even Mendelssohn or Schumann, but Dr Parry, an enthusiastic and popular professor, forty-five years old, and therefore of ascertained powers.

Now, will any reasonable person pretend that it lies within the limits of those powers to let us hear the morning stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for joy? True, it is impossible to say what a man can do until he tries. I may before the end of this year write a tragedy on the subject of King Lear that will efface Shakespeare's; but if I do it will be a surprise, not perhaps to myself, but to the public. It is certain that if I took the work in hand I should be able to turn out five acts about King Lear that would be, at least, grammatical, superficially coherent, and arranged in lines that would scan. And I doubt not at all that some friendly and ingenious critic would say of it, "Lear is, from beginning to end, a remarkable work, and one which nobody but an English author could have written. Every page bears the stamp of G. B. S.'s genius; and no higher praise can be awarded to it than to say that it is fully worthy of his reputation." What critic would need to be so unfriendly as to face the plain question, "Has the author been able for his subject?"

I might easily shirk that question in the case of Job: there are no end of nice little things I could point out about the workmanship shewn in the score, its fine feeling, its scrupulous moderation, its entire freedom from any base element of art or character, and so on through a whole epitaph of

pleasant and perfectly true irrelevancies. I might even say that Dr Parry's setting of Job placed him infinitely above the gentleman who set to music *The Man that broke the Bank*. But would that alter the fact that Dr Parry has left his subject practically untouched, whilst his music-hall rival has most exhaustively succeeded in covering his? It is the great glory of Job that he shamed the devil. Let me imitate him by telling the truth about the work as it appeared to me. Of course I may be wrong: even I am not infallible, at least not always.

And it must be remembered that I am violently prejudiced against the professorial school of which Dr Parry is a distinguished member. I always said, and say still, that his much-admired oratorio *Judith* has absolutely no merit whatever. I allowed a certain vigor and geniality in his *L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso*, and a certain youthful inspiration in his *Prometheus*. But even these admissions I regarded as concessions to the academic faction which he leans to; and I was so afraid of being further disarmed that I lived in fear of meeting him and making his acquaintance; for I had noticed that the critics to whom this happens become hopelessly corrupt, and say anything to please him without the least regard to public duty. Let Job then have the benefit of whatever suspicion may be cast on my verdict by my prepossessions against the composer's school.

The first conspicuous failure in the work is Satan, who, after a feeble attempt to give himself an infernal air by getting the bassoon to announce him with a few frog-like croaks, gives up the pretence, and, though a tenor and a fiend, models himself on Mendelssohn's *St Paul*. He has no tact as an orator. For example, when he says "Put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face," there is not a shade of scepticism or irony in him; and he ineptly tries to drive his point home by a melodramatic shriek on the word "curse." When one thinks—I will not say of *Loki* or *Klingsor*, but of Verdi's *Iago* and Boito's *Mefistofele*, and even of Gounod's stage devil, it is impossible to accept this pale shadow of an excitable curate as one of the poles of the great world magnet.

As to Job, there is no sort of grit in him: he is abject from first to last, and is only genuinely touching when he longs to lie still and be quiet where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. That is the one tolerable moment in the work; and Job passes from it to relapse into dullness,

not to rise into greater strength of spirit. He is much distracted by fragments of themes from the best composers coming into his head from time to time, and sometimes cutting off the thread of his discourse altogether. When he talks of mountains being removed, he flourishes on the flute in an absurdly inadequate manner; and his challenge to God, Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me, is too poor to be described.

Not until he has given in completely, and is saying his last word, does it suddenly occur to him to make a hit; and then, in announcing that he repents in dust and ashes, he explodes in the most unlooked-for way on the final word "ashes", which produces the effect of a sneeze. The expostulation of God with Job is given to the chorus: the voice that sometimes speaks through the mouths of babes and sucklings here speaks through the mouths of Brixton and Bayswater, and the effect is precisely what might have been expected. It is hard to come down thus from the "heil'gen Hallen" of Sarastro to the suburbs.

There is one stroke of humor in the work. When Job says, The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord, a long and rueful interval after the words "taketh away" elapses before poor Job can resign himself to utter the last clause. That is the sole trace of real dramatic treatment in this dreary ramble of Dr Parry's through the wastes of artistic error. It is the old academic story—an attempt to bedizen a dramatic poem with scraps of sonata music.

Dr Parry reads, The walls are broken down: destroyed are the pleasant places; and it sounds beautifully to him. So it associates itself with something else that sounds beautifully—Mendelssohn's violin concerto, as it happens in this case—and straight way he rambles off into a rhythm suggested by the first movement of the concerto, and produces a tedious combination which has none of the charm or propriety of either poem or concerto. For the sake of relief he drags in by the ears a piece of martial tumult—See! upon the distant plain, a white cloud of dust, the ravagers come—compounded from the same academic prescription as the business of the dragon's teeth coming up armed men in Mackenzie's Jason; and the two pieces of music are consequently indistinguishable in my memory—in fact, I do not remember a note of either of them.

I have no wish to linger over a barbarous task. In time I may forgive Dr Parry, especially if he will write a few more essays on the great composers, and confine himself to the composition of "absolute music," with not more than three pedal points to the page. But at this moment I feel sore. He might have let Job alone, and let me alone; for, patient as we both are, there are limits to human endurance. I hope he will burn the score, and throw Judith in when the blaze begins to flag.

As to the performance, it did not greatly matter. On the whole, it was somewhat tame, even relatively to the music. Mr Piercy's treatment of the high notes in his part offended all my notions of artistic singing. Mr Newman did what he could with the part of Job; and his performance was entirely creditable to him. Mr Bantock Pierpoint, as the Narrator, gave more pleasure than any of his colleagues. Miss Palliser was the shepherd-boy. The chorus was not very vigorous or majestic; but it made the most of itself.

BEETHOVEN

From Pen Portraits and Reviews

1927

A HUNDRED years ago a crusty old bachelor of fifty-seven, so deaf that he could not hear his own music played by a full orchestra, yet still able to hear thunder, shook his fist at the roaring heavens for the last time, and died as he had lived, challenging God and defying the universe. He was Defiance Incarnate: he could not even meet a Grand Duke and his court in the street without jamming his hat tight down on his head and striding through the very middle of them. He had the manners of a disobliging steamroller (most steamrollers are abjectly obliging and conciliatory); and he was rather less particular about his dress than a scarecrow: in fact he was once arrested as a tramp because the police refused to believe that such a tatterdemalion could be a famous composer, much less a temple of the most turbulent spirit that ever

found expression in pure sound. It was indeed a mighty spirit; but if I had written the mightiest, which would mean mightier than the spirit of Handel, Beethoven himself would have rebuked me; and what mortal man could pretend to a spirit mightier than Bach's? But that Beethoven's spirit was the most turbulent is beyond all question. The impetuous fury of his strength, which he could quite easily contain and control, but often would not, and the uproariousness of his fun, go beyond anything of the kind to be found in the works of other composers. Greenhorns write of syncopation now as if it were a new way of giving the utmost impetus to a musical measure; but the rowdiest jazz sounds like The Maiden's Prayer after Beethoven's third Leonora overture; and certainly no negro corobbery that I ever heard could inspire the blackest dancer such with *diable au corps* as the last movement of the Seventh Symphony. And no other composer has ever melted his hearers into complete sentimentality by the tender beauty of his music, and then suddenly turned on them and mocked them with derisive trumpet blasts for being such fools. Nobody but Beethoven could govern Beethoven; and when, as happened when the fit was on him, he deliberately refused to govern himself, he was ungovernable.

It was this turbulence, this deliberate disorder, this mockery, this reckless and triumphant disregard of conventional manners, that set Beethoven apart from the musical geniuses of the ceremonious seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was a giant wave in that storm of the human spirit which produced the French Revolution. He called no man master. Mozart, his greatest predecessor in his own department, had from his childhood been washed, combed, splendidly dressed, and beautifully behaved in the presence of royal personages and peers. His childish outburst at the Pompadour, "Who is this woman who does not kiss me? The Queen kisses me," would be incredible of Beethoven, who was still an unlicked cub even when he had grown into a very grizzly bear. Mozart had the refinement of convention and society as well as the refinement of nature and of the solitudes of the soul. Mozart and Gluck are refined as the court of Louis XIV was refined: Haydn is refined as the most cultivated country gentlemen of his day were refined: compared to them socially Beethoven was an ostreperous Bohemian: a man of the people. Haydn, so superior to envy that he declared his junior, Mozart, to be the greatest composer that ever lived, could not stand

Beethoven: Mozart, more farseeing, listened to his playing, and said "You will hear of him some day"; but the two would never have hit it off together had Mozart lived long enough to try. Beethoven had a moral horror of Mozart, who in *Don Giovanni* had thrown a halo of enchantment round an aristocratic blackguard, and then, with the unscrupulous moral versatility of a born dramatist, turned round to cast a halo of divinity round Sarastro, setting his words to the only music yet written that would not sound out of place in the mouth of God.

IV
THEATRE

ON HIS OWN TECHNIQUE

From the Preface to Plays Pleasant

1894

RETURNING now to the actual state of things, it is clear that I have no grievance against our theatres. Knowing quite well what I was doing, I have heaped difficulties in the way of the performance of my plays by ignoring the majority of the manager's customers: nay, by positively making war on them. To the actor I have been more considerate, using all my cunning to enable him to make the most of his technical methods; but I have not hesitated on occasion to tax his intelligence very severely, making the stage effect depend not only on *nuances* of execution quite beyond the average skill produced by the routine of the English stage in its present condition, but on a perfectly sincere and straightforward conception of states of mind which still seem cynically perverse to most people, and on a goodhumoredly contemptuous or profoundly pitiful attitude towards ethical conventions which seem to them validly heroic or venerable. It is inevitable that actors should suffer more than most of us from the sophistication of their consciousness by romance; and my view of romance as the great heresy to be swept off from art and life—as the food of modern pessimism and the bane of modern self-respect, is far more puzzling to the performers than it is to the pit. It is hard for an actor whose point of honor it is to be a perfect gentleman, to sympathize with an author who regards gentility as a dishonest folly, and gallantry and chivalry as treasonable to women and stultifying to men.

The misunderstanding is complicated by the fact that actors, in their demonstrations of emotion, have made a second nature of stage custom, which is often very much out of date as a representation of contemporary life. Sometimes the stage custom is not only obsolete, but fundamentally wrong: for instance, in the simple case of laughter and tears, in which it deals too liberally, it is certainly not based on the fact, easily

enough discoverable in real life, that we only cry now in the effort to bear happiness, whilst we laugh and exult in destruction, confusion, and ruin. When a comedy is performed, it is nothing to me that the spectators laugh: any fool can make an audience laugh. I want to see how many of them, laughing or grave, are in the melting mood. And this result cannot be achieved, even by actors who thoroughly understand my purpose, except through an artistic beauty of execution unattainable without long and arduous practice, and an intellectual effort which my plays probably do not seem serious enough to call forth.

Beyond the difficulties thus raised by the nature and quality of my work, I have none to complain of. I have come upon no ill will, no inaccessibility, on the part of the very few managers with whom I have discussed it. As a rule I find that the actor-manager is over-sanguine, because he has the artist's habit of underrating the force of circumstances and exaggerating the power of the talented individual to prevail against them; whilst I have acquired the politician's habit of regarding the individual, however talented, as having no choice but to make the most of his circumstances. I half suspect that those managers who have had most to do with me, if asked to name the main obstacle to the performance of my plays, would unhesitatingly and unanimously reply "The author." And I confess that though, as a matter of business I wish my plays to be performed, as a matter of instinct I fight against the inevitable misrepresentation of them with all the subtlety needed to conceal my ill will from myself as well as from the manager.

The main difficulty, of course, is the incapacity for serious drama of thousands of playgoers of all classes whose shillings and half guineas will buy as much in the market as if they delighted in the highest art. But with them I must frankly take the superior position. I know that many managers are wholly dependent on them, and that no manager is wholly independent of them; but I can no more write what they want than Joachim can put aside his fiddle and oblige a happy company of beanfeasters with a marching tune on the German concertina. They must keep away from my plays: that is all.

There is no reason, however, why I should take this haughty attitude towards those representative critics whose

complaint is that my talent, though not unentertaining, lacks elevation of sentiment and seriousness of purpose. They can find, under the surface-brilliance for which they give me credit, no coherent thought or sympathy, and accuse me, in various terms and degrees, of an inhuman and freakish wantonness; of preoccupation with "the seamy side of life"; of paradox, cynicism, and eccentricity, reducible, as some contend, to a trite formula of treating bad as good and good as bad, important as trivial and trivial as important, serious as laughable and laughable as serious, and so forth. As to this formula I can only say that if any gentleman is simple enough to think that even a good comic opera can be produced by it, I invite him to try his hand, and see whether anything resembling one of my plays will reward him.

I could explain the matter easily enough if I chose; but the result would be that the people who misunderstand the plays would misunderstand the explanation ten times more. The particular exceptions taken are seldom more than symptoms of the underlying fundamental disagreement between the romantic morality of the critics and the natural morality of the plays. For example, I am quite aware that the much criticized Swiss officer in *Arms and The Man* is not a conventional stage soldier. He suffers from want of food and sleep; his nerves go to pieces after three days under fire, ending in the horrors of a rout and pursuit; he has found by experience that it is more important to have a few bits of chocolate to eat in the field than cartridges for his revolver. When many of my critics rejected these circumstances as fantastically improbable and cynically unnatural, it was not necessary to argue them into common sense: all I had to do was to brain them, so to speak, with the first half dozen military authorities at hand, beginning with the present Commander-in-Chief. But when it proved that such unromantic (but all the more dramatic) facts implied to them a denial of the existence of courage, patriotism, faith, hope, and charity, I saw that it was not really mere matter of fact that was at issue between us. One strongly Liberal critic, the late Moy Thomas, who had, in the teeth of a chorus of dissent, received my first play with the most generous encouragement, declared, when *Arms and The Man* was produced, that I had struck a wanton blow at the cause of liberty in the Balkan Peninsula by mentioning that it was not a matter of course for a Bulgarian in 1885 to

wash his hands every day. He no doubt saw soon afterwards the squabble, reported all through Europe, between Stambouloff and an eminent lady of the Bulgarian court who took exception to his neglect of his fingernails. After that came the news of his ferocious assassination, with a description of the room prepared for the reception of visitors by his widow, who draped it with black, and decorated it with photographs of the mutilated body of her husband. Here was a sufficiently sensational confirmation of the accuracy of my sketch of the theatrical nature of the first apings of western civilization by spirited races just emerging from slavery. But it had no bearing on the real issue between my critic and myself, which was, whether the political and religious idealism which had inspired Gladstone to call for the rescue of these Balkan principalities from the despotism of the Turk, and converted miserably enslaved provinces into hopeful and gallant little States, will survive the general onslaught on idealism which is implicit, and indeed explicit, in *Arms and The Man* and the naturalist plays of the modern school. For my part I hope not; for idealism, which is only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals, is as obnoxious to me as romance in ethics or religion. In spite of a Liberal Revolution or two, I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct, shedding fictitious glory on robbery, starvation, disease, crime, drink, war, cruelty, cupidity, and all the other commonplaces of civilization which drive men to the theatre to make foolish pretences that such things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them. On the other hand, I see plenty of good in the world working itself out as fast as the idealists will allow it; and if they would only let it alone and learn to respect reality, which would include the beneficial exercise of respecting themselves, and incidentally respecting me, we should all get along much better and faster. At all events, I do not see moral chaos and anarchy as the alternative to romantic convention; and I am not going to pretend I do merely to please the people who are convinced that the world is held together only by the force of unanimous, strenuous, eloquent, trumpet-tongued lying. To me the tragedy and comedy of life lie in the consequences, sometimes terrible, sometimes ludicrous, of our persistent attempts to found our institutions on the ideals suggested to our imaginations by our half-satisfied

passions, instead of on a genuinely scientific natural history. And with that hint as to what I am driving at, I withdraw and ring up the curtain.

IRVING'S LECTURE

From Our Theatres in the Nineties

1895

IN an old-fashioned play revived the other day by Mr Terry, a kitchen discussion of literature leads to the question, "Who wrote Shakespear?" Let me put a cognate question. Who writes Mr Irving's lectures? Of course, I must not altogether exclude the hypothesis that he writes them himself; but I had rather flatter him by assuming that he contents himself with jotting down a scenario, and orders some literary retainer to write the dialogue, enjoining him especially to put in plenty of art and learning, and not to forget some good declamatory passages, in the manner of the late Mr Wills, for elocutionary display. At all events, this is what is suggested by the report of his recent discourse at the Royal Institution. Dr Johnson—"Punch, sir, has no feelings"—Homer—"poetry, music, sculpture, painting"—Hamlet—Shakespear—"the poor player of Wittenberg"—Hogarth—Edmund Kean—Raphael and Michael Angelo—Praxiteles and Phidias—the Colosseum and the Parthenon—"Roscius a name that lives in history": who could not deliver the lecture verbatim from these notes as easily as Mr Percy Fitzgerald could write a book from them? And would we stand it from anybody but Henry Irving? Some years ago Mr William Archer lectured on the drama at the Royal Institution. What would the directors have said to Mr Archer had he put them off with stuff which any sufficiently old-fashioned auctioneer could improvise at a sale of theatrical prints? No: let us deal faithfully with Mr Irving in this matter, and not treat him like a spoiled child. The other evening, after King Arthur, he wished us all a happy new year. He wished it heartily, respectfully, and so on; and then,

with a friendly impulse to get on more intimate terms with us, he asked whether he might wish it to us "affectionately." Naturally, the house immediately shook hands with him, so to speak—I among the rest. Consequently I hold myself privileged now to drop all insecure ceremony, and tell Mr Irving bluntly what every competent person thinks of his lecture. Their opinion may not seem consistent with their applause; but Mr Irving must remember that we now applaud him, not critically, but affectionately, and that we allow him to play like a child at being a learned lecturer, just as we indulge him, every evening at the Lyceum, with a broadsword combat the solemn absurdity of which quite baffles my powers of description. If we treat his orations as lectures, do we not also treat Mr Gladstone's tree-felling exploits as acts of statesmanship? No one can say that we are not indulgent to our favorites.

Mr Irving, however, began his lecture seriously and well, by putting forward "a formal claim to have acting classified *officially* among the fine arts." We all know what official recognition of a fine art means; but for the benefit of the millions of persons who never know anything, and therefore are not included in such general expressions as "we all," Mr Irving explicitly said, "Official recognition of anything worthy is a good, or at least a useful thing. It is a part, and an important part, of the economy of the State: if it is not, of what use are titles and distinctions, names, badges, offices, in fact all the titular and sumptuary ways of distinction?" Here the "formal claim" is put as precisely as Mr Irving himself feels he can decorously put it. I, who am not an actor, and am therefore not hampered by any personal interest in the claim, can put it much more definitely. What Mr Irving means us to answer is this question: "The artist who composed the music for King Arthur is Sir Arthur Sullivan; the artist who composed the poem which made King Arthur known to this generation died Lord Tennyson; the artist who designed the suit of armor worn by King Arthur is Sir Edward Burne-Jones: why should the artist who plays King Arthur be only Mister Henry Irving?" That is clearly Mr Irving's meaning, since his art lacks no other sort of recognition or advancement than this.

Here let me plead against any envious and base-minded view of this claim. Mr Irving is entitled to an entirely honorable construction: we owe him an unhesitating assumption that his jealousy is for the dignity of his art and not of

himself, and that it would never have been advanced if the friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds had been Sir David Garrick, and if every successive P.R.A. had had for his officially recognized peer the leading actor of his day. The theatre at present only boasts one title, that of Sir Augustus Harris, who was knighted, not on the excellent ground of his public services as opera impresario, but through the perfectly irrelevant accident of his having been sheriff when the Emperor of Germany visited the City. Who can deny that the actor is regarded as less worthy of official honors than the musician, the painter, or the poet? We have Sir Arthur Sullivan, Sir A. C. Mackenzie, and Sir Charles Hallé (a purely "executive" artist); and we have Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Sir John Millais, and Sir Frederick Leighton. No one questions the social position of these gentlemen; and an expression of any doubt as to whether it was right to go to a concert or to the Royal Academy Exhibition would be considered an unheard-of eccentricity. But numbers of respectable English people still regard a visit to the theatre as a sin; and numbers more, including most of those who have become accustomed to meeting even rank-and-file actors and actresses in society where thirty years ago they would as soon have expected to meet an acrobat, would receive a proposal from an actor for the hand of their daughter with a sense of *mésalliance* which they would certainly not have if the suitor were a lawyer, a doctor, a clergyman, or a painter. Such people, being intellectually and socially mere sheep, are very much influenced by titles—indeed, that influence is the *raison d'être* of titles; and there can be no doubt that if the next list of birthday honors were to include the names of Sir Henry Irving, Sir John Hare, and Sir Charles Wyndham, the boycott would lose half its force and all its credit at one stroke. On this account it is tenable not only that Mr Irving might with perfect propriety and dignity accept an official honor which we should expect a great poet, for instance, to refuse just as a great commoner is expected to refuse a peerage, but that he is quite right, on behalf of his profession, to claim it as his due before it is offered. His lecture is such a claim; and in advancing it, he has done worthily and courageously—worthily, because a title can add nothing to his personal eminence, and courageously, because many unworthy persons will wound him by seeing nothing in the act but a vain man grasping at a handle for his name.

But since this was Mr Irving's meaning, why was he too

shy to say so in plain words, with the i's dotted and the t's crossed? Why observe that "the philologists define the word Art, as we have it, as coming through the Latin from the Greek. In this language the root-word means etc. etc. etc."? In the Royal Institution an actor should not meddle with philology, for precisely the same reason as a philologist should not meddle with acting. And even when an actor exercises his right as an artist to talk about art, he should be careful to speak from his knowledge and not from his imagination, lest he unknowingly fall into the style of a Cabinet Minister proposing the health of the President of the Royal Academy, and be received by irreverent Slade scholars with the thumb to the nose. For example:

"What is there in works of genius, howsoever they may be represented which touches the heart with emotion? We feel it as we gaze on the beauty which Canova wrought in marble, which Raphael and Velasquez and Vandyke and Reynolds and Gainsborough depicted on canvas, which Michael Angelo piled up to the dome of St Peter's or as we listen to the tender strains of Mozart, the sad witchery of Mendelssohn, or the tempestuous force of Wagner."

I have no doubt Mr Irving, reading this over, and not for the life of him being able to see what I have to complain of in it, will think me nothing short of a wizard when I tell him that I have discovered from it that he does not know Arnolfo from Brunelleschi in architecture, nor Carpaccio from Guido in painting, nor Rossini from Rubinstein in music. One does not illustrate Michael Angelo's genius from the dome of St Peter's, which was another man's affair; nor do you lump Canova with Velasquez or Raphael with Gainsborough, any more than you lump Blondin and the late Mr Spurgeon with Henry Irving. As to the "sad witchery" put forward as Mendelssohn's general characteristic, I can only wish Mr Irving better luck next time. Never did man make a worse shot in the dark. And yet Mr Irving has a fine ear; for he hears the music of Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Wagner, as aforesaid, "in Nature's choral forces—that mighty gamut of creation which rises from the tiniest whisper of whirring wings in the insect world, through the sighing of the night wind, the crackle of swaying corn, the roar of falling water, and the mighty voice of the sounding sea, up to the hiss of the lightning flash and the crash of the thunderbolt."

This quotation, by the way, also proves that Mr Irving does not know fine literature from penny-a-liner's fustian—

though that, alas! we have known ever since we heard him, as Mephistopheles, threatening to do all manner of horrible things to Faust in a passage not at all unlike the above.

Here I can imagine some good-natured reader asking me why I go on like this at our favorite actor—whether I deliberately wish to be disagreeable. My answer is, yes. I do deliberately want to make it impossible for Mr Irving, or any other member of his profession, ever hereafter to get on the Royal Institution or any other platform, and, with stores of first-hand experience to draw on for a sincere and authoritative, and consequently enormously interesting and valuable lecture on his art, to put us off with two columns of stereo concerning which I can tell Mr Irving with the utmost exactitude, and without fear of contradiction, that if he wrote it himself he wasted his time, and that if—as I prefer to believe—he got it written for him, he need not have paid the writer a farthing more than one-and-sixpence an hour, at which rate I will undertake to procure him, in the reading-room of the British Museum and at the shortest notice, as much literary matter to match his sample as he wants. And of all the critics who paid Mr Irving flowery little compliments on his exhibition next day, there is not one who does not know this as well as I know it. Some day, no doubt, I, too, shall succumb to Mr Irving's charm and prestige. But for the present I prefer to say what I think. I can well understand that it is natural for an actor to resort to his art on the platform, and to *act* the lecturer from a written part rather than venture, without experience, to be the lecturer. But surely, if Mr Irving could so happily come before the curtain at the Lyceum, and wish an audience of friends that affectionate happy new year, he could equally come before a still more select circle of friends . . . , and, having told them frankly what he knew about his own art, plead that whether it be ranked as a creative art, like Sir Frederick Leighton's (or like Liszt's playing of Beethoven's sonatas, according to a memorable and luminous criticism of Wagner's), or an executive art like Sir Charles Hallé's, it is no less worthy than theirs of a recognition which, though it could make no personal difference to him, would make all the difference in the world to the status of his profession. Of course, that would not be acting; but then acting is the one thing that is intolerable in a lecturer. Even on the stage it is a habit that only the finest actors get rid of completely.

IRVING AS THE VETERAN OF WATERLOO

From Our Theatres in the Nineties

1895

ANYONE who consults recent visitors to the Lyceum, or who seeks for information in the Press as to the merits of Mr Conan Doyle's *Story of Waterloo*, will in nineteen cases out of twenty learn that the piece is a trifle raised into importance by the marvellous acting of Mr Irving as Corporal Gregory Brewster. As a matter of fact, the entire effect is contrived by the author, and is due to him alone. There is absolutely no acting in it—none whatever. There is a make-up in it, and a little cheap and simple mimicry which Mr Irving does indifferently because he is neither apt nor observant as a mimic of doddering old men, and because his finely cultivated voice and diction again and again rebel against the indignity of the Corporal's squeakings and mumblings and vulgarities of pronunciation. But all the rest is an illusion produced by the machinery of "a good acting play," by which is always meant a play that requires from the performers no qualifications beyond a plausible appearance and a little experience and address in stage business. I had better make this clear by explaining the process of doing without acting as exemplified by *A Story of Waterloo*, in which Mr Conan Doyle has carried the art of constructing an "acting" play to such an extreme that I almost suspect him of satirically revenging himself, as a literary man, on a profession which has such a dread of "literary plays." (A "literary play," I should explain, is a play that the actors have to act, in opposition to the "acting play," which acts them.)

Before the curtain rises, you read the playbill; and the process commences at once with the suggestive effect on your imagination of "Corporal Gregory Brewster, age eighty-six, a Waterloo veteran," of "Nora Brewster, the corporal's grand-niece," and of "Scene—Brewster's lodgings." By the time you have read that, your own imagination, with the author pull-

ing the strings, has done half the work you afterwards give Mr Irving credit for. Up goes the curtain; and the lodgings are before you, with the humble breakfast table, the cheery fire, the old man's spectacles and bible, and a medal hung up in a frame over the chimney-piece. Lest you should be unobservant enough to miss the significance of all this, Miss Annie Hughes comes in with a basket of butter and bacon, ostensibly to impersonate the grandniece, really to carefully point out all these things to you, and to lead up to the entry of the hero by preparing breakfast for him. When the background is sufficiently laid in by this artifice, the drawing of the figure commences. Mr Fuller Mellish enters in the uniform of a modern artillery sergeant, with a breech-loading carbine. You are touched: here is the young soldier come to see the old—two figures from the Seven Ages of Man. Miss Hughes tells Mr Mellish all about Corporal Gregory. She takes down the medal, and makes him read aloud to her the press-cutting pasted beside it which describes the feat for which the medal was given. In short, the pair work at the picture of the old warrior until the very dullest dog in the audience knows what he is to see, or to imagine he sees, when the great moment comes. Thus is Brewster already created, though Mr Irving has not yet left his dressing room. At last, everything being ready, Mr Fuller Mellish is packed off so as not to divide the interest. A squeak is heard behind the scenes: it is the childish treble that once rang like a trumpet on the powder-waggon at Waterloo. Enter Mr Irving, in a dirty white wig, toothless, blear-eyed, palsied, shaky at the knees, stooping at the shoulders, incredibly aged and very poor, but respectable. He makes his way to his chair, and can only sit down, so stiff are his aged limbs, very slowly and creakily. This sitting down business is not acting: the callboy could do it; but we are so thoroughly primed by the playbill, the scene-painter, the stage-manager, Miss Hughes and Mr Mellish, that we go off in enthusiastic whispers, "What superb acting! How wonderfully he does it!" The corporal cannot recognize his grandniece at first. When he does, he asks her questions about children—children who have long gone to their graves at ripe ages. She prepares his tea: he sups it noisily and ineptly, like a infant. More whispers: "How masterly a touch of second childhood!" He gets a bronchial attack and gasps for paregoric, which Miss Hughes administers with a spoon, whilst our faces glisten with tearful smiles. "Is there another living actor who could take paregoric like

that?" The sun shines through the window: the old man would fain sit there and peacefully enjoy the fragrant air and life-giving warmth of the world's summer, contrasting so pathetically with his own winter. He rises, more creakily than before, but with his faithful grandniece's arm fondly supporting him. He dodders across the stage, expressing a hope that the flies will not be too "owdacious," and sits down on another chair with his joints crying more loudly than ever for some of the oil of youth. We feel that we could watch him sitting down for ever. Hark! a band in the street without. Soldiers pass: the old war-horse snorts feebly, but complains that bands dont play so loud as they used to. The band being duly exploited for all it is worth, the bible comes into play. What he likes in it are the campaigns of Joshua and the battle of Armageddon, which the poor dear old thing can hardly pronounce, though he had it from "our clergyman." How sweet of the clergyman to humor him! Blessings on his kindly face and on his silver hair! Mr Fuller Mellish comes back with the breech-loading carbine. The old man handles it; calls it a firelock; and goes crazily through his manual with it. Finally, he unlocks the breech, and as the barrel drops, believes that he has broken the weapon in two. Matters being explained, he expresses his unalterable conviction that England will have to fall back on Brown Bess when the moment for action arrives again. He takes out his pipe. It falls and is broken. He whimpers, and is petted and consoled by a present of the sergeant's beautiful pipe with "a hamber mouthpiece." Mr Fuller Mellish, becoming again superfluous, is again got rid of. Enter a haughty gentleman. It is the Colonel of the Royal Scots Guards, the corporal's old regiment. According to the well-known custom of colonels, he has called on the old pensioner to give him a five-pound note. The old man, as if electrically shocked, staggers up and desperately tries to stand for a moment at "attention" and salute his officer. He collapses, almost slain by the effort, into his chair, mumbling pathetically that he "were a'most gone that time, Colonel." "A masterstroke! who but a great actor could have executed this heart-searching movement?" The veteran returns to the fireside: once more he depicts with convincing art the state of an old man's joints. The Colonel goes; Mr Fuller Mellish comes; the old man dozes. Suddenly he springs up. "The Guards want powder; and, by God, the Guards shall have it." With these words he falls back in his chair. Mr Fuller Mellish, lest there should be any mistake

about it (it is never safe to trust the intelligence of the British public), delicately informs Miss Hughes that her granduncle is dead. The curtain falls amid thunders of applause.

Every old actor into whose hands this article falls will understand perfectly from my description how the whole thing is done, and will wish that he could get such Press notices for a little hobbling and piping, and a few bits of mechanical business with a pipe, a carbine, and two chairs. The whole performance does not involve one gesture, one line, one thought outside the commonest routine of automatic stage illusion. What, I wonder, must Mr Irving, who of course knows this better than anyone else, feel when he finds this pitiful little handful of hackneyed stage tricks received exactly as if it were a crowning instance of his most difficult and finest art? No doubt he expected and intended that the public, on being touched and pleased by machinery, should imagine that they were being touched and pleased by acting. But the critics! What can he think of the analytic powers of those of us who, when an organized and successful attack is made on our emotions, are unable to discriminate between the execution done by the actor's art and that done by Mr. Conan Doyle's ingenious exploitation of the ready-made pathos of old age, the ignorant and maudlin sentiment attaching to the army and "the Dook," and the vulgar conception of the battle of Waterloo as a stand-up street fight between an Englishman and a Frenchman, a conception infinitely less respectable than that which led Byron to exclaim, when he heard of Napoleon's defeat, "I'm damned sorry"?...

IRVING AS AN ACTOR

From Our Theatres in the Nineties

1895

MR PINERO madly cited Sir Henry Irving as an example of the product of the stock-company training; but the fact is, when Sir Henry first attempted classical acting at the Lyceum, he did not know the A B C of it, and only succeeded by his

original and sympathetic notions of the X Y Z. Nobody who is familiar with the best technical work of the Irving of today, its finish, dignity, and grace, and the exactitude of its expression of his thought and feeling, can (unless he remembers) form any idea of what our chief actor had to teach himself before he could carry veteran playgoers with him in his breach with the tradition of superhuman acting of which Barry Sullivan was, as far as I know, the last English exponent (need I say that the great Irish actor was born in Birmingham?). Barry Sullivan was a splendidly monstrous performer in his prime: there was hardly any part sufficiently heroic for him to be natural in it. He had deficiencies in his nature, or rather blanks, but no weaknesses, because he had what people call no heart. Being a fine man, as proud as Lucifer, and gifted with an intense energy which had enabled him to cultivate himself physically to a superb degree, he was the very incarnation of the old individualistic, tyrannical conception of a great actor. By magnifying that conception to sublimity, he reduced it to absurdity. There were just two serious parts which he could play—Hamlet and Richelieu—the two loveless parts in the grand repertory. I know that some people do not like to think of Hamlet as loveless, and that the Irving Hamlet has his heart in the right place, and almost breaks it in the scene with Ophelia; but this I take to be the actor's rebuke to Shakespear rather than an attempt to fulfil his intentions. Sir Henry Irving has never thought much of the immortal William, and has given him more than one notable lesson—for instance, in *The Merchant of Venice*, where he gave us, not "the Jew that Shakespear drew," but the one he ought to have drawn if he had been up to the Lyceum mark. Barry Sullivan, with his gift of lovelessness, *was* Hamlet, and consequently used to put his Ophelia out of countenance more than it is easy to describe. In Hamlet, as in Richelieu, it was right to create a figure whose utter aloofness from his fellows gave him an almost supernatural distinction, and cut him off from all such trifling intimacy with them as love implies. And it was his success in producing this very curious and very imposing effect that made for Barry Sullivan, in his best days (I am not now speaking of the period after 1870 or thereabout), a unique provincial and Australian reputation which carried him over parts he could not play at all, such as Othello, through which he walked as if the only line in the play that conveyed any idea to him was the description of Othello as "perplexed in the

extreme," or Macbeth, who was simply Cibber's Richard (a favorite part of his) in mutton-chop whiskers. No doubt his temperament, with its exceptional combination of imaginative energy with coldness and proud timidity of the sympathetic passions, accentuated the superhuman pretension in the style of acting which he practised; but his predecessor, Macready (if I may judge from that extremely depressing document, his diary), must have been much more like him than like Sir Henry Irving. At all events, both Macready and Sullivan had abominable tempers, and relied for their stage climaxes on effects of violence and impetuosity, and for their ordinary impressiveness on grandiose assumption of style. Once, when my father mentioned to me that he had seen Macready play Coriolanus, and I asked him what it was like, he replied that it was like a mad bull. I do not offer this as evidence that my critical faculty is an inherited one—clearly there must have been some artistic method in the bull's madness to have gained such a reputation—but I feel quite sure that when Sir Henry Irving fulfils his promise to appear as Coriolanus, no father will describe him to his son as my father described Macready to me. Barry Sullivan, then, represented the grandiose and the violent on its last legs, and could do nothing for the young Irving but mislead him. Irving's mission was to re-establish on the stage the touching, appealing nobility of sentiment and affection—the dignity which only asserts itself when it is wounded; and his early attempts to express these by the traditional methods of the old domineering, self-assertive, ambitious, thundering, superb school led him for a time into a grotesque confusion of style. In playing villains, too, his vein of callous, humorous impishness, with its occasional glimpses of a latent bestial dangerousness, utterly defied the methods of expression proper to the heaven-defying, man-quelling tyrant, usurper, and murderer, who was the typical villain of the old school, and whose flavorless quintessence will be found by the curious distilled into that instructive Shakespearean forgery, Ireland's Vortigern. In short, Irving had to find the right expression for a perfectly new dignity and a perfectly new indignity; and it was not until he had done this that he really accomplished his destiny, broke the old tradition, and left Barry Sullivan and Macready half a century behind. I will not say that he also left Shakespeare behind: there is too much of the "not for an age but for all time" about our bard for that; but it is a pity that the new acting was not applied to a new author. For though Sir

Henry Irving's acting is no longer a falsification of the old style, his acting versions are falsifications of the old plays. His Hamlet, his Shylock, his Lear, though interesting in their own way, are spurious as representations of Shakespear. His Othello I have never seen: his Macbeth I thought fine and genuine, indicating that his business is with Shakespear's later plays and not with his earlier ones. But he owes it to literature to connect his name with some greater modern dramatist than the late Wills, or Tennyson, who was not really a dramatist at all.

IRVING'S ADAPTATIONS

From Our Theatres in the Nineties

1896

... IN a true republic of art Sir Henry Irving would ere this have expiated his acting versions on the scaffold. He does not merely cut plays: he disembowels them. In Cymbeline he has quite surpassed himself by extirpating the antiphonal third verse of the famous dirge. A man who would do that would do anything—cut the coda out of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or shorten one of Velasquez's Philips into a kitcat to make it fit over his drawing room mantelpiece. The grotesque character tracery of Cloten's lines, which is surely not beyond the appreciation of an age educated by Stevenson, is defaced with Cromwellian ruthlessness: and the patriotic scene, with the Queen's great speech about the natural bravery of our isle, magnificent in its Walkürenritt swing, is shorn away, though it might easily have been introduced in the Garden scene. And yet, long screeds of rubbish about "slander, whose edge is sharper than the sword," and so on, are preserved with superstitious veneration.

This curious want of connoisseurship in literature would disable Sir Henry Irving seriously if he were an interpretative actor. But it is, happily, the fault of a great quality—the creative quality. A prodigious deal of nonsense has been

written about Sir Henry Irving's conception of this, that, and the other Shakespearean character. The truth is that he has never in his life conceived or interpreted the characters of any author except himself. He is really as incapable of acting another man's play as Wagner was of setting another man's libretto; and he should, like Wagner, have written his plays for himself. But as he did not find himself out until it was too late for him to learn that supplementary trade, he was compelled to use other men's plays as the framework for his own creations. His first great success in this sort of adaptation was with the Merchant of Venice. There was no question then of a bad Shylock or a good Shylock: he was simply not Shylock at all; and when his own creation came into conflict with Shakespear's, as it did quite openly in the Trial scene, he simply played in flat contradiction of the lines, and positively acted Shakespear off the stage. This was an original policy, and an intensely interesting one from the critical point of view; but it was obvious that its difficulty must increase with the vividness and force of the dramatist's creation. Shakespear at his highest pitch cannot be set aside by any mortal actor, however gifted; and when Sir Henry Irving tried to interpolate a most singular and fantastic notion of an old man between the lines of a fearfully mutilated acting version of King Lear, he was smashed. On the other hand, in plays by persons of no importance, where the dramatist's part of the business is the merest trash, his creative activity is unhampered and uncontradicted; and the author's futility is the opportunity for the actor's masterpiece. Now I have already described Shakespear's Iachimo as little better than any of the lay figures in Cymbeline—a mere *diabolus ex machina*. But Irving's Iachimo is a very different affair. It is a new and independent creation. I knew Shakespear's play inside and out before last Tuesday; but his Iachimo was quite fresh and novel to me. I witnessed it with unqualified delight: it was no vulgar bagful of "points," but a true impersonation, unbroken in its life-current from end to end, varied on the surface with the finest comedy, and without a single lapse in the sustained beauty of its execution. It is only after such work that an artist can with perfect naturalness and dignity address himself to his audience as "their faithful and loving servant;" and I wish I could add that the audience had an equal right to offer him their applause as a worthy acknowledgment of his merit. But when a house distributes its officious first-night plaudits impartially between the fine artist

and the blunderer who roars a few lines violently and rushes off the stage after compressing the entire art of *How Not to Act* into five intolerable minutes, it had better be told to reserve its impertinent and obstreperous demonstrations until it has learnt to bestow them with some sort of discrimination. Our first-night people mean well, and will, no doubt, accept my assurance that they are donkeys with all possible good humor; but they should remember that to applaud for the sake of applauding, as schoolboys will cheer for the sake of cheering, is to destroy our own power of complimenting those who, as the greatest among us, are the servants of all the rest.

IRVING'S RICHARD III

From Our Theatres in the Nineties

1896

THE world being yet little better than a mischievous school-boy, I am afraid it cannot be denied that *Punch and Judy* holds the field still as the most popular of dramatic entertainments. And of all its versions, except those which are quite above the head of the man in the street, Shakespear's *Richard III* is the best. It has abundant devilry, humor, and character, presented with luxuriant energy of diction in the simplest form of blank verse. Shakespear revels in it with just the sort of artistic unconscionableness that fits the theme. *Richard* is the prince of *Punches*: he delights Man by provoking God, and dies unrepentant and game to the last. His incongruous conventional appendages, such as the *Punch* hump, the conscience, the fear of ghosts, all impart a spice of outrageousness which leaves nothing lacking to the fun of the entertainment, except the solemnity of those spectators who feel bound to take the affair as a profound and subtle historic study.

Punch, whether as *Jingle*, *Macaire*, *Mephistopheles*, or *Richard*, has always been a favorite part with Sir Henry Irving. The craftily mischievous, the sardonically impudent, tickle

him immensely, besides providing him with a welcome relief from the gravity of his serious impersonations. As Richard he drops Punch after the coronation scene, which, in deference to stage tradition, he makes a turning-point at which the virtuoso in mischief, having achieved his ambition, becomes a savage at bay. I do not see why this should be. In the tent scene, Richard says:

There is no creature loves me;
And if I die no soul will pity me.

Macbeth repeats this patch of pathos, and immediately proceeds to pity himself unstintedly over it; but Richard no sooner catches the sentimental cadence of his own voice than the mocker in him is awakened at once, and he adds, quite in Punch's vein,

Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself
Find in myself no pity for myself.

Sir Henry Irving omits these lines, because he plays, as he always does, for a pathetically sublime ending. But we have seen the sublime ending before pretty often; and this time it robs us of such strokes as Richard's aristocratically cynical private encouragement to his entourage of peers:

Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
March on; join bravely; let us to't pell-mell,
If not to Heaven, then hand in hand to hell;

followed by his amusingly blackguardly public address to the rank and file, quite in the vein of the famous and more successful appeal to the British troops in the Peninsula. "Will you that are Englishmen fed on beef let yourselves be licked by a lot of—Spaniards fed on oranges?" Despair, one feels, could bring to Punch-Richard nothing but the exultation of one who loved destruction better than even victory; and the exclamation

A thousand hearts are great within my bosom

is not the expression of a hero's courage, but the evil ecstasy of the destroyer as he finds himself, after a weak, piping time of peace, back at last in his native element. . . .

As to Sir Henry Irving's own performance, I am not prepared to judge it, in the point of execution, by what he did on the first night. He was best in the Court scenes. In the heavy single-handed scenes which Cibber loved, he was not, as it seemed to me, answering his helm satisfactorily; and he was occasionally a little out of temper with his own nervous condition. He made some odd slips in the text, notably by repeatedly substituting "you" for "I"—for instance, "Shine out, fair sun, till you have bought a glass." Once he inadvertently electrified the house by very unexpectedly asking Miss Milton to get further up the stage in the blank verse and penetrating tones of Richard. Finally, the worry of playing against the vein tired him. In the tent and battle scenes his exhaustion was too genuine to be quite acceptable as part of the play. The fight was, perhaps, a relief to his feelings; but to me the spectacle of Mr Cooper pretending to pass his sword three times through Richard's body, as if a man could be run through as easily as a cuttle-fish, was neither credible nor impressive. . . .

Further, it seems to me that Sir Henry Irving should either cast the play to suit his acting or else modify his acting to suit the cast. His playing in the scene with Lady Anne—which, though a Punch scene, is Punch on the Don Giovanni plane—was a flat contradiction, not only of the letter of the lines, but of their spirit and feeling as conveyed unmistakably by their cadence. This, however, we are used to: Sir Henry Irving never did and never will make use of a play otherwise than as a vehicle for some fantastic creation of his own. But if we are not to have the tears, the passion, the tenderness, the transport of dissimulation which alone can make the upshot credible—if the woman is to be openly teased and insulted, mocked, and disgusted, all through the scene as well as in the first "keen encounter of their wits," why not have Lady Anne presented as a weak, childish-witted, mesmerized creature, instead of as that most awful embodiment of virtue and decorum, the intellectual American lady? Poor Miss Julia Arthur honestly did her best to act the part as she found it in Shakespear; and if Richard had done the same she would have come off with credit. But how could she play to a Richard who would not utter a single tone to which any woman's heart could respond? She could not very well box the actor-manager's ears, and walk off; but really she deserves some credit for refraining from that extreme remedy. She partly had her revenge when she left the stage; for Richard,

after playing the scene with her as if he were a Houndsditch salesman cheating a factory girl over a pair of second-hand stockings, naturally could not reach the raptures of the tremendous outburst of elation beginning

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won?

One felt inclined to answer, "Never, I assure you," and make an end of the scene there and then. I am prepared to admit that the creations of Sir Henry Irving's imagination are sometimes—the case of his Iachimo, for example—better than those of the dramatists whom he is supposed to interpret. But what he did in this scene, as well as in the opening soliloquy, was child's play compared to what Shakespear meant him to do.

GHOSTS AT THE JUBILEE

From Our Theatres in the Nineties

1897

THE Jubilee and Ibsen's Ghosts! On the one hand the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury: on the other, Mrs Alving and Pastor Manders. Stupendous contrast! how far reflected in the private consciousness of those two august persons there is no means of ascertaining. For though of all the millions for the nourishment of whose loyalty the Queen must submit to be carried through the streets from time to time, not a man but is firmly persuaded that her opinions and convictions are exact facsimiles of his own, none the less she, having seen much of men and affairs, may quite possibly be a wise woman and worthy successor of Canute, and no mere butt for impertinent and senseless Jubilee odes such as their perpetrators dare not, for fear of intolerable domestic scorn and ridicule, address to their own wives or mothers. I am myself cut off by my profession from Jubilees; for loyalty in a critic is corruption. But if I am to avoid idolizing

kings and queens in the ordinary human way, I must carefully realize them as fellow-creatures. And so, whilst the nation was burning war incense in a thousand cannons before the throne at Spithead, I was wondering, on my way home from Ghosts, how far life had brought to the Queen the lessons it brought to Mrs Alving. For Mrs Alving is not anybody in particular: she is a typical figure of the experienced, intelligent woman who, in passing from the first to the last quarter of the hour of history called the nineteenth century, has discovered how appallingly opportunities were wasted, morals perverted, and instincts corrupted, not only—sometimes not at all—by the vices she was taught to abhor in her youth, but by the virtues it was her pride and uprightness to maintain.

Suppose, then, the Queen were to turn upon us in the midst of our jubilation, and say, "My Lords and Gentlemen: You have been good enough to describe at great length the changes made during the last sixty years in science, art, politics, dress, sport, locomotion, newspapers, and everything else that men chatter about. But you have not a word to say about the change that comes home most closely to me? I mean the change in the number, the character, and the intensity of the lies a woman must either believe or pretend to believe before she can graduate in polite society as a well-brought-up lady." If Her Majesty could be persuaded to give a list of these lies, what a document it would be! Think of the young lady of seventy years ago, systematically and piously lied to by parents, governesses, clergymen, servants, everybody; and slapped, sent to bed, or locked up in the bedevilled and beghosted dark at every rebellion of her common sense and natural instinct against sham religion, sham propriety, sham decency, sham knowledge, and sham ignorance. Surely every shop-window picture of "the girl Queen" of 1837 must tempt the Queen of 1897 to jump out of her carriage and write up under it, "Please remember that there is not a woman earning twenty-four shillings a week as a clerk today who is not ten times better educated than this unfortunate girl was when the crown dropped on her head, and left her to reign by her mother wit and the advice of a parcel of men who to this day have not sense enough to manage a Jubilee, let alone an Empire, without offending everybody." Depend on it, seventy-eight years cannot be lived through without finding out things that queens do not mention in Adelphi melodramas. Granted that the Queen's consort was

not a Chamberlain Alving, and that too few of her wide, numerous and robust posterity have perished for even Ibsen to see in the dissoluteness of the ancestors of the First Gentleman in Europe any great menace to the longevity of their descendants; still nineteenth-century life, however it may stage-manage itself tragically and sensationally here, or settle itself happily and domestically there, is yet all of one piece: and it is possible to have better luck than Mrs. Alving without missing all her conclusions.

Let us therefore guard ourselves against the gratuitous, but just now very common, assumption that the Queen, in her garnered wisdom and sorrow, is as silly as the noisiest of her subjects, who see in their ideal Queen the polar opposite of Mrs Alving, and who are so far right that the spirit of Ghosts is unquestionably the polar opposite of the spirit of the Jubilee. The Jubilee represents the nineteenth century proud of itself. Ghosts represents it loathing itself. And how it *can* loathe itself when it gets tired of its money! . . .

The performance of Ghosts by the Independent Theatre Society left the two previous productions by the same society far behind. As in the case of *The Wild Duck*, all obscurity vanished; and Ibsen's clearness, his grip of his theme, and the rapidity, directness, and intensity of the action of the piece produced the effect they can always be depended on to produce in capable hands. . . .

THE CASE FOR PRINTING PLAYS

From the Preface to Plays Unpleasant

1898

. . . THE dramatic author has reasons for publishing his plays which would hold good even if English families went to the theatre as regularly as they take in the newspaper. A perfectly adequate and successful stage representation of a play requires a combination of circumstances so extraordinarily fortunate that I doubt whether it has ever occurred in the history of the world. Take the case of the most successful English

dramatist of the first rank: Shakespear. Although he wrote three centuries ago, he still holds his own so well that it is not impossible to meet old playgoers who have witnessed public performances of more than thirty out of his thirty-seven reputed plays, a dozen of them fairly often, and half a dozen over and over again. I myself, though I have by no means availed myself of all my opportunities, have seen twenty-three of his plays publicly acted. But if I had not read them as well, my impression of them would be not merely incomplete, but violently distorted and falsified. It is only within the last few years that some of our younger actor-managers have been struck with the idea, quite novel in their profession, of performing Shakespear's plays as he wrote them, instead of using them as a cuckoo uses a sparrow's nest. In spite of the success of these experiments, the stage is still dominated by Garrick's conviction that the manager and actor must adapt Shakespear's plays to the modern stage by a process which no doubt presents itself to the adapter's mind as one of masterly amelioration, but which must necessarily be mainly one of debasement and mutilation whenever, as occasionally happens, the adapter is inferior to the author. The living author can protect himself against this extremity of misrepresentation; but the more unquestioned his authority is on the stage, and the more friendly and willing the co-operation of the manager and the company, the more completely does he get convinced of the impossibility of achieving an authentic representation of his piece as well as an effective and successful one. It is quite possible for a piece to enjoy the most sensational success on the basis of a complete misunderstanding of its philosophy: indeed, it is not too much to say that it is only by a capacity for succeeding in spite of its philosophy that a dramatic work of serious poetic import can become popular. In the case of the first part of Goethe's *Faust* we have this frankly avowed by the extraction from the great original of popular entertainments like Gounod's opera or the Lyceum version, in which poetry and philosophy are replaced by romance, which is the recognized spurious substitute for both and is destructive of them. Not even when a drama is performed without omission or alteration by actors who are enthusiastic disciples of the author does it escape transfiguration. . . .

In short, the fact that a skilfully written play is infinitely more adaptable to all sorts of acting than available acting is to all sorts of plays (the actual conditions thus exactly

reversing the desirable ones) finally drives the author to the conclusion that his own view of his work can only be conveyed by himself. And since he could not act the play singlehanded even if he were a trained actor, he must fall back on his powers of literary expression, as other poets and fictionists do. So far, this has hardly been seriously attempted by dramatists. Of Shakespear's plays we have not even complete prompt copies: the folio gives us hardly anything but the bare lines. What would we not give for the copy of *Hamlet* used by Shakespear at rehearsal, with the original stage business scrawled by the prompter's pencil? And if we had in addition the descriptive directions which the author gave on the stage: above all, the character sketches, however brief, by which he tried to convey to the actor the sort of person he meant him to incarnate, what a light they would shed, not only on the play, but on the history of the sixteenth century! Well, we should have had all this and much more if Shakespear, instead of merely writing out his lines, had prepared the plays for publication in competition with fiction as elaborate as that of Meredith. It is for want of this elaboration that Shakespear, unsurpassed as poet, storyteller, character draughtsman, humorist, and rhetorician, has left us no intellectually coherent drama, and could not afford to pursue a genuinely scientific method in his studies of character and society, though in such unpopular plays as *All's Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*, we find him ready and willing to start at the twentieth century if the seventeenth would only let him.

Such literary treatment is much more needed by modern plays than by Shakespear's, because in his time the acting of plays was very imperfectly differentiated from the declamation of verses; and descriptive or narrative recitation did what is now done by scenery, furniture, and stage business. Anyone reading the mere dialogue of an Elizabethan play understands all but half a dozen unimportant lines of it without difficulty; whilst many modern plays, highly successful on the stage, are not merely unreadable but positively unintelligible without visible stage business. Recitation on a platform, with the spectators seated round the reciter in the Elizabethan fashion, would reduce them to absurdity. . . .

Obvious as this is, the presentation of plays through the literary medium has not yet become an art; and the result is that it is very difficult to induce the English public to buy and read plays. Indeed, why should they, when they find

nothing in them except the bare words, with a few carpenter's and costumier's directions as to the heroine's father having a grey beard, and the drawing room having three doors on the right, two doors and an entrance through the conservatory on the left, and a French window in the middle? It is astonishing to me that Ibsen, devoting two years to the production of a three-act play, the extraordinary quality of which depends on a mastery of character and situation which can only be achieved by working out a good deal of the family and personal history of the individuals represented, should nevertheless give the reading public very little more than the technical memorandum required by the carpenter, the electrician, and the prompter. Who will deny that the resultant occasional mysteriousness of effect, enchanting though it may be, is produced at the cost of intellectual obscurity? Ibsen, interrogated as to his meaning, replied "What I have said, I have said." Precisely; but the point is that what he hasnt said, he hasnt said. There are perhaps people (though I doubt it, not being one of them myself) to whom Ibsen's plays, as they stand, speak sufficiently for themselves. There are certainly others who could not understand them on any terms. Granting that on both these classes further explanations would be thrown away, is nothing to be done for the vast majority to whom a word of explanation makes all the difference?

Finally, may I put in a plea for the actors themselves? Born actors have a susceptibility to dramatic emotion which enables them to seize the moods of their parts intuitively. But to expect them to be intuitive as to intellectual meaning and circumstantial conditions as well, is to demand powers of divination from them: one might as well expect the Astronomer Royal to tell the time in a catacomb. And yet the actor generally finds his part full of emotional directions which he could supply as well or better than the author, whilst he is left quite in the dark as to the political or religious conditions under which the character he impersonates is supposed to be acting. Definite conceptions of these are always implicit in the best plays, and are often the key to their appropriate rendering; but most actors are so accustomed to do without them that they would object to being troubled with them, although it is only by such educative trouble that an actor's profession can place him on the level of the lawyer, the physician, the churchman, and the statesman. Even as it is, Shylock as a Jew and usurer, Othello as a Moor and a soldier, Cæsar,

Cleopatra and Antony as figures in defined political circumstances, are enormously more real to the actor than the countless heroes as to whom nothing is ever known except that they wear nice clothes, love the heroine, baffle the villain, and live happily ever after.

The case, then, is overwhelming not only for printing and publishing the dialogue of plays, but for a serious effort to convey their full content to the reader. This means the institution of a new art; and I daresay that before these two volumes are ten years old, the bald attempt they make at it will be left far behind, and that the customary brief and unreadable scene specification at the head of an act will have expanded into a chapter, or even a series of chapters. No doubt one result of this will be the production, under cover of the above arguments, of works of a mixture of kinds, part narrative, part homily, part description, part dialogue, and (possibly) part drama: works that could be read, but not acted. I have no objection to such works; but my own aim has been that of the practical dramatist: if anything my eye has been too much on the stage. At all events, I have tried to put down nothing that is irrelevant to the actor's performance, and, through it, to the audience's comprehension of the play. I have of course been compelled to omit many things that a stage representation could convey, simply because the art of letters, though highly developed grammatically, is still in its infancy as a technical speech notation: for example, there are fifty ways of saying Yes, and five hundred of saying No, but only one way of writing them down. Even the use of spaced letters instead of italics for underlining, though familiar to foreign readers, will have to be learned by the English public before it becomes effective. But if my readers do their fair share of the work, I daresay they will understand nearly as much of the plays as I do myself.

ON THE CENSORSHIP

From the Preface to The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet

1908

IN dealing with the question of the censorship, everything depends on the correct use of the word immorality, and a careful discrimination between the powers of a magistrate or judge to administer a code, and those of a censor to please himself.

Whatever is contrary to established manners and customs is immoral. An immoral act or doctrine is not necessarily a sinful one: on the contrary, every advance in thought and conduct is by definition immoral until it has converted the majority. For this reason it is of the most enormous importance that immorality should be protected jealously against the attacks of those who have no standard except the standard of custom, and who regard any attack on custom that is, on morals—as an attack on society, on religion, and on virtue.

A censor is never intentionally a protector of immorality. He always aims at the protection of morality. Now morality is extremely valuable to society. It imposes conventional conduct on the great mass of persons who are incapable of original ethical judgment, and who would be quite lost if they were not in leading-strings devised by lawgivers, philosophers, prophets, and poets for their guidance. But morality is not dependent on censorship for protection. It is already powerfully fortified by the magistracy and the whole body of law. Blasphemy, indecency, libel, treason, sedition, obscenity, profanity, and all the other evils which a censorship is supposed to avert, are punishable by the civil magistrate with all the severity of vehement prejudice. Morality has not only every engine that lawgivers can devise in full operation for its protection, but also that enormous weight of public opinion enforced by social ostracism which is stronger than all the statutes. A censor pretending to protect morality is like a child pushing the cushions of a railway carriage to give itself the

sensation of making the train travel at sixty miles an hour. It is immorality, not morality, that needs protection: it is morality, not immorality, that needs restraint; for morality, with all the dead weight of human inertia and superstition to hang on the back of the pioneer, and all the malice of vulgarity and prejudice to threaten him, is responsible for many persecutions and many martyrdoms.

Persecutions and martyrdoms, however, are trifles compared to the mischief done by censorships in delaying the general march of enlightenment. This can be brought home to us by imagining what would have been the effect of applying to all literature the censorship we still apply to the stage. The works of Linnaeus and the evolutionists of 1790-1830, of Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, Helmholtz, Tyndall, Spencer, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Samuel Butler, would not have been published, as they were all immoral and heretical in the very highest degree, and gave pain to many worthy and pious people. They are at present condemned by the Greek and Roman Catholic censorships as unfit for general reading. A censorship of conduct would have been equally disastrous. The disloyalty of Hampden and of Washington; the revolting immorality of Luther in not only marrying when he was a priest, but actually marrying a nun; the heterodoxy of Galileo; the shocking blasphemies and sacrileges of Mahomet against the idols whom he dethroned to make way for his conception of one god; the still more startling blasphemy of Jesus when He declared God to be the son of man and Himself to be the son of God, are all examples of shocking immoralities (every immorality shocks somebody), the suppression and extinction of which would have been more disastrous than the utmost mischief that can be conceived as ensuing from the toleration of vice.

These facts, glaring as they are, are disguised by the promotion of immoralities into moralities which is constantly going on. Christianity and Mahometanism, once thought of and dealt with exactly as Anarchism is thought of and dealt with today, have become established religions; and fresh immoralities are persecuted in their name. The truth is that the vast majority of persons professing these religions have never been anything but simple moralists. The respectable Englishman who is a Christian because he was born in Clapham would be a Mahometan for the cognate reason if he had been born in Constantinople. He has never willingly tolerated immorality. He did not adopt any innovation until

it had become moral; and then he adopted it, not on its merits, but solely because it had become moral. In doing so he never realized that it had ever been immoral: consequently its early struggles taught him no lesson; and he has opposed the next step in human progress as indignantly as if neither manners, customs, nor thought had ever changed since the beginning of the world. Toleration must be imposed on him as a mystic and painful duty by his spiritual and political leaders, or he will condemn the world to stagnation, which is the penalty of an inflexible morality.

This must be done all the more arbitrarily because it is not possible to make the ordinary moral man understand what toleration and liberty really mean. He will accept them verbally with alacrity, even with enthusiasm, because the word toleration has been moralized by eminent Whigs; but what he means by toleration is toleration of doctrines that he considers enlightened, and, by liberty, liberty to do what he considers right: that is, he does not mean toleration or liberty at all; for there is no need to tolerate what appears enlightened or to claim liberty to do what most people consider right. Toleration and liberty have no sense or use except as toleration of opinions that are considered damnable, and liberty to do what seems wrong. Setting Englishmen free to marry their deceased wife's sisters is not tolerated by the people who approve of it, but by the people who regard it as incestuous. Catholic Emancipation and the admission of Jews to parliament needed no toleration from Catholics and Jews: the toleration they needed was that of the people who regarded the one measure as a facilitation of idolatry, and the other as a condonation of the crucifixion. Clearly such toleration is not clamored for by the multitude or by the press which reflects its prejudices. It is essentially one of those abnegations of passion and prejudice which the common man submits to because uncommon men whom he respects as wiser than himself assure him that it must be so, or the higher affairs of human destiny will suffer.

Such submission is the more difficult because the arguments against tolerating immorality are the same as the arguments against tolerating murder and theft; and this is why the Censor seems to the inconsiderate as obviously desirable a functionary as the police magistrate. But there is this simple and tremendous difference between the cases: that whereas no evil can conceivably result from the total suppression of

murder and theft, and all communities prosper in direct proportion to such suppression, the total suppression of immorality, especially in matters of religion and sex, would stop enlightenment, and produce what used to be called a Chinese civilization until the Chinese lately took to immoral courses by permitting railway contractors to desecrate the graves of their ancestors, and their soldiers to wear clothes which indecently revealed the fact that they had legs and waists and even posteriors. At about the same moment a few bold Englishwomen ventured on the immorality of riding astride their horses, a practice that has since established itself so successfully that before another generation has passed away there may not be a new side-saddle in England, or a woman who could use it if there was. . . .

A magistrate has laws to administer: a censor has nothing but his own opinion. A judge leaves the question of guilt to the jury: the Censor is jury and judge as well as lawgiver. A magistrate may be strongly prejudiced against an atheist or an anti-vaccinator, just as a sanitary inspector may have formed a careful opinion that drains are less healthy than cesspools; but the magistrate must allow the atheist to affirm instead of to swear, and must grant the anti-vaccinator an exemption certificate, when their demands are lawfully made; and in cities the inspector must compel the builder to make drains and must prosecute him if he makes cesspools. The law may be only the intolerance of the community; but it is a defined and limited intolerance. The limitation is sometimes carried so far that a judge cannot inflict the penalty for housebreaking on a burglar who can prove that he found the door open and therefore made only an unlawful entry. On the other hand, it is sometimes so vague, as for example in the case of the American law against obscenity, that it makes the magistrate virtually a censor. But in the main a citizen can ascertain what he may do and what he may not do; and, though no one knows better than a magistrate that a single ill-conducted family may demoralize a whole street, no magistrate can imprison or otherwise restrain its members on the ground that their immorality may corrupt their neighbors. He can prevent any citizen from carrying certain specified weapons, but not from handling pokers, table-knives, bricks or bottles of corrosive fluid, on the ground that he might use them to commit murder or inflict malicious injury. He has no general power to prevent citizens from selling unhealthy or poisonous substances, or judging for themselves what sub-

stances are unhealthy and what wholesome, what poisonous and what innocuous; what he *can* do is to prevent anybody who has not a specific qualification from selling certain specified poisons of which a schedule is kept. Nobody is forbidden to sell minerals without a licence; but everybody is forbidden to sell silver without a licence. When the law has forgotten some atrocious sin—for instance, contracting marriage whilst suffering from contagious disease—the magistrate cannot arrest or punish the wrongdoer, however he may abhor his wickedness. In short, no man is lawfully at the mercy of the magistrate's personal caprice, prejudice, ignorance, superstition, temper, stupidity, resentment, timidity, ambition, or private conviction. But a playwright's livelihood, his reputation, and his inspiration and mission are at the personal mercy of the Censor. The two do not stand, as the criminal and the judge stand, in the presence of a law that binds them both equally, and was made by neither of them, but by the deliberate collective wisdom of the community. The only law that affects them is the Act of 1843, which empowers one of them to do absolutely and finally what he likes with the other's work. And when it is remembered that the slave in this case is the man whose profession is that of Eschylus and Euripides, of Shakespear and Goethe, of Tolstoy and Ibsen, and the master the holder of a party appointment which by the nature of its duties practically excludes the possibility of its acceptance by a serious statesman or great lawyer, it will be seen that the playwrights are justified in reproaching the framers of that Act for having failed not only to appreciate the immense importance of the theatre as a most powerful instrument for teaching the nation how and what to think and feel, but even to conceive that those who make their living by the theatre are normal human beings with common rights of English citizens. In this extremity of inconsiderateness it is not surprising that they also did not trouble themselves to study the difference between a censor and a magistrate. And it will be found that almost all the people who disinterestedly defend the censorship today are defending him on the assumption that there is no constitutional difference between him and any other functionary whose duty it is to restrain crime and disorder.

One further difference remains to be noted. As a magistrate grows old his mind may change or decay; but the law remains the same. The censorship of the theatre fluctuates with every change in the views and character of the man who

exercises it. And what this implies can only be appreciated by those who can imagine what the effect on the mind must be of the duty of reading through every play that is produced in the kingdom year in, year out.

AN APPEAL FOR A NATIONAL THEATRE

From The Dark Lady of the Sonnets

1910

SHAKESPEAR. . . . The boon I crave is that you do endow a great playhouse, or, if I may make bold to coin a scholarly name for it, a National Theatre, for the better instruction and gracing of your Majesty's subjects.

ELIZABETH. Why, sir, are there not theatres enow on the Bankside and in Blackfriars?

SHAKESPEAR. Madam: these are the adventures of needy and desperate men that must, to save themselves from perishing of want, give the sillier sort of people what they best like; and what they best like, God knows, is not their own betterment and instruction, as we well see by the example of the churches, which must needs compel men to frequent them, though they be open to all without charge. Only when there is a matter of a murder, or a plot, or a pretty youth in petticoats, or some naughty tale of wantonness, will your subjects pay the great cost of good players and their finery, with a little profit to boot. To prove this I will tell you that I have written two noble and excellent plays setting forth the advancement of women of high nature and fruitful industry even as your Majesty is: the one a skilful physician, the other a sister devoted to good works. I have also stole from a book of idle wanton tales two of the most damnable foolishnesses in the world, in the one of which a woman goeth in man's attire and maketh impudent love to her swain, who pleaseth the groundlings by overthrowing a wrestler; whilst, in the other, one of the same kidney sheweth her wit by

saying endless naughtinesses to a gentleman as lewd as herself. I have writ these to save my friends from penury, yet shewing my scorn for such follies and for them that praise them by calling the one *As You Like It*, meaning that it is not as *I* like it, and the other *Much Ado About Nothing*, as it truly is. And now these two filthy pieces drive their nobler fellows from the stage, where indeed I cannot have my lady physician presented at all, she being too honest a woman for the taste of the town. Wherefore I humbly beg your Majesty to give order that a theatre be endowed out of the public revenue for the playing of those pieces of mine which no merchant will touch, seeing that his gain is so much greater with the worse than with the better. Thereby you shall also encourage other men to undertake the writing of plays who do now despise it and leave it wholly to those whose counsels will work little good to your realm. For this writing of plays is a great matter, forming as it does the minds and affections of men in such sort that whatsoever they see done in show on the stage, they will presently be doing in earnest in the world, which is but a larger stage. Of late, as you know, the Church taught the people by means of plays; but the people flocked only to such as were full of superstitious miracles and bloody martyrdoms; and so the Church, which also was just then brought into straits by the policy of your royal father, did abandon and discountenance the art of playing; and thus it fell into the hands of poor players and greedy merchants that had their pockets to look to and not the greatness of this your kingdom. Therefore now must your Majesty take up that good work that your Church hath abandoned, and restore the art of playing to its former use and dignity.

ELIZABETH. Master Shakespear: I will speak of this matter to the Lord Treasurer.

SHAKESPEAR. Then am I undone, madam; for there was never yet a Lord Treasurer that could find a penny for anything over and above the necessary expenses of your government, save for a war or a salary for his own nephew.

ELIZABETH. Master Shakespear: you speak sooth; yet cannot I in any wise mend it. I dare not offend my unruly Puritans by making so lewd a place as the playhouse a public charge; and there be a thousand things to be done in this London of mine before your poetry can have its penny from the general purse. I tell thee, Master Will, it will be three hundred years and more before my subjects learn that man

cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh from the mouth of those whom God inspires. By that time you and I will be dust beneath the feet of the horses, if indeed there be any horses then, and men be still riding instead of flying. Now it may be that by then your works will be dust also.

SHAKESPEAR. They will stand, madam: fear not for that.

ELIZABETH. It may prove so. But of this I am certain (for I know my countrymen) that until every other country in the Christian world, even to barbarian Muscovy and the hamlets of the boorish Germans, have its playhouse at the public charge, England will never adventure. And she will adventure then only because it is her desire to be ever in the fashion, and to do humbly and dutifully whatso she seeth everybody else doing. In the meantime you must content yourself as best you can by the playing of those two pieces which you give out as the most damnable ever writ, but which your countrymen, I warn you, will swear are the best you have ever done. But this I will say, that if I could speak across the ages to our descendants, I should heartily recommend them to fulfil your wish; for the Scottish minstrel hath well said that he that maketh the songs of a nation is mightier than he that maketh its laws; and the same may well be true of plays and interludes.

THE LONDON THEATRE IN WAR TIME

From the Preface to Heartbreak House

1919

... FOR four years the London theatres were crowded every night with thousands of soldiers on leave from the front. These soldiers were not seasoned London playgoers. A childish experience of my own gave me a clue to their condition. When I was a small boy I was taken to the opera. I did not then know what an opera was, though I could whistle a good deal of opera music. I had seen in my mother's album

photographs of all the great opera singers, mostly in evening dress. In the theatre I found myself before a gilded balcony filled with persons in evening dress whom I took to be the opera singers. I picked out one massive dark lady as Alboni, and wondered how soon she would stand up and sing. I was puzzled by the fact that I was made to sit with my back to the singers instead of facing them. When the curtain went up, my astonishment and delight were unbounded.

In 1915 I saw in the theatres men in khaki in just the same predicament. To everyone who had my clue to their state of mind it was evident that they had never been in a theatre before and did not know what it was. At one of our great variety theatres I sat beside a young officer, not at all a rough specimen, who, even when the curtain rose and enlightened him as to the place where he had to look for his entertainment, found the dramatic part of it utterly incomprehensible. He did not know how to play his part of the game. He could understand the people on the stage singing and dancing and performing gymnastic feats. He not only understood but intensely enjoyed an artist who imitated cocks crowing and pigs squeaking. But the people who pretended that they were somebody else, and that the painted picture behind them was real, bewildered him. In his presence I realized how very sophisticated the natural man has to become before the conventions of the theatre can be easily acceptable, or the purpose of the drama obvious to him.

Well, from the moment when the routine of leave for our soldiers was established, such novices, accompanied by damsels (called flappers) often as innocent as themselves, crowded the theatres to the doors. It was hardly possible at first to find stuff crude enough to nurse them on. The best music-hall comedians ransacked their memories for the oldest quips and the most childish antics to avoid carrying the military spectators out of their depth. I believe that this was a mistake as far as the novices were concerned. Shakespear, or the dramatized histories of George Barnwell, Maria Martin, or the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, would probably have been quite popular with them. But the novices were only a minority after all. The cultivated soldier, who in time of peace would look at nothing theatrical except the most advanced post-Ibsen plays in the most artistic settings, found himself, to his own astonishment, thirsting for silly jokes, dances, and brainlessly sensuous exhibitions of pretty girls. The author of

some of the most grimly serious plays of our time told me that after enduring the trenches for months without a glimpse of the female of his species, it gave him an entirely innocent but delightful pleasure merely to see a flapper. The reaction from the battle-field produced a condition of hyperaesthesia in which all the theatrical values were altered. Trivial things gained intensity and stale things novelty. The actor, instead of having to coax his audiences out of the boredom which had driven them to the theatre in an ill humor to seek some sort of distraction, had only to exploit the bliss of smiling men who were no longer under fire and under military discipline, but actually clean and comfortable and in a mood to be pleased with anything and everything that a bevy of pretty girls and a funny man, or even a bevy of girls pretending to be pretty and a man pretending to be funny, could do for them.

Then could be seen every night in the theatres old-fashioned farcical comedies, in which a bedroom, with four doors on each side and a practicable window in the middle, was understood to resemble exactly the bedroom in the flats beneath and above, all three inhabited by couples consumed with jealousy. When these people came home drunk at night; mistook their neighbor's flats for their own; and in due course got into the wrong beds, it was not only the novices who found the resulting complications and scandals exquisitely ingenious and amusing, nor their equally verdant flappers who could not help squealing in a manner that astonished the oldest performers when the gentleman who had just come in drunk through the window pretended to undress, and allowed glimpses of his naked person to be descried from time to time....

Wellington said that an army moves on its belly. So does a London theatre. Before a man acts he must eat. Before he performs plays he must pay rent. In London we have no theatres for the welfare of the people: they are all for the sole purpose of producing the utmost obtainable rent for the proprietor. If the twin flats and twin beds produce a guinea more than Shakespear, out goes Shakespear, and in come the twin flats and the twin beds. If the brainless bevy of pretty girls and the funny man outbid Mozart, out goes Mozart.

Before the war an effort was made to remedy this by establishing a national theatre in celebration of the tercentenary of the death of Shakespear. A committee was formed;

and all sorts of illustrious and influential persons lent their names to a grand appeal to our national culture. My play, *The Dark Lady of The Sonnets*, was one of the incidents of that appeal. After some years of effort the result was a single handsome subscription from a German gentleman. Like the celebrated swearer in the anecdote when the cart containing all his household goods lost its tailboard at the top of the hill and let its contents roll in ruin to the bottom, I can only say, "I cannot do justice to this situation," and let it pass without another word.

The effect of the war on the London theatres may now be imagined. The beds and the be vies drove every higher form of art out of it. Rents went up to an unprecedented figure. At the same time prices doubled everywhere except at the theatre pay-boxes, and raised the expenses of management to such a degree that unless the houses were quite full every night, profit was impossible. Even bare solvency could not be attained without a very wide popularity. Now what had made serious drama possible to a limited extent before the war was that a play could pay its way even if the theatre were only half full until Saturday and three-quarters full then. A manager who was an enthusiast and a desperately hard worker, with an occasional grant-in-aid from an artistically disposed millionaire, and a due proportion of those rare and happy accidents by which plays of the higher sort turn out to be potboilers as well, could hold out for some years, by which time a relay might arrive in the person of another enthusiast. Thus and not otherwise occurred that remarkable revival of the British drama at the beginning of the century which made my own career as a playwright possible in England. . . .

The present situation will not last. Although the newspaper I read at breakfast this morning before writing these words contains a calculation that no less than twenty-three wars are at present being waged to confirm the peace, England is no longer in khaki; and a violent reaction is setting in against the crude theatrical fare of the four terrible years. Soon the rents of theatres will once more be fixed on the assumption that they cannot always be full, nor even on the average half full week in and week out. Prices will change. The higher drama will be at no greater disadvantage than it was before the war; and it may benefit, first, by the fact that many of us have been torn from the fools' paradise in which the theatre

formerly traded, and thrust upon the sternest realities and necessities until we have lost both faith in and patience with the theatrical pretences that had no root either in reality or necessity; second, by the startling change made by the war in the distribution of income. It seems only the other day that a millionaire was a man with £50,000 a year. Today, when he has paid his income tax and super tax, and insured his life for the amount of his death duties, he is lucky if his net income is £10,000, though his nominal property remains the same. And this is the result of a Budget which is called "a respite for the rich." At the other end of the scale millions of persons have had regular incomes for the first time in their lives; and their men have been regularly clothed, fed, lodged, and taught to make up their minds that certain things have to be done, also for the first time in their lives. Hundreds of thousands of women have been taken out of their domestic cages and tasted both discipline and independence. The thoughtless and snobbish middle classes have been pulled up short by the very unpleasant experience of being ruined to an unprecedented extent. We have all had a tremendous jolt; and although the widespread notion that the shock of the war would automatically make a new heaven and a new earth, and that the dog would never go back to his vomit nor the sow to her wallowing in the mire, is already seen to be a delusion, yet we are far more conscious of our condition than we were, and far less disposed to submit to it.

EVOLUTION IN THE THEATRE

From the Preface to Back to Methuselah

1921

ON the stage (and here I come at last to my own particular function in the matter), Comedy, as a destructive, derisory, critical, negative art, kept the theatre open when sublime tragedy perished. From Molière to Oscar Wilde we had a line of comedic playwrights who, if they had nothing fundamentally positive to say, were at least in revolt against false-

hood and imposture, and were not only, as they claimed, "chastening morals by ridicule," but, in Johnson's phrase, clearing our minds of cant, and thereby shewing an uneasiness in the presence of error which is the surest symptom of intellectual vitality. Meanwhile the name of Tragedy was assumed by plays in which everyone was killed in the last act, just as, in spite of Molière, plays in which everyone was married in the last act called themselves comedies. Now neither tragedies nor comedies can be produced according to a prescription which gives only the last moments of the last act. Shakespear did not make Hamlet out of its final butchery, nor Twelfth Night out of its final matrimony. And he could not become the conscious iconographer of a religion because he had no conscious religion. He had therefore to exercise his extraordinary natural gifts in the very entertaining art of mimicry, giving us the famous "delineation of character" which makes his plays, like the novels of Scott, Dumas, and Dickens, so delightful. Also, he developed that curious and questionable art of building us a refuge from despair by disguising the cruelties of Nature as jokes. But with all his gifts, the fact remains that he never found the inspiration to write an original play. He furbished up old plays, and adapted popular stories, and chapters of history from Holinshed's Chronicle and Plutarch's biographies, to the stage. All this he did (or did not; for there are minus quantities in the algebra of art) with a recklessness which shewed that his trade lay far from his conscience. It is true that he never takes his characters from the borrowed story, because it was less trouble and more fun to him to create them afresh; but none the less he heaps the murders and villainies of the borrowed story on his own essentially gentle creations without scruple, no matter how incongruous they may be. And all the time his vital need for a philosophy drives him to seek one by the quaint professional method of introducing philosophers as characters into his plays, and even of making his heroes philosophers; but when they come on the stage they have no philosophy to expound: they are only pessimists and railers; and their occasional would-be philosophic speeches, such as *The Seven Ages of Man* and *The Soliloquy on Suicide*, shew how deeply in the dark Shakespear was as to what philosophy means. He forced himself in among the greatest of playwrights without having once entered that region in which Michael Angelo, Beethoven, Goethe, and the antique Athenian stage poets are great. He would really not be great at all

if it were not that he had religion enough to be aware that his religionless condition was one of despair. His towering King Lear would be only a melodrama were it not for its express admission that if there is nothing more to be said of the universe than Hamlet has to say, then "as flies to wanton boys are we to the gods: they kill us for their sport."

Ever since Shakespear, playwrights have been struggling with the same lack of religion; and many of them were forced to become mere panders and sensation-mongers because, though they had higher ambitions, they could find no better subject matter. From Congreve to Sheridan they were so sterile in spite of their wit that they did not achieve between them the output of Molière's single lifetime; and they were all (not without reason) ashamed of their profession, and preferred to be regarded as mere men of fashion with a rakish hobby. Goldsmith's was the only saved soul in that pandemonium.

TO THE CRITICS

From the Preface to Saint Joan

1924

To a professional critic (I have been one myself) theatre-going is the curse of Adam. The play is the evil he is paid to endure in the sweat of his brow; and the sooner it is over, the better. This would seem to place him in irreconcilable opposition to the paying playgoer, from whose point of view the longer the play, the more entertainment he gets for his money. It does in fact so place him, especially in the provinces, where the playgoer goes to the theatre for the sake of the play solely, and insists so effectively on a certain number of hours' entertainment that touring managers are sometimes seriously embarrassed by the brevity of the London plays they have to deal in.

For in London the critics are reinforced by a considerable body of persons who go to the theatre as many others go to church, to display their best clothes and compare them with other people's; to be in the fashion, and have something to

talk about at dinner parties; to adore a pet performer; to pass the evening anywhere rather than at home: in short, for any or every reason except interest in dramatic art as such. In fashionable centres the number of irreligious people who go to church, of unmusical people who go to concerts and operas, and of undramatic people who go to the theatre, is so prodigious that sermons have been cut down to ten minutes and plays to two hours; and, even at that, congregations sit longing for the benediction and audiences for the final curtain, so that they may get away to the lunch or supper they really crave for, after arriving as late as (or later than) the hour of beginning can possibly be made for them.

Thus from the stalls and in the Press an atmosphere of hypocrisy spreads. Nobody says straight out that genuine drama is a tedious nuisance, and that to ask people to endure more than two hours of it (with two long intervals of relief) is an intolerable imposition. Nobody says "I hate classical tragedy and comedy as I hate sermons and symphonies; but I like police news and divorce news and any kind of dancing or decoration that has an aphrodisiac effect on me or on my wife or husband. And whatever superior people may pretend, I cannot associate pleasure with any sort of intellectual activity; and I don't believe anyone else can either." Such things are not said; yet nine-tenths of what is offered as criticism of the drama in the metropolitan Press of Europe and America is nothing but a muddled paraphrase of it. If it does not mean that, it means nothing.

I do not complain of this, though it complains very unreasonably of me. But I can take no more notice of it than Einstein of the people who are incapable of mathematics. I write in the classical manner for those who pay for admission to a theatre because they like classical comedy or tragedy for its own sake, and like it so much when it is good of its kind and well done that they tear themselves away from it with reluctance to catch the very latest train or omnibus that will take them home. Far from arriving late from an eight or half-past eight o'clock dinner so as to escape at least the first half-hour of the performance, they stand in queues outside the theatre doors for hours beforehand in biting cold weather to secure a seat. In countries where a play lasts a week, they bring baskets of provisions and sit it out. These are the patrons on whom I depend for my bread. I do not give them performances twelve hours long, because circumstances do not at present make such entertainments feasible;

though a performance beginning after breakfast and ending at sunset is as possible physically and artistically in Surrey or Middlesex as in Ober-Ammergau; and an all-night sitting in a theatre would be at least as enjoyable as an all-night sitting in the House of Commons, and much more useful. But in St Joan I have done my best by going to the well-established classical limit of three and a half hours practically continuous playing, barring the one interval imposed by considerations which have nothing to do with art. I know that this is hard on the pseudo-critics and on the fashionable people whose playgoing is a hypocrisy. I cannot help feeling some compassion for them when they assure me that my play, though a great play, must fail hopelessly, because it does not begin at a quarter to nine and end at eleven. The facts are overwhelmingly against them. They forget that all men are not as they are. Still, I am sorry for them; and though I cannot for their sakes undo my work and help the people who hate the theatre to drive out the people who love it, yet I may point out to them that they have several remedies in their own hands. They can escape the first part of the play by their usual practice of arriving late. They can escape the epilogue by not waiting for it. And if the irreducible minimum thus attained is still too painful, they can stay away altogether. But I deprecate this extreme course, because it is good neither for my pocket nor for their own souls. Already a few of them, noticing that what matters is not the absolute length of time occupied by a play, but the speed with which that time passes, are discovering that the theatre, though purgatorial in its Aristotelian moments, is not necessarily always the dull place they have so often found it. What do its discomforts matter when the play makes us forget them?

V
GREAT SPEECHES
AND SCENES

THE WILL OF THE GODS

Prologue to Cæsar and Cleopatra

1912

In the doorway of the temple of Ra in Memphis. Deep gloom. An august personage with a hawk's head is mysteriously visible by his own light in the darkness within the temple. He surveys the modern audience with great contempt; and finally speaks the following words to them.

Peace! Be silent and hearken unto me, ye quaint little islanders. Give ear, ye men with white paper on your breasts and nothing written thereon (to signify the innocence of your minds). Hear me, ye women who adorn yourselves alluringly and conceal your thoughts from your men, leading them to believe that ye deem them wondrous strong and masterful whilst in truth ye hold them in your hearts as children without judgment. Look upon my hawk's head; and know that I am Ra, who was once in Egypt a mighty god. Ye cannot kneel nor prostrate yourselves; for ye are packed in rows without freedom to move, obstructing one another's vision; neither do any of ye regard it as seemly to do ought until ye see all the rest do so too; wherefore it commonly happens that in great emergencies ye do nothing, though each telleth his fellow that something must be done. I ask you not for worship, but for silence. Let not your men speak nor your women cough; for I am come to draw you back two thousand years over the graves of sixty generations. Ye poor posterity, think not that ye are the first. Other fools before ye have seen the sun rise and set, and the moon change her shape and her hour. As they were so ye are; and yet not so great; for the pyramids my people built stand to this day; whilst the dustheaps on which ye slave, and which ye call empires, scatter in the wind even as ye pile your dead sons' bodies on them to make yet more dust.

Hearken to me then, oh ye compulsorily educated ones. Know that even as there is an old England and a new, and

ye stand perplexed between the twain; so in the days when I was worshipped was there an old Rome and a new, and men standing perplexed between them. And the old Rome was poor and little, and greedy and fierce, and evil in many ways; but because its mind was little and its work was simple, it knew its own mind and did its own work; and the gods pitied it and helped it and strengthened it and shielded it; for the gods are patient with littleness. Then the old Rome, like the beggar on horseback, presumed on the favor of the gods, and said, "Lo! there is neither riches nor greatness in our littleness: the road to riches and greatness is through robbery of the poor and slaughter of the weak." So they robbed their own poor until they became great masters of that art, and knew by what laws it could be made to appear seemly and honest. And when they had squeezed their own poor dry, they robbed the poor of other lands, and added those lands to Rome until there came a new Rome, rich and huge. And I, Ra, laughed; for the minds of the Romans remained the same size whilst their dominion spread over the earth.

Now mark me, that ye may understand what ye are presently to see. Whilst the Romans still stood between the old Rome and the new, there arose among them a mighty soldier: Pompey the Great. And the way of the soldier is the way of death; but the way of the gods is the way of life; and so it comes that a god at the end of his way is wise and a soldier at the end of his way is a fool. So Pompey held by the old Rome, in which only soldiers could become great; but the gods turned to the new Rome, in which any man with wit enough could become what he would. And Pompey's friend Julius Cæsar was on the side of the gods; for he saw that Rome had passed beyond the control of the little old Romans. This Cæsar was a great talker and a politician: he bought men with words and with gold, even as ye are bought. And when they would not be satisfied with words and gold, and demanded also the glories of war, Cæsar in his middle age turned his hand to that trade; and they that were against him when he sought their welfare, bowed down before him when he became a slayer and a conqueror; for such is the nature of you mortals. And as for Pompey, the gods grew tired of his triumphs and his airs of being himself a god; for he talked of law and duty and other matters that concerned not a mere human worm. And the gods smiled on Cæsar; for he lived the life they had given him boldly, and was not forever rebuking us for our indecent ways of crea-

tion, and hiding our handiwork as a shameful thing. Ye know well what I mean; for this is one of your own sins.

And thus it fell out between the old Rome and the new, that Cæsar said, "Unless I break the law of old Rome, I cannot take my share in ruling her; and the gift of ruling that the gods gave me will perish without fruit." But Pompey said, "The law is above all; and if thou break it thou shalt die." Then said Cæsar, "I will break it: kill me who can." And he broke it. And Pompey went for him, as ye say, with a great army to slay him and uphold the old Rome. So Cæsar fled across the Adriatic sea; for the high gods had a lesson to teach him, which lesson they shall also teach you in due time if ye continue to forget them and to worship that cad among gods, Mammon. Therefore before they raised Cæsar to be master of the world, they were minded to throw him down into the dust, even beneath the feet of Pompey, and blacken his face before the nations. And Pompey they raised higher than ever, he and his laws and his high mind that aped the gods, so that his fall might be the more terrible. And Pompey followed Cæsar, and overcame him with all the majesty of old Rome, and stood over him and over the whole world even as ye stand over it with your fleet that covers thirty miles of the sea. And when Cæsar was brought down to utter nothingness, he made a last stand to die honorably, and did not despair; for he said, "Against me there is Pompey, and the old Rome, and the law and the legions: all all against me; but high above these are the gods; and Pompey is a fool." And the gods laughed and approved; and on the field of Pharsalia the impossible came to pass; the blood and iron ye pin your faith on fell before the spirit of man; for the spirit of man is the will of the gods; and Pompey's power crumbled in his hand, even as the power of imperial Spain crumbled when it was set against your fathers in the days when England was little, and knew her own mind, and had a mind to know instead of a circulation of newspapers. Wherefore look to it, lest some little people whom ye would enslave rise up and become in the hand of God the scourge of your boastings and your injustices and your lusts and stupidities.

And now, would ye know the end of Pompey, or will ye sleep while a god speaks? Heed my words well; for Pompey went where ye have gone, even to Egypt, where there was a Roman occupation even as there was but now a British one. And Cæsar pursued Pompey to Egypt: a Roman fleeing, and a Roman pursuing: dog eating dog. And the Egyptians

said, "Lo: these Romans which have lent money to our kings and levied a distraint upon us with their arms, call for ever upon us to be loyal to them by betraying our own country to them. But now behold two Romes! Pompey's Rome and Cæsar's Rome! To which of the twain shall we pretend to be loyal?" So they turned in their perplexity to a soldier that had once served Pompey, and that knew the ways of Rome and was full of her lusts. And they said to him, "Lo: in thy country dog eats dog; and both dogs are coming to eat us: what counsel hast thou to give us?" And this soldier, whose name was Lucius Septimius, and whom ye shall presently see before ye, replied, "Ye shall diligently consider which is the bigger dog of the two; and ye shall kill the other dog for his sake and thereby earn his favor." And the Egyptians said, "Thy counsel is expedient; but if we kill a man outside the law we set ourselves in the place of the gods; and this we dare not do. But thou, being a Roman, art accustomed to this kind of killing; for thou hast imperial instincts. Wilt thou therefore kill the lesser dog for us?" And he said, "I will; for I have made my home in Egypt; and I desire consideration and influence among you." And they said, "We knew well thou wouldst not do it for nothing: thou shalt have thy reward." Now when Pompey came, he came alone in a little galley, putting his trust in the law and the constitution. And it was plain to the people of Egypt that Pompey was now but a very small dog. So when he set his foot on the shore he was greeted by his old comrade Lucius Septimius, who welcomed him with one hand and with the other smote off his head, and kept it as it were a pickled cabbage to make a present to Cæsar. And mankind shuddered; but the gods laughed; for Septimius was but a knife that Pompey had sharpened; and when it turned against his own throat they said that Pompey had better have made Septimius a ploughman than so brave and readyhanded a slayer. Therefore again I bid you beware, ye who would all be Pompeys if ye dared; for war is a wolf that may come to your own door.

Are ye impatient with me? Do ye crave for a story of an unchaste woman? Hath the name of Cleopatra tempted ye hither? Ye foolish ones; Cleopatra is as yet but a child that is whipped by her nurse. And what I am about to shew you for the good of your souls is how Cæsar, seeking Pompey in Egypt, found Cleopatra; and how he received that present of a pickled cabbage that was once the head of Pompey; and

what things happened between the old Cæsar and the child queen before he left Egypt and battled his way back to Rome to be slain there as Pompey was slain, by men in whom the spirit of Pompey still lived. All this ye shall see; and ye shall marvel after your ignorant manner, that men twenty centuries ago were already just such as you, and spoke and lived as ye speak and live, no worse and no better, no wiser and no sillier. And the two thousand years that have past are to me, the god Ra, but a moment; nor is this day any other than the day in which Cæsar set foot in the land of my people. And now I leave you: for ye are a dull folk, and instruction is wasted on you; and I had not spoken so much but that it is in the nature of a god to struggle for ever with the dust and the darkness, and to drag from them, by the force of his longing for the divine, more life and more light. Settle ye therefore in your seats and keep silent; for ye are about to hear a man speak, and a great man he was, as ye count greatness. And fear not that I shall speak to you again: the rest of the story must ye learn from them that lived it. Farewell; and do not presume to applaud me. [*The temple vanishes in utter darkness*].

CÆSAR SPEAKS

Opening of Act I of Cæsar and Cleopatra

1901

The same darkness into which the temple of Ra and the Syrian palace vanished. The same silence. Suspense. Then the blackness and stillness break softly into silver mist and strange airs as the wind-swept harp of Memnon plays at the dawning of the moon. It rises full over the desert; and a vast horizon comes into relief, broken by a huge shape which soon reveals itself in the spreading radiance as a Sphinx pedestalled on the sands. The light still clears, until the upraised eyes of the image are distinguished looking straight forward and upward in infinite fearless vigil, and a mass of color between its great paws defines itself as a heap of red poppies on which a girl lies motionless, her silken vest heav-

ing gently and regularly with the breathing of a dreamless sleeper, and her braided hair glittering in a shaft of moonlight like a bird's wing.

Suddenly there comes from afar a vaguely fearful sound (it might be the bellow of a Minotaur softened by great distance) and Memnon's music stops. Silence: then a few faint high-ringing trumpet notes. Then silence again. Then a man comes from the south with stealing steps, ravished by the mystery of the night, all wonder, and halts, lost in contemplation, opposite the left flank of the Sphinx, whose bosom, with its burden, is hidden from him by its massive shoulder.

THE MAN. Hail, Sphinx: salutation from Julius Cæsar! I have wandered in many lands, seeking the lost regions from which my birth into this world exiled me, and the company of creatures such as I myself. I have found flocks and pastures, men and cities, but no other Cæsar, no air native to me, no man kindred to me, none who can do my day's deed, and think my night's thought. In the little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert; only I wander, and you sit still; I conquer, and you endure; I work and wonder, you watch and wait; I look up and am dazzled, look down and am darkened, look round and am puzzled, whilst your eyes never turn from looking out—out of the world—to the lost region—the home from which we have strayed. Sphinx, you and I, strangers to the race of men, are no strangers to one another: have I not been conscious of you and of this place since I was born? Rome is a madman's dream: this is my Reality. These starry lamps of yours I have seen from afar in Gaul, in Britain, in Spain, in Thessaly, signalling great secrets to some eternal sentinel below, whose post I never could find. And here at last is their sentinel—an image of the constant and immortal part of my life, silent, full of thoughts, alone in the silver desert. Sphinx, Sphinx: I have climbed mountains at night to hear in the distance the stealthy footfall of the winds that chase your sands in forbidden play—our invisible children, O Sphinx, laughing in whispers. My way hither was the way of destiny; for I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part god—nothing of man in me at all. Have I read your riddle, Sphinx?

THE DEVIL IN MAN

From Man and Superman

1903

THE DEVIL. . . . Is Man any the less destroying himself for all this boasted brain of his? Have you walked up and down upon the earth lately? I have; and I have examined Man's wonderful inventions. And I tell you that in the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine. The peasant I tempt today eats and drinks what was eaten and drunk by the peasants of ten thousand years ago; and the house he lives in has not altered as much in a thousand centuries as the fashion of a lady's bonnet in a score of weeks. But when he goes out to slay, he carries a marvel of mechanism that lets loose at the touch of his finger all the hidden molecular energies, and leaves the javelin, the arrow, the blowpipe of his fathers far behind. In the arts of peace Man is a bungler. I have seen his cotton factories and the like, with machinery that a greedy dog could have invented if it had wanted money instead of food. I know his clumsy typewriters and bungling locomotives and tedious bicycles: they are toys compared to the Maxim gun, the submarine torpedo boat. There is nothing in Man's industrial machinery but his greed and sloth: his heart is in his weapons. This marvellous force of Life of which you boast is a force of Death: Man measures his strength by his destructiveness. What is his religion? An excuse for hating me. What is his law? An excuse for hanging you. What is his morality? Gentility! an excuse for consuming without producing. What is his art? An excuse for gloating over pictures of slaughter. What are his politics? Either the worship of a despot because a despot can kill, or parliamentary cock-fighting. I spent an evening lately in a certain celebrated legislature, and heard the pot lecturing the kettle for its blackness, and ministers answering questions. When I left I chalked up on the door the old nursery saying

"Ask no questions and you will be told no lies." I bought a sixpenny family magazine, and found it full of pictures of young men shooting and stabbing one another. I saw a man die: he was a London bricklayer's laborer with seven children. He left seventeen pounds club money; and his wife spent it all on his funeral and went into the workhouse with the children next day. She would not have spent sevenpence on her children's schooling: the law had to force her to let them be taught gratuitously; but on death she spent all she had. Their imagination glows, their energies rise up at the idea of death, these people: they love it; and the more horrible it is the more they enjoy it. Hell is a place far above their comprehension: they derive their notion of it from two of the greatest fools that ever lived, an Italian and an Englishman. The Italian described it as a place of mud, frost, filth, fire, and venomous serpents: all torture. This ass, when he was not lying about me, was maundering about some woman whom he saw once in the street. The Englishman described me as being expelled from Heaven by cannons and gunpowder; and to this day every Briton believes that the whole of his silly story is in the Bible. What else he says I do not know; for it is all in a long poem which neither I nor anyone else ever succeeded in wading through. It is the same in everything. The highest form of literature is the tragedy, a play in which everybody is murdered at the end. In the old chronicles you read of earthquakes and pestilences, and are told that these shewed the power and majesty of God and the littleness of Man. Nowadays the chronicles describe battles. In a battle two bodies of men shoot at one another with bullets and explosive shells until one body runs away, when the others chase the fugitives on horseback and cut them to pieces as they fly. And this, the chronicle concludes, shews the greatness and majesty of empires, and the littleness of the vanquished. Over such battles the people run about the streets yelling with delight, and egg their Governments on to spend hundreds of millions of money in the slaughter, whilst the strongest Ministers dare not spend an extra penny in the pound against the poverty and pestilence through which they themselves daily walk. I could give you a thousand instances; but they all come to the same thing: the power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death; and the inner need that has nerved Life to the effort of organizing itself into the human being is not the need for higher life but for a more efficient engine of destruction. The plague, the

famine, the earthquake, the tempest were too spasmodic in their action; the tiger and crocodile were too easily satiated and not cruel enough: something more constantly, more ruthlessly, more ingeniously destructive was needed; and that something was Man, the inventor of the rack, the stake, the gallows, the electric chair; of sword and gun and poison gas: above all, of justice, duty, patriotism, and all the other isms by which even those who are clever enough to be humanely disposed are persuaded to become the most destructive of all the destroyers.

AGAINST HERESY

From Saint Joan

1924

WARWICK. What can you expect? . . . Her head is turned.

CAUCHON. Who has turned it? The devil. And for a mighty purpose. He is spreading this heresy everywhere. The man Hus, burnt only thirteen years ago at Constance, infected all Bohemia with it. A man named WcLeef, himself an anointed priest, spread the pestilence in England; and to your shame you let him die in his bed. We have such people here in France too: I know the breed. It is cancerous: if it be not cut out, stamped out, burnt out, it will not stop until it has brought the whole body of human society into sin and corruption, into waste and ruin. By it an Arab camel driver drove Christ and His Church out of Jerusalem, and ravaged his way west like a wild beast until at last there stood only the Pyrenees and God's mercy between France and damnation. Yet what did the camel driver do at the beginning more than this shepherd girl is doing? He had his voices from the angel Gabriel: she has her voices from St Catherine and St Margaret and the Blessed Michael. He declared himself the messenger of God, and wrote in God's name to the kings of the earth. Her letters to them are going forth daily. It is not the Mother of God now to whom we must look for intercession, but to Joan the Maid. What will the world be like when The Church's accumulated wisdom and knowledge and

experience, its councils of learned, venerable pious men, are thrust into the kennel by every ignorant laborer or dairymaid whom the devil can puff up with the monstrous self-conceit of being directly inspired from heaven? It will be a world of blood, of fury, of devastation, of each man striving for his own hand: in the end a world wrecked back into barbarism. For now you have only Mahomet and his dupes, and the Maid and her dupes; but what will it be when every girl thinks herself a Joan and every man a Mahomet? I shudder to the very marrow of my bones when I think of it. I have fought it all my life; and I will fight it to the end. Let all this woman's sins be forgiven her except only this sin; for it is the sin against the Holy Ghost; and if she does not recant in the dust before the world, and submit herself to the last inch of her soul to her Church, to the fire she shall go if she once falls into my hand.

THE INQUISITOR'S SPEECH

From Saint Joan

1924

THE INQUISITOR [*speaking very gravely*] Brother Martin: if you had seen what I have seen of heresy, you would not think it a light thing even in its most apparently harmless and even lovable and pious origins. Heresy begins with people who are to all appearance better than their neighbors. A gentle and pious girl, or a young man who has obeyed the command of our Lord by giving all his riches to the poor, and putting on the garb of poverty, the life of austerity, and the rule of humility and charity, may be the founder of a heresy that will wreck both Church and Empire if not ruthlessly stamped out in time. The records of the Holy Inquisition are full of histories we dare not give to the world, because they are beyond the belief of honest men and innocent women: yet they all began with saintly simpletons. I have seen this again and again. Mark what I say: the woman who quarrels with her clothes, and puts on the dress of a man, is like the man who throws off his fur gown and

dresses like John the Baptist: they are followed, as surely as the night follows the day, by bands of wild women and men who refuse to wear any clothes at all. When maids will neither marry nor take regular vows, and men reject marriage and exalt their lust into divine inspirations, then, as surely as the summer follows the spring, they begin with polygamy, and end by incest. Heresy at first seems innocent and even laudable; but it ends in such a monstrous horror of unnatural wickedness that the most tender-hearted among you, if you saw it at work as I have seen it, would clamor against the mercy of the Church in dealing with it. For two hundred years the Holy Office has striven with these diabolical madnenses; and it knows that they begin always by vain and ignorant persons setting up their own judgment against the Church, and taking it upon themselves to be the interpreters of God's will. You must not fall into the common error of mistaking these simpletons for liars and hypocrites. They believe honestly and sincerely that their diabolical inspiration is divine. Therefore you must be on your guard against your natural compassion. You are all, I hope, merciful men: how else could you have devoted your lives to the service of our gentle Savior? You are going to see before you a young girl, pious and chaste; for I must tell you, gentlemen, that the things said of her by our English friends are supported by no evidence, whilst there is abundant testimony that her excesses have been excesses of religion and charity and not of worldliness and wantonness. This girl is not one of those whose hard features are the sign of hard hearts, and whose brazen looks and lewd demeanor condemn them before they are accused. The devilish pride that has led her into her present peril has left no mark on her countenance. Strange as it may seem to you, it has even left no mark on her character outside those special matters in which she is proud; so that you will see a diabolical pride and a natural humility seated side by side in the selfsame soul. Therefore be on your guard. God forbid that I should tell you to harden your hearts; for her punishment if we condemn her will be so cruel that we should forfeit our own hope of divine mercy were there one grain of malice against her in our hearts. But if you hate cruelty—and if any man here does not hate it I command him on his soul's salvation to quit this holy court—I say, if you hate cruelty, remember that nothing is so cruel in its consequences as the toleration of heresy. Remember also that no court of law can be so cruel as the common people are to

those whom they suspect of heresy. The heretic in the hands of the Holy Office is safe from violence, is assured of a fair trial, and cannot suffer death, even when guilty, if repentance follows sin. Innumerable lives of heretics have been saved because the Holy Office has taken them out of the hands of the people, and because the people have yielded them up, knowing that the Holy Office would deal with them. Before the Holy Inquisition existed, and even now when its officers are not within reach, the unfortunate wretch suspected of heresy, perhaps quite ignorantly and unjustly, is stoned, torn in pieces, drowned, burned in his house with all his innocent children, without a trial, unshriven, unburied save as a dog is buried: all of them deeds hateful to God and most cruel to man. Gentlemen: I am compassionate by nature as well as by my profession; and though the work I have to do may seem cruel to those who do not know how much more cruel it would be to leave it undone, I would go to the stake myself sooner than do it if I did not know its righteousness, its necessity, its essential mercy. I ask you to address yourself to this trial in that conviction. Anger is a bad counsellor: cast out anger. Pity is sometimes worse: cast out pity. But do not cast out mercy. Remember only that justice comes first.

JOAN REJECTS THE PRISON SENTENCE

From Saint Joan

1924

JOAN. . . . They told me you were fools [*the word gives great offence*], and that I was not to listen to your fine words nor trust to your charity. You promised me my life; but you lied [*indignant exclamations*]. You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread: when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet so that I can never again ride

with the soldiers nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him: all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times. I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God.

PRAISE TO ST JOAN

From Saint Joan

1924

JOAN. My sword shall conquer yet: the sword that never struck a blow. Though men destroyed my body, yet in my soul I have seen God.

CAUCHON [*kneeling to her*] The girls in the field praise thee; for thou hast raised their eyes; and they see that there is nothing between them and heaven.

DUNOIS [*kneeling to her*] The dying soldiers praise thee, because thou art a shield of glory between them and the judgment.

THE ARCHBISHOP [*kneeling to her*] The princes of the Church praise thee, because thou hast redeemed the faith their worldlinesses have dragged through the mire.

WARWICK [*kneeling to her*] The cunning counsellors praise thee, because thou hast cut the knots in which they have tied their own souls.

DE STOGUMBER [*kneeling to her*] The foolish old men on their deathbeds praise thee, because their sins against thee are turned into blessings.

THE INQUISITOR [*kneeling to her*] The judges in the blindness and bondage of the law praise thee, because thou hast vindicated the vision and the freedom of the living soul.

THE SOLDIER [*kneeling to her*] The wicked out of hell praise thee, because thou hast shewn them that the fire that is not quenched is a holy fire.

THE EXECUTIONER [*kneeling to her*] The tormentors and executioners praise thee, because thou hast shewn that their hands are guiltless of the death of the soul.

CHARLES [*kneeling to her*] The unpretending praise thee, because thou hast taken upon thyself the heroic burdens that are too heavy for them.

JOAN. Woe unto me when all men praise me! I bid you remember that I am a saint, and that saints can work miracles. . . .

THE KING TO HIS CABINET

From The Apple Cart

1929

THERE was a time when the king could depend on the support of the aristocracy and the cultivated bourgeoisie. Today there is not a single aristocrat left in politics, not a single member of the professions, not a single leading personage in big business or finance. They are richer than ever, more powerful than ever, more able and better educated than ever. But not one of them will touch this drudgery of government, this public work that never ends because we cannot finish one job without creating ten fresh ones. We get no thanks for it because ninety-nine hundredths of it is unknown to the people, and the remaining hundredth is resented by them as an invasion of their liberty or an increase in their taxation. It wears out the strongest man, and even the strongest woman, in five or six years. It slows down to nothing when we are fresh from our holidays and best able to bear it, and rises in an overwhelming wave through some unforeseen catastrophe

when we are on the verge of nervous breakdown from overwork and fit for rest and sleep only. And this drudgery, remember, is a sweated trade, the only one now left in this country. My civil list leaves me a poor man among multimillionaires. Your salaries can be earned ten times over in the city by anyone with outstanding organizing or administrative ability. History tells us that the first Lord Chancellor who abandoned the woolsack for the city boardroom struck the nation with amazement: today the nation would be equally amazed if a man of his ability thought it worth his while to prefer the woolsack even to the stool of an office boy as a jumping-off place for his ambition. Our work is no longer even respected. It is looked down on by our men of genius as dirty work. What great actor would exchange his stage? what great barrister his court? what great preacher his pulpit? for the squalor of the political arena in which we have to struggle with foolish factions in parliament and with ignorant voters in the constituencies? The scientists will have nothing to do with us; for the atmosphere of politics is not the atmosphere of science. Even political science, the science by which civilization must live or die, is busy explaining the past whilst we have to grapple with the present: it leaves the ground before our feet in black darkness whilst it lights up every corner of the landscape behind us. All the talent and genius of the country is bought up by the flood of unearned money. On that poisoned wealth talent and genius live more luxuriously in the service of the rich than we in the service of our country. Politics, once the centre of attraction for ability, public spirit, and ambition, has now become the refuge of a few fanciers of public speaking and party intrigue who find all the other avenues to distinction closed to them either by their lack of practical ability, their comparative poverty and lack of education, or, let me hasten to add, their hatred of oppression and injustice, and their contempt for the chicaneries and false pretences of commercialized professionalism. History tells us of a gentleman-statesman who declared that such people were not fit to govern. Within a year it was discovered that they could govern at least as well as anyone else who could be persuaded to take on the job. Then began that abandonment of politics by the old governing class which has ended in all Cabinets, conservative no less than progressive, being what were called in the days of that rash statesman Labor Cabinets. Do not misunderstand me: I do not want the old governing class back. It governed so self-

ishly that the people would have perished if democracy had not swept it out of politics. But evil as it was in many ways, at least it stood above the tyranny of popular ignorance and popular poverty. Today only the king stands above that tyranny. You are dangerously subject to it. In spite of my urgings and remonstrances you have not yet dared to take command of our schools and put a stop to the inculcation upon your unfortunate children of superstitions and prejudices that stand like stone walls across every forward path. Are you well advised in trying to reduce me to your own slavery to them? If I do not stand above them there is no longer any reason for my existence at all. I stand for the future and the past, for the posterity that has no vote and the tradition that never had any. I stand for the great abstractions: for conscience and virtue; for the eternal against the expedient; for the evolutionary appetite against the day's gluttony; for intellectual integrity, for humanity, for the rescue of industry from commercialism and of science from professionalism, for everything that you desire as sincerely as I, but which in you is held in leash by the Press, which can organize against you the ignorance and superstition, the timidity and credulity, the gullibility and prudery, the hating and hunting instinct of the voting mob, and cast you down from power if you utter a word to alarm or displease the adventurers who have the Press in their pockets. Between you and that tyranny stands the throne. I have no elections to fear; and if any newspaper magnate dares offend me, that magnate's fashionable wife and marriageable daughters will soon make him understand that the King's displeasure is still a sentence of social death within range of St James's Palace. Think of the things you dare not do! the persons you dare not offend! Well, a king with a little courage may tackle them for you. Responsibilities which would break your backs may still be borne on a king's shoulders. But he must be a king, not a puppet. You would be responsible for a puppet: remember that. But whilst you continue to support me as a separate and independent estate of the realm, I am your scapegoat: you get the credit of all our popular legislation whilst you put the odium of all our resistance to ignorant popular clamor on me. I ask you, before you play your last card and destroy me, to consider where you will be without me. Think once: think twice: for your danger is, not that I may defeat you, but that your success is certain if you insist.

VI
HUMOR

THE LADY WHISTLER

From London Music

1889

...I WENT to Covent Garden on Wednesday to hear the classical program, and to Her Majesty's on the previous Saturday to hear Mrs Shaw, who is not, after all, the American Lady Whistler, but an American lady whistler, which is not exactly the same thing. Mrs Shaw is a tall, dark, pleasantly-favored woman, with a good deal of cheek, not too chubby, but just slack enough to allow plenty of play to her lips. After the manner of her countrywomen, she travels with enormous wreaths and baskets of flowers, which are handed to her at the conclusion of her pieces. And no matter how often this happens, she is never a whit the less astonished to see the flowers come up.

They say that the only artist who never gets accustomed to his part is the performing flea who fires a cannon, and who is no less dismayed and confounded by the three-hundredth report than by the first. Now it may be ungallant, coarse, brutal even; but whenever I see a fair American thrown into raptures by her own flower-basket, I always think of the flea thrown into convulsions by its own cannon. And so, dear but silly American ladies, be persuaded, and drop it. Nobody except the very greenest of greenhorns is taken in; and the injury you do to your artistic self-respect by condescending to take him in is incalculable. Just consider for a moment how insanely impossible it is that a wreath as big as a cart-wheel could be the spontaneous offering of an admiring stranger.

If these persuasions do not avail, sterner methods must be taken. The public can protect themselves by organization. There is—or was—an institution called the Playgoers' Club. Some day I shall get up an affiliated Society of Hissers and Hooters, whose mission it will be to attend "first appearances" in force, and hiss all bogus demonstrations until the sight of a basket of flowers becomes more dreadful to a

debutante than any fear of a cold reception could possibly be. However, I shall not leave my Society plunged for ever in the barbarism from which hissing and hooting survive. It is a savage thing to assail a possibly nervous artist with fierce sibillations and booings. At a well-conducted public meeting a gentle, but very expressive murmur of "Oh! oh!" is quite sufficient to bring to his senses a speaker who says or does anything unbecoming. My club shall be trained to "Oh! oh!" like cooing doves at a first offence. Only persistent wrongdoing will be dealt with by hissing, or, in the last extremity, by brickbats.

But to return to Mrs Shaw. I cannot say that her performance astonished me. Indeed, when I had conquered my first impulse to laugh at the oddity of this novel prima donna gravely whistling Ardit's *Il Bacio* to the orchestral accompaniment, I began to entertain serious thoughts of going into the business myself. I am by no means an exceptionally gifted whistler; but at the very first trial I found that I could get within a sixteenth of a semitone of B natural, which is apparently Mrs Shaw's highest note. As to *Il Bacio*, with its pretty but easy and trumpery bravura, who could not whistle that? Now if Mrs Shaw had whistled the waltz from Gounod's *Romeo*, or the *Shadow Song* from *Dinorah*, there would have been something in the feat. The audience seemed hugely amused and delighted; but unless Mrs Shaw can greatly surpass her performance of *Saturday*, any demand her success may create for lady whistlers is sure to bring forward a dozen equally brilliant performers.

As far as my knowledge of whistling goes there are two methods open to the virtuoso. One, Mrs Shaw's method and mine, is to whistle with the lips and tongue. This produces the best results as far as purity and flexibility are concerned. The other, which totally baffles me, but which comes naturally to a talented friend of mine, is to open a corner of the mouth, tuck it under the ear, and whistle through the back teeth. The tone produced is penetrating in quality, and will attract the attention of a disengaged cabman at a great distance. Mrs Shaw makes no use of this method even in *forte* passages, perhaps because it is somewhat lacking in facial beauty. On the whole, my verdict upon her is that she lacks sustaining power and volume of tone, and that *Il Bacio* is not a sufficiently arduous test to entitle her to claim a first-class as a florid whistler.

AFTER THE BALLET

From London Music

1890

WHEN I arrived at my door after these dissipations I found Fitzroy Square, in which I live, deserted. It was a clear, dry cold night; and the carriage way round the circular railing presented such a magnificent hippodrome that I could not resist trying to go just once round in Vincenti's fashion. It proved frightfully difficult. After my fourteenth fall I was picked up by a policeman. "What are you doing here?" he said, keeping fast hold of me, "I've bin watching you for the last five minutes." I explained, eloquently and enthusiastically. He hesitated a moment, and then said, "Would you mind holding my helmet while I have a try. It don't look so hard." Next moment his nose was buried in the macadam and his right knee was out through its torn garment. He got up bruised and bleeding, but resolute. "I never was beaten yet" he said; "and I won't be beaten now. It was my coat that tripped me." We both hung our coats on the railings, and went at it again. If each round of the square had been a round in a prize fight, we should have been less damaged and disfigured; but we persevered, and by four o'clock the policeman had just succeeded in getting round twice without a rest or a fall, when an inspector arrived and asked him bitterly whether that was his notion of fixed point duty. "I allow it aint fixed point" said the constable, emboldened by his new accomplishment; "but I'll lay a half sovereign *you* cant do it." The inspector could not resist the temptation to try (I was whirling round before his eyes in the most fascinating manner); and he made rapid progress after half an hour or so. We were subsequently joined by an early postman and by a milkman, who unfortunately broke his leg and had to be carried to hospital by the other three. By that time I was quite exhausted, and could barely crawl into bed. It was perhaps a foolish scene; but nobody who has witnessed Vincenti's performance will feel surprised at it.

ELIZA GETS CARRIED AWAY

From *Pygmalion*

1912

Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite fluttered. Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs Higgins with studied grace.

LIZA [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*] How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful*]. Mr Higgins told me I might come.

MRS HIGGINS [*cordially*] Quite right: I'm very glad indeed to see you.

PICKERING. How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

LIZA [*shaking hands with him*] Colonel Pickering, is it not?

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. I feel sure we have met before, Miss Doolittle. I remember your eyes.

LIZA. How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman gracefully in the place just left vacant by Higgins*].

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*introducing*] My daughter Clara.

LIZA. How do you do?

CLARA [*impulsively*] How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman beside Eliza, devouring her with her eyes*].

FREDDY [*coming to their side of the ottoman*] I've certainly had the pleasure.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*introducing*] My son Freddy.

LIZA. How do you do?

Freddy bows and sits down in the Elizabethan chair, infatuated.

HIGGINS [*suddenly*] By George, yes: it all comes back to me! [*They stare at him*]. Covent Garden! [*Lamentably*] What a damned thing!

MRS HIGGINS. Henry, please! [*He is about to sit on the edge of the table*] Don't sit on my writing-table: you'll break it.

HIGGINS [*sulkily*] Sorry.

He goes to the divan, stumbling into the fender and over

the fire-irons on his way; extricating himself with muttered imprecations; and finishing his disastrous journey by throwing himself so impatiently on the divan that he almost breaks it. Mrs Higgins looks at him, but controls herself and says nothing.

A long and painful pause ensues.

MRS HIGGINS [*at last, conversationally*] Will it rain, do you think?

LIZA. The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.

FREDDY. Ha! ha! how awfully funny!

LIZA. What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY. Killing!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. I'm sure I hope it wont turn cold. Theres so much influenza about. It runs right through our whole family regularly every spring.

LIZA [*darkly*] My aunt died of influenza: so they said.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*clicks her tongue sympathetically*] !!!

LIZA [*in the same tragic tone*] But it's my belief they done the old woman in.

MRS HIGGINS [*puzzled*] Done her in?

LIZA. Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before. I saw her with my own eyes. Fairly blue with it, she was. They all thought she was dead; but my father he kept ladling gin down her throat til she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*startled*] Dear me!

LIZA [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. What does doing her in mean?

HIGGINS [*hastily*] Oh, thats the new small talk. To do a person in means to kill them.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*to Eliza, horrified*] You surely dont believe that your aunt was killed?

LIZA. Do I not! Them she lived with would have killed her for a hat-pin, let alone a hat.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. But it cant have been right for your father to pour spirits down her throat like that. It might have

killed her.

LIZA. Not her. Gin was mother's milk to her. Besides, he'd poured so much down his own throat that he knew the good of it.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. Do you mean that he drank?

LIZA. Drank! My word! Something chronic.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. How dreadful for you!

LIZA. Not a bit. It never did him no harm what I could see. But then he did not keep it up regular. [*Cheerfully*] On the burst, as you might say, from time to time. And always more agreeable when he had a drop in. When he was out of work, my mother used to give him fourpence and tell him to go out and not come back until he'd drunk himself cheerful and loving-like. Theres lots of women has to make their husbands drunk to make them fit to live with. [*Now quite at her ease*] You see, it's like this. If a man has a bit of a conscience, it always takes him when he's sober; and then it makes him low-spirited. A drop of booze just takes that off and makes him happy. [*To Freddy, who is in convulsions of suppressed laughter*] Here! What are you sniggering at?

FREDDY. The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

LIZA. If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? [*To Higgins*] Have I said anything I oughtnt?

MRS HIGGINS [*interposing*] Not at all, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA. Well, thats a mercy, anyhow. [*Expansively*] What I always say is—

HIGGINS [*rising and looking at his watch*] Ahem!

LIZA [*looking round at him; taking the hint; and rising*] Well: I must go. [*They all rise. Freddy goes to the door*]. So pleased to have met you. Goodbye. [*She shakes hands with Mrs Higgins*].

MRS HIGGINS. Goodbye.

LIZA. Goodbye, Colonel Pickering.

PICKERING. Goodbye, Miss Doolittle. [*They shake hands*].

LIZA [*nodding to the others*] Goodbye, all.

FREDDY [*opening the door for her*] Are you walking across the Park, Miss Doolittle? If so—

LIZA [*with perfectly elegant diction*] Walk! Not bloody likely. [*Sensation*]. I am going in a taxi [*She goes out*].

ANDROCLES MEETS THE LION

Prologue to Androcles and the Lion

1912

Overture: forest sounds, roaring of lions, Christian hymn faintly.

A jungle path. A lion's roar, a melancholy suffering roar, comes from the jungle. It is repeated nearer. The lion limps from the jungle on three legs, holding up his right forepaw, in which a huge thorn sticks. He sits down and contemplates it. He licks it. He shakes it. He tries to extract it by scraping it along the ground, and hurts himself worse. He roars piteously. He licks it again. Tears drop from his eyes. He limps painfully off the path and lies down under the trees, exhausted with pain. Heaving a long sigh, like wind in a trombone, he goes to sleep.

Androcles and his wife Megaera come along the path. He is a small, thin, ridiculous little man who might be any age from thirty to fifty-five. He has sandy hair, watery compassionate blue eyes, sensitive nostrils, and a very presentable forehead; but his good points go no further; his arms and legs and back, though wiry of their kind, look shrivelled and starved. He carries a big bundle, is very poorly clad, and seems tired and hungry.

His wife is a rather handsome pampered slattern, well fed and in the prime of life. She has nothing to carry, and has a stout stick to help her along.

MEGAERA [*suddenly throwing down her stick*] I wont go another step.

ANDROCLES [*pleading wearily*] Oh, not again, dear. Whats the good of stopping every two miles and saying you wont go another step? We must get on to the next village before night. There are wild beasts in this wood: lions, they say.

MEGAERA. I dont believe a word of it. You are always threatening me with wild beasts to make me walk the very soul out of my body when I can hardly drag one foot before another. We havnt seen a single lion yet.

ANDROCLES. Well, dear, do you want to see one?

MEGAERA [*tearing the bundle from his back*] You cruel brute, you dont care how tired I am, or what becomes of me [*she throws the bundle on the ground*]: always thinking of yourself. Self! self! self! always yourself! [*She sits down on the bundle*].

ANDROCLES [*sitting down sadly on the ground with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands*] We all have to think of ourselves occasionally, dear.

MEGAERA. A man ought to think of his wife sometimes.

ANDROCLES. He cant always help it, dear. You make me think of you a good deal. Not that I blame you.

MEGAERA. Blame me! I should think not indeed. Is it my fault that I'm married to you?

ANDROCLES. No dear: that is my fault.

MEGAERA. Thats a nice thing to say to me. Arnt you happy with me?

ANDROCLES. I dont complain, my love.

MEGAERA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

ANDROCLES. I am, my dear.

MEGAERA. Youre not: you glory in it.

ANDROCLES. In what, darling?

MEGAERA. In everything. In making me a slave, and making yourself a laughing-stock. It's not fair. You get me the name of being a shrew with your meek ways, always talking as if butter wouldnt melt in your mouth. And just because I look a big strong woman, and because I'm goodhearted and a bit hasty, and because youre always driving me to do things I'm sorry for afterwards, people say "Poor man: what a life his wife leads him!" Oh, if they only knew! And you think I dont know. But I do, I do, [*screaming*] I do.

ANDROCLES. Yes, my dear: I know you do.

MEGAERA. Then why dont you treat me properly and be a good husband to me?

ANDROCLES. What can I do, my dear?

MEGAERA. What can you do! You can return to your duty, and come back to your home and your friends, and sacrifice to the gods as all respectable people do, instead of having us hunted out of house and home for being dirty disreputable blaspheming atheists.

ANDROCLES. I am not an atheist, dear: I am a Christian.

MEGAERA. Well, isnt that the same thing, only ten times worse? Everybody knows that the Christians are the very lowest of the low.

ANDROCLES. Just like us, dear.

MEGAERA. Speak for yourself. Dont you dare to compare me to common people. My father owned his own public-house; and sorrowful was the day for me when you first came drinking in our bar.

ANDROCLES. I confess I was addicted to it, dear. But I gave it up when I became a Christian.

MEGAERA. Youd much better have remained a drunkard. I can forgive a man being addicted to drink: it's only natural; and I dont deny I like a drop myself sometimes. What I cant stand is your being addicted to Christianity. And whats worse again, your being addicted to animals. How is any woman to keep her house clean when you bring in every stray cat and lost cur and lame duck in the whole countryside? You took the bread out of my mouth to feed them: you know you did: dont attempt to deny it.

ANDROCLES. Only when they were hungry and you were getting too stout, dearie.

MEGAERA. Yes: insult me, do. [*Rising*] Oh! I wont bear it another moment. You used to sit and talk to those dumb brute beasts for hours, when you hadnt a word for me.

ANDROCLES. They never answered back, darling. [*He rises and again shoulders the bundle*].

MEGAERA. Well, if youre fonder of animals than of your own wife, you can live with them here in the jungle. Ive had enough of them and enough of you. I'm going back. I'm going home.

ANDROCLES [*barring the way back*] No, dearie: dont take on like that. We cant go back. Weve sold everything: we should starve; and I should be sent to Rome and thrown to the lions—

MEGAERA. Serve you right! I wish the lions joy of you. [*Screaming*] Are you going to get out of my way and let me go home?

ANDROCLES. No, dear—

MEGAERA. Then I'll make my way through the forest; and when I'm eaten by the wild beasts youll know what a wife youve lost. [*She dashes into the jungle and nearly falls over the sleeping lion*]. Oh! Oh! Andy! Andy! [*She totters back and collapses into the arms of Androcles, who, crushed by her weight, falls on his bundle*].

ANDROCLES [*extracting himself from beneath her and slapping her hands in great anxiety*] What is it, my precious, my pet? Whats the matter? [*He raises her head. Speechless with*

terror, she points in the direction of the sleeping lion. He steals cautiously towards the spot indicated by Megaera. She rises with an effort and totters after him].

MEGAERA. No Andy: youll be killed. Come back.

The lion utters a long snoring sigh. Androcles sees the lion, and recoils fainting into the arms of Megaera, who falls back on the bundle. They roll apart and lie staring in terror at one another. The lion is heard groaning heavily in the jungle.

ANDROCLES [*whispering*] Did you see? A lion.

MEGAERA [*despairing*] The gods have sent him to punish us because youre a Christian. Take me away, Andy. Save me.

ANDROCLES [*rising*] Meggy: theres one chance for you. Itll take him pretty nigh twenty minutes to eat me (I'm rather stringy and tough) and you can escape in less time than that.

MEGAERA. Oh, dont talk about eating. [*The lion rises with a great groan and limps towards them*]. Oh! [*She faints*].

ANDROCLES [*quaking, but keeping between the lion and Megaera*] Dont you come near my wife, do you hear? [*The lion groans. Androcles can hardly stand for trembling*]. Meggy: Run for your life. If I take my eye off him, it's all up. [*The lion holds up his wounded paw and flaps it piteously before Androcles*]. Oh, he's lame, poor old chap! He's got a thorn in his paw. A frightfully big thorn. [*Full of sympathy*] Oh, poor old man! Did um get an awful thorn into um's tootsums wootsums? Has it made um too sick to eat a nice little Christian man for um's breakfast? Oh, a nice little Christian man will get um's thorn out for um; and then um shall eat the nice Christian man and the nice Christian man's nice big tender wifey pifey. [*The lion responds by moans of self-pity*]. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Now, now [*taking the paw in his hand*], um is not to bite and not to scratch, not even if it hurts a very very little. Now make velvet paws. Thats right [*He pulls gingerly at the thorn. The lion, with an angry yell of pain, jerks back his paw so abruptly that Androcles is thrown on his back*]. Steadeee! Oh, did the nasty cruel little Christian man hurt the sore paw? [*The lion moans assentingly but apologetically*]. Well, one more little pull and it will be all over. Just one little, little, leetle pull; and then um will live happily ever after. [*He gives the thorn another pull. The lion roars and snaps his jaws with a terrifying clash*]. Oh, mustnt frighten um's good kind doctor, um's affectionate nursey. That didnt hurt at all: not a bit. Just one more. Just to shew how the brave big lion can bear pain, not

like the little crybaby Christian man. Oopsh! [*The thorn comes out. The lion yells with pain, and shakes his paw wildly*]. Thats it! [*Holding up the thorn*]. Now it's out. Now lick um's paw to take away the nasty inflammation. See? [*He licks his own hand. The lion nods intelligently and licks his paw industriously*]. Clever little liony-piony! Understands um's dear old friend Andy Wandy. [*The lion licks his face*]. Yes, kissums Andy Wandy. [*The lion wagging his tail violently, rises on his hind legs, and embraces Androcles, who makes a wry face and cries*] Velvet paws! Velvet paws! [*The lion draws in his claws*]. Thats right. [*He embraces the lion, who finally takes the end of his tail in one paw, places that tight round Androcles' waist, resting it on his hip. Androcles takes the other paw in his hand, stretches out his arm, and the two waltz rapturously round and round and finally away through the jungle*].

MEGAERA [*who has revived during the waltz*] Oh, you coward, you havnt danced with me for years; and now you go off dancing with a great brute beast that you havnt known for ten minutes and that wants to eat your own wife. Coward. Coward! Coward! [*She rushes off after them into the jungle*].

AS THE NOVELISTS WOULD HAVE DONE IT¹

From Pen Portraits and Reviews

1916

... I AM not going to argue. I never do. I will simply take one of the shortest, most intense, and most famous scenes in English dramatic literature, and rewrite it as a chapter in a novel in the style of my friends Bennett and Galsworthy when they are too lazy to write plays:

¹ In *The Author's Craft* (1916) Arnold Bennett claimed that it is easier to write plays than novels.

MACBETH

A PLAY. BY William Shakespear. *Act V. Scene 7*
The precinct of Macbeth's Castle on Dunsinane Hill
Enter Macbeth

MACB. Why should I play the Roman fool, and die
 On mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the gashes
 Do better upon *them*.

Enter Macduff

MACD. Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACB. Of all men else I have avoided thee;
 But get thee back: my soul is too much charg'd
 With blood of thine already.

MACD. I have no words;
 My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain
 Than terms can give thee out! (*They fight.*)

MACB. Thou lovest labor.
 As easy may'st thou the intrenchant air
 With thy keen sword impress, as make me bleed.
 Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests:
 I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
 To one of woman born.

MACD. Despair thy charm;
 And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd
 Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
 Untimely ripp'd.

MACB. Accurséd be that tongue that tells me so;
 For it hath cow'd my better part of man.
 And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd
 That palter with us in a double sense;
 That keep the word of promise to our ear,
 And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACD. Then yield thee, coward,
 And live to be the show and gaze o' the time.
 We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
 Painted upon a pole; and, underwrit,
 "Here may you see the tyrant."

MACB. I'll not yield,
 To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
 And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
 Though Birnam wood *be* come to Dunsinane,
 And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,

Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff;
And damn'd be him that first cries, "Hold! Enough!"
(*Exeunt fighting*)

MACBETH

A NOVEL. By Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, or
Anybody. The Last Chapter

He was to fail, after all, then. The day was going against him. His men were not really fighting. They had conveyed to Old Siward that they were open to an offer of quarter; and the hint had not been lost on that ancient campaigner, whose son he had just slain.

What was the use of killing? Duncan, Banquo, the Macduff people: he had waded through their blood; and how much better would it not be if it were all a dream and they were alive and kind to him?

How the martins were singing! Banquo, always a bit of a fool, had been sentimental about the martins. Gruach, the dear dead wife whom the southrons persisted in calling Lady Macbeth, had argued with Banquo about them, telling him that their habits were insanitary, and that they were infested with small bugs which got into the castle, already too rich in insect life. But Duncan had agreed with Banquo; and when Gruach became queen she would not let the martins' nests be broken down, being anxious to copy Duncan's tastes in every way, lest anyone should say that the Macbeths did not know how kings lived. And so the martins were singing, singing, always singing when they were not fly-catching.

It came to him, with a twist at the heart, that he had never told Gruach the truth about Banquo. He had left her to believe that he had killed him because the witches had foretold that his posterity should be kings. But the real reason was that Banquo had given himself moral airs. That is hard to bear at any time; but when you are within ten minutes of committing a murder, it is insufferable. Morality is easy for a man who does not intend to do anything; but a man of action cannot stand on scruples. These idle thanes who sat down on their little patrimonies and had no ambition: they had invented this moral twaddle to excuse their laziness.

What an exquisite morning it was! Was there anything so

blue as a blue sky, anything so white as a white cloud, any gold so golden as the gold of the gorse? From the summit of Dunsinane he could see almost to the Roman wall on the south and to the Forth Bridge on the north. The wind had backed a little to the north: perhaps it would rain later. But no such foreboding troubled the wood pigeon that now called to him, "Tak two coos, Taffy: tak two coos, Taffy." He smiled grimly. He had taken from first to last not less than a thousand coos; and this funny bird kept on exhorting him to take two. And yet he did not throw a stone at it as he once would have done. It seemed all so useless. You strove and strove, and killed and killed, and made journeys to consult witches; and at the end of it all the wood pigeon had no more to say to you than before; and the sky was no bluer, the cloud no whiter, the whins no yellower. Curse the sky! Curse the whins! Double damn the wood pigeon! Why not make an end of it, like the Roman fool at Philippi? He stood his claymore on its hilt on the flags and bent over the point. Just to lean on it, and let it go through him; then the wood pigeon might coo itself black in the face: Macbeth would be at rest with Duncan. Where had he heard about Philippi? It seemed unlikely that he could have learned Roman history; and yet he found that he did know. Do men know everything before death? He shuddered. Strange, that he, who rather enjoyed killing other people, should feel an intense repugnance to kill himself! Yet there was one canny thing about killing yourself: it relieved you of all concern for the future. You could kill as many other people as you liked first without considering the consequences. He would, please God, spit a few more of his enemies on that sword before his own turn came. He tossed it into the air by the point, and caught the hilt as it came down. He no longer heard the wood pigeon.

And yet, what was that? Had the wood pigeon called him a hell-hound? He turned, and saw Macduff there, between him and the sun, glaring at him. If the sun had been in his eyes, he could not have glared. It was clever of him to come that way and get the advantage of the sun.

Macduff! Yes, Macduff: the man of whom the spirit called up by the witches had bade him beware. The man whose wife and child he had slaughtered. Could he blame him for glaring? Would not any man glare after such an experience? Banquo had glared even after his death, but with no speculation in his eyes. There was speculation enough in Macduff's:

he was speculating on the sun being in the eyes of his adversary.

How the martins were singing! How fresh the air tasted! How good life was! How many pleasant paths there were on those hillsides, paths that had led his feet and Macduff's to this one spot of all spots in the world! Well, if Macduff had not come by one path he would have come by another. That was life, always inscrutable, sometimes a little ironical. The wind dropped: the banner had ceased to flap, and hung inert. A number of birds and crickets, no longer scared into silence by its flapping, joined the concert of the martins. Again came the wood pigeon's incitement, "Tak two coos, Taffy: tak——" What was that? A sharp, rasping sound called Macbeth from the landscape. He looked again at the man against whom he had been warned.

Macduff had stooped to sharpen his claymore on the flags. He was squatting down in an attitude which brought his boney knees into prominence just below his kilt, and drawing his blade to and fro, with a harsh rhythmical grating on the granite. By the mere instinct of imitation, Macbeth did the same. His knees were fleshier; and it was hard for him to stoop; but he did it. It is never easy for a king to stoop; but Fate will have it so sometimes. Now there were two blades scraping. The birds stopped singing, and listened in astonished suspicious silence. Only a jay laughed.

Macbeth heard it. Something stirred in him, and distorted his lips into a grin. It seemed to him that he suddenly opened a book that had always been sealed to him. When Gruach was dying he had asked the doctor for some physic for the mind; and the doctor had failed him. Then he had asked the porter, because he had noticed that the porter, alone among all the men of his acquaintance, was light-hearted, and would laugh, even when nobody was being hurt or ridiculed, and seemed to despise ambition. And the porter had told him that life is not so bad if you can see the fun of it. Old Siward had nailed the porter to the door that morning because he refused to open it to the enemy. Did he see the fun of that, Macbeth wondered? Yet here, as he squatted before Macduff, and they both sharpened their blades on the flags, a dim sense of something laughable in the situation touched him, though, God knows, there was nothing to laugh at if the warning of the witches were trustworthy. The spirits had said that no man born of woman should harm Macbeth. That seemed pretty conclusive. But they had also said that he

would not be vanquished until Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane. That also seemed conclusive; yet the thing had happened: he had seen the wood walking.

He decided to give Macduff a chance. He was tired of killing people named Macduff. He said so. He advised Macduff to go away.

Macduff tried to speak; gulped; and came on. His voice was in his sword.

Macbeth was not afraid, though he knew he was not the man he had been. He had drunk heavily since he seized the throne: the Scots expected that from a king. But he could fight as well as ever for forty-five seconds; and then he could clinch, and try to get in his dirk somewhere. After all, Macduff was no teetotaller, if one might judge by his nose, which was red and swollen. Only, the doubt came: was the redness and the swelling from drink, or from weeping over his slaughtered family? With that thought came Macduff's first blow: a feint, followed by a vicious thrust at the groin.

Macbeth was quick enough to drop his targe and stop the thrust, even while he guarded the blow that did not come. That reassured him, and took some of the bounce out of Macduff. He was equally successful the next time, and the next. He became elated. At last his pride in his charmed life got the better of his prudence. He told Macduff that he was losing his labor, and told him why.

The effect was exactly the contrary of what he had anticipated. A gleam of savage delight came into Macduff's eyes.

What did it mean?

Macbeth was not left long in doubt. He stood petrified, whilst a tale poured from Macduff's lips such as had never before blasted the ears of mortal man. It cannot be repeated here: there is such a thing as the library censorship. Let it suffice that it was a tale of the rude but efficient obstetric surgery of those ancient times, and that it established beyond all question the fact that Macduff had never been born.

After that, Macbeth felt that he simply could not fight with him. It was not that he was afraid, even now. Nor was it that he was utterly disgusted at the way the witches had let him down again. He just could not bring himself to hack at a man who was not natural. It was like trying to eat a cat. He flatly refused further combat.

Of course, Macduff called him Coward. He did not mind that so much; for he had given his proofs, and nobody would believe Macduff; nor, indeed, would any reasonable

Scot expect him to fight an unborn adversary. But Macduff hinted at unbearable things; at defeat, disgrace, the pillory even.

There was a lark singing now. Far down the hillside, where the rugged road wound up to the barbican, the last of Birnam Wood was still on the march. A hawk hovered motionless over a walking oak: he could see the glint of the sun on its brown back. The oak's legs must be those of an old soldier, he thought, who had cunningly taken the heaviest tree so that he might be late for the fighting. But, old or young, the soldier was now anxious lest he should be late for the plunder and the other sequels to the sack of a castle; for the oak was coming up at a rattling pace. There were nests in it, too. Curious, to wonder how those nesting pairs took their moving!

A surge of wrath went through Macbeth. He was, above all things, a country gentleman; and that another country gentleman should move his timber without acquiring any rights infuriated him. He became reckless. Birnam Wood—*his* wood—had been taken to Dunsinane: was that a thing he could be expected to stand? What though Macduff had not been properly born: was it not all the more likely that he had a weak constitution and could not stick it out if he were pressed hard in the fight? Anyhow, Macbeth would try. He braced himself; grasped his claymore powerfully; thrust his shield under the chin of his adversary; and cried, "Lay on, Macduff."

He could not have chosen a more unfortunate form of defiance. When the news had come to Macduff of the slaughter of his wife and boy, he had astonished the messenger by exclaiming, "What! All my pretty chickens and their dam at one fell swoop!" Accustomed from his earliest youth to deal with horses, he knew hardly anything of poultry, which was a woman's business. When he applied the word dam, properly applicable only to a mare, to a hen, Malcolm, though deeply moved by his distress, had a narrow escape of a fit of hysterics; for the innocent blunder gave him an impulse of untimely laughter. The story had been repeated; and something of it had come to Macduff's ears. He was a highly-strung man, exquisitely sensitive to ridicule. Since that time the slightest allusion to chickens had driven him to transports of fury. At the words "Lay on," he saw red. Macbeth, from the instant those fatal words passed his lips, had not a dog's chance.

In any case, he would not have been ready to meet a sudden attack. All his life he had been subject to a strange discursiveness which sent his mind wandering to the landscape, and to the fauna and flora of the district, at the most exciting crisis of his fate. When he meant to tell Gruach that he had arranged to have Banquo killed, he had said to her, instead, "Light thickens; and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood." His attentions had already strayed to the wood pigeon when Macduff's yell of fury split his ears; and at the same moment he felt his foe's teeth snap through his nose and his foe's dirk drive through his ribs.

When Malcolm arrived, there was little left of Macbeth but a pile of mince. Macduff was panting, "That will teach him," he said, and stopped, exsufflicate.

They laid Macbeth beside Gruach in God's quiet acre in the little churchyard of Dunsinane. Malcolm erected a stately tomb there, for the credit of the institution of kingship; and the epitaph, all things considered, was not unhandsome. There was no reproach in it, no vain bitterness. It said that Macbeth had "succeeded Duncan."

The birds are still singing on Dunsinane. The wood pigeon still coos about the coos; and Malcolm takes them frankly and generously. It is not for us to judge him, or to judge Macbeth. Macbeth was born before his time. Men call him a villain; but had the press existed in his day, a very trifling pecuniary sacrifice on his part would have made a hero of him. And, to do him justice, he was never stingy.

Well! Well!

THE END

There! that is what is called novel writing. I raise no idle question as to whether it is easy or not. Fine art of any sort is either easy or impossible. But that sort of thing I can write by the hundred thousand words on my head. I believe that if I turned my attention to mechanics for a month or two, I could make a typewriter attachment that would do it, like the calculating attachment that has lately come into use. The odd thing is that people seem to like it. They swallow it in doses of three hundred pages at a time; and they are not at all keen on Shakespear. Decidedly, when my faculties decay a little further, I shall go back to novel writing. And Arnold Bennett can fall back on writing plays.

THE KING AND THE DOCTORS

From Doctors' Delusions

1929

ONCE upon a time, in the country of the Half Mad, which was cut off from the western end of Europe in prehistoric times to prevent the inhabitants from injuring any but themselves, the King fell ill. As he had always been well spoken of, and had established very kindly relations with his subjects, his illness caused a great increase of their affection for him and for his family. All the married women saw in the Queen a wife anxious about her husband, with a sick-bed to provide for. All the men saw in the King a fellow-man suffering as they themselves had suffered or might at any moment have to suffer. For sickness is a Great Leveller, and consequently a great breeder of sympathy, unlike that Impostor Death, who gives a pompous eminence to even the humblest. And thus, with sympathy added to loyalty, the nation was in such a state of concern about the King as had never before arisen within living memory. Naturally, the case being one of dangerous illness, it was to the doctors that the nation turned for help and reassurance.

Now in the country of the Half Mad the doctors had long before this taken the place of the medieval Church. There was a law that when a man was ill he must on pain of punishment send for his parish priest; but this law had been so long disregarded that only a few specialists in Church history knew of its existence. Its place had been taken by a law that when there was sickness in the house the doctor must be sent for, and that if the doctor said that any part of a sick child's body must be cut out its parents must have that done at once whether they approved or not, or else be haled before a magistrate and heavily fined, or, should the child have died, committed for trial for having killed it.

To such powers as this were added extraordinary privileges. For instance, doctors were licensed to commit murder with impunity, provided they did it either by administering

poison or by using knives of a particular shape in such a manner that the victim did not die until he or she had been put to bed. Not only was no inquest held and no indictment brought against the doctor, but he was actually paid for his labor, and sometimes invited to the funeral.

As the Half Mad were so jealous of their liberties that a priest could not even order a father to have his child baptized, it will be seen that this strange people, though half sane on the subject of priests, were wholly mad on the subject of doctors, willingly granting them powers which they had denied to their Kings at the cost of revolution and civil war.

Now the doctors, being no worse than other people, did their best to prove worthy of their extraordinary trust by using it for the relief of the sick, and making it impossible for anyone to become a doctor except by years of study to qualify him for his duties. But as the Half Mad, whilst bowing down with the deepest reverence to the condition of omniscience which they supposed these studies to confer, would not pay a doctor anything until they were actually ill and threatened with death, the doctors were mostly poor, and would have starved altogether if the nation had been in a reasonably healthy condition. Thus their duty to themselves and their wives and children was to keep their patients ill as long and as often as possible; to persuade them that they were dangerously ill when there was nothing the matter with them that their own recuperative powers could not cure; and even to deprive them of as many of their limbs and organs as they could without killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. On the other hand, their duty to their patients and their country was to do exactly the contrary, and strive to their utmost to produce a state of things in which doctors would starve.

Now in the kingdom of the Half Mad, people always ended by believing what they wanted to believe, no matter how much it might be contradicted by facts; and so it had come about that the doctors, though they were as kindly and honorable as could reasonably be expected, and sometimes very clever, had built up an elaborately reasoned and ingenious series of mechanical explanations of all the diseases, giving them impressive names, and setting forth the treatments and operations and medicines proper to them, until at last they could do almost anything with a patient except cure him or even allow him a fair chance of curing himself. Thus the calling of a doctor to the sick-bed was rather a pious

ceremony enforced by law than a proceeding from which any relief to the patient could be expected. But the doctors were wonderfully accurate in predicting the time at which the patient would die in their hands; and this was very necessary for the settlement of the affairs of patients who had any affairs to settle.

With a Faith (for such it was) in this condition, naturally there were Heresies in all directions. New methods of treating disease were discovered; but the doctors took so long to learn the old ones that they had no time for the new ones. Even the surgeons had to do without any manual training, and picked up their art as the father of a family picks up the art of carving a turkey. So, instead of adopting the new methods, they excommunicated the new practitioners and all their accomplices. Only, as the heretics either cured their patients or at least did not kill them by obsolete and barbarous treatments, the doctors, when they were ill themselves, often resorted to the heretics for treatment.

This was the state of things when the King fell ill. He had twelve doctors to attend him; and when there was no sign of his being cured, his people became anxious, and said, "A single doctor is generally sufficient to kill one of us, so how can the King survive twelve doctors?"

Then the King's son, who was at the other side of the world among the black savages (for he was very tired of the white ones), came flying, sailing, and express-training at an amazing speed back to his father, and spoke with the King's chief physician, who was so delightful a person that his patients were often cured by his mere appearance in the bedroom. The Prince knew that his father's case must be most serious since it resisted the presence of this great healer and the influence of the King's faith in him. And the Prince said to him: "Doc, the King my father does not seem to be getting any better. Is it not possible to get a move on?"

"In what direction, sir?" replied the chief physician.

"In the direction of getting him up and about," said the Prince.

"Everything is being done that can properly be done," said the physician. "If your Royal Highness has not confidence in our knowledge and devotion—"

"Stow that," said the Prince. "Your devotion is all right; but your knowledge is bunk."

"Bunk!" exclaimed the chief physician, highly scandalized.

"Well, perhaps not all of it," said the Prince, feeling that

he had gone a little too far; "but I cannot help knowing what everyone knows, and that is that according to your own best men nine-tenths of your official notions are fit only for the dustbin. I have a heap of letters, books, pamphlets, and magazines here which have been sent me; and they have disturbed me very much."

"I have not read these documents," said the physician. "If your Royal Highness can suggest any measure we have omitted, my opinion is at your service."

"Drugs, now?" said the Prince. "Drugs are bunk, are they not?"

"Undoubtedly, from a purely secular point of view, drugs are bunk," said the physician; "but in the case of a royal patient I could not possibly take the responsibility of withholding from His Majesty the official remedies from our *materia medica*."

"But," said the Prince, "there is a way of giving drugs in infinitesimal quantities to which all the latest discoveries and scientific speculations point as the right way."

"Infinitesimals," replied the physician, "are used only by homeopaths: that is, by empirics who, being ignorant of the nature of disease, merely treat its symptoms. If you bring a Chinese patient to a homeopath, he will treat him for yellow fever."

"Do you really know the nature of disease any more than a homeopath does?" said the Prince.

"Certainly," said the physician, "I have passed an examination in pathology, and written books about it. What a strange question!"

"What is the nature of my father's complaint?" said the Prince.

"It is what we call pleurisy," said the physician.

"I know that," said the Prince. "I know its name; and I know its symptoms. What is its nature?"

"If I knew that," said the physician, "perhaps I could cure it."

"Then pathology is bunk," said the Prince, who had picked up this expression from a famous motor-car manufacturer, who had applied it to History. "Let us call in a homeopath."

"Unfortunately," said the physician, "the only one in London whose reputation and success would satisfy public opinion has not been admitted to our communion; and if I discussed the case with him I should be excommunicated."

"Well," said the Prince, "they say a lot of trouble comes from spinal displacements. What about my father's spine?"

"It looks all right," said the physician.

"But there are chaps who are trained to feel whether it is all right or not," said the Prince. "There is a machine that will register on a galvanometer displacements that nobody can feel."

"I never heard of it," said the physician, "I can assure you that these people who feel spines are almost all ignorant Americans who have spent two years in mere manual training instead of in the study of pathology."

"All the same," said the Prince, "they bring off cures occasionally; so why not call one in?"

"I should be excommunicated if I were seen speaking to one," said the physician.

"Why not do it yourself?" said the Prince. "You are a surgeon."

"I have not had the two years' training," said the physician: "it is not part of our official surgery."

"Official surgery is a wash-out," said the Prince. "What about testing my father's blood for radiations? That can be done by a rheostat, cant it? And there is some method of neutralizing the rays that sometimes cures, isnt there?"

"But it was discovered by an American," said the physician.

"I am prepared to overlook that if my father's health can be restored by his method," said the Prince.

"Impossible," said the physician. "He was not only an American, but a Jew."

"I understand he was a proper doctor all the same," persisted the Prince.

"No doubt," said the physician; "but the treatment would involve attaching His Majesty to the electric light switch; and public opinion would never tolerate that."

"Public opinion be blowed!" said the Prince. "Do you suppose I am going to let my father lose a chance because people are fools? Besides, we can use a private battery."

"It may not be," said the physician. "This discovery reached us only about a dozen years ago, and is not yet recognized by our Vatican. I dare not take the responsibility of experimenting on the King with a treatment that has not been proved by at least fifty years' experience."

"Proved to do what?" said the Prince. "To cure the disease?"

"To have stood the test of being taught in our medical schools as the logical and appropriate treatment," said the physician.

"Do the patients recover under your logical and appropriate treatments?" said the Prince.

"Sometimes," said the physician. "Quite frequently."

"They might do that if they had no treatment at all," said the Prince.

"That is true," said the physician. "The recuperative power of the human organism is marvellous. Quacks take advantage of that, I am sorry to say."

"I am not satisfied about all this," said the Prince. "It seems to me that my father, just because he is a king, is cut off from the benefit of all the new discoveries and treatments that are available for the meanest of his subjects."

"I exhort your Royal Highness to be patient," said the physician. "Your royal father is in the hands of God."

"You mean that we should call in a Christian Science practitioner?" said the Prince.

"Most certainly not," said the physician. "I and my colleagues would be obliged to withdraw at once if such a person were admitted to the palace."

"Another wash-out," said the Prince.

"Not at all," said the physician. "We should not object to a visit from His Majesty's domestic chaplain; though of course we could not allow him to treat the case; and anything in the nature of a consultation would be out of the question."

"In short," said the Prince, "my poor father is in the hands of your confounded Vatican. However, I suppose we must make the best of it. I should like to call in your Pope for a consultation."

"We should have to tell him what to say beforehand," said the physician. "You see, he was qualified more than half a century ago, and may not be quite up to date."

"But I have looked him up in Who's Who," said the Prince; "and he has ninety distinctions and qualifications, entitling him to a dozen medical letters after his name. I attach great importance to a lot of letters because I have nothing else to go by."

"As I myself have only six, you naturally consider his opinion twice as valuable as mine," said the physician.

"Well, if the letters dont mean that, they dont mean anything," said the Prince.

"Precisely," said the physician.

"Then your Pope is another wash-out," said the Prince. "Are there any laymen on your Vatican council to represent my father and all the other patients?"

"A notorious enemy of our profession has succeeded, after years of agitation, in having one layman appointed," said the physician.

"Well, don't you agree with that?" said the Prince.

"Officially, no," said the physician.

"But unofficially—as between man and man?" pleaded the Prince.

"Since your Royal Highness is good enough to admit me to that footing," said the physician, "I am bound to say, as between man and man, that the exclusion of laymen from a body whose business it is to safeguard the general interests of the laity against the sectional interests of the medical profession is only one out of the many instances of the almost incredible incapacity of the Half Mad for taking care of themselves. In respect of the art of life, our people must be set aside as unqualified practitioners."

"This is a world of bunk," said the Prince; "and the boasted capacity of my father's subjects for self-government is the biggest bunk of the lot. But my father's life is in danger. I appeal to you to throw over your silly Vatican and be a friend to us in our need. If they give you the sack you shall have a dukedom and a pension of a hundred thousand a year. Tell me what is the most up-to-date scientific treatment for my father?"

"I have already ordered it," said the physician. "And you will be glad to hear that it will involve no conflict on my part with my colleagues."

"Splendid!" said the Prince. "I will never forget this proof of your sympathy and devotion. What is the treatment?"

"The seaside," said the physician.

"The seaside!" cried the Prince. "You call that the latest! Why, it is what my great-grandmother would have recommended."

"Yes," said the physician, "but not for the true scientific reason. She thought that the benefit arose from change of air."

"Then what does it arise from?" said the Prince.

"That," said the physician, "is a professional secret which I can impart to you only under a solemn pledge that it shall go no further."

"I give you my word of honor," said the Prince. "What will the seaside do to cure my father?"

The physician stooped to the Prince's ear, and whispered: "It will get him away from the doctors."

Shortly afterwards, the King recovered.

VII
RELIGION
AND PHILOSOPHY

THE LIFE FORCE

From Man and Superman (Act III).

1903

DON JUAN. . . Is a man no better than a worm, or a dog than a wolf, because he gets tired of everything? Shall he give up eating because he destroys his appetite in the act of gratifying it? Is a field idle when it is fallow? . . . Granted that the great Life Force has hit on the device of the clockmaker's pendulum, and uses the earth for its bob; that the history of each oscillation, which seems so novel to us the actors, is but the history of the last oscillation repeated; nay more, that in the unthinkable infinitude of time the sun throws off the earth and catches it again a thousand times as a circus rider throws up a ball, and that our age-long epochs are but the moments between the toss and the catch, has the colossal mechanism no purpose?

THE DEVIL. None, my friend. You think, because you have a purpose, Nature must have one. You might as well expect it to have fingers and toes because you have them.

DON JUAN. But I should not have them if they served no purpose. And I, my friend, am as much a part of Nature as my own finger is a part of me. If my finger is the organ by which I grasp the sword and the mandoline, my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself. My dog's brain serves only my dog's purposes; but my own brain labors at a knowledge which does nothing for me personally but make my body bitter to me and my decay and death a calamity. Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgiving. This is because the philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force. This Life Force says to him "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination, and choose my path; so I

have made a special brain—a philosopher's brain—to grasp this knowledge for me as the husbandman's hand grasps the plough for me. And this" says the Life Force to the philosopher "must thou strive to do for me until thou diest, when I will make another brain and another philosopher to carry on the work."

THE DEVIL. What is the use of knowing?

DON JUAN. Why, to be able to choose the line of greatest advantage instead of yielding in the direction of the least resistance. Does a ship sail to its destination no better than a log drifts no-whither? The philosopher is Nature's pilot. And there you have our difference: to be in hell is to drift: to be in heaven is to steer.

THE DEVIL. On the rocks, most likely.

DON JUAN. Pooh! which ship goes oftenest on the rocks or to the bottom? the drifting ship or the ship with a pilot on board?

ON EVOLUTION

From the Preface to Back to Methuselah

1921

... LAMARCK, whilst making many ingenious suggestions as to the reaction of external causes on life and habit, such as changes of climate, food supply, geological upheavals and so forth, really held as his fundamental proposition that living organisms changed because they wanted to. As he stated it, the great factor in Evolution is use and disuse. If you have no eyes, and want to see, and keep trying to see, you will finally get eyes. If, like a mole or a subterranean fish, you have eyes and dont want to see, you will lose your eyes. If you like eating the tender tops of trees enough to make you concentrate all your energies on the stretching of your neck, you will finally get a long neck, like the giraffe. This seems absurd to inconsiderate people at the first blush; but it is within the personal experience of all of us that it is just by this process that a child tumbling about the floor becomes a boy walking erect; and that a man sprawling on the road

with a bruised chin, or supine on the ice with a bashed occiput, becomes a bicyclist and a skater. The process is not continuous, as it would be if mere practice had anything to do with it; for though you may improve at each bicycling lesson *during* the lesson, when you begin your next lesson you do not begin at the point at which you left off: you relapse apparently to the beginning. Finally, you succeed quite suddenly, and do not relapse again. More miraculous still, you at once exercise the new power unconsciously. Although you are adapting your front wheel to your balance so elaborately and actively that the accidental locking of your handle bars for a second will throw you off; though five minutes before you could not do it at all, yet now you do it as unconsciously as you grow your finger nails. You have a new faculty, and must have created some new bodily tissue as its organ. And you have done it solely by willing. For here there can be no question of Circumstantial Selection, or the survival of the fittest. The man who is learning how to ride a bicycle has no advantage over the non-cyclist in the struggle for existence: quite the contrary. He has acquired a new habit, an automatic unconscious habit, solely because he wanted to, and kept trying until it was added unto him.

But when your son tries to skate or bicycle in his turn, he does not pick up the accomplishment where you left it, any more than he is born six feet high with a beard and a tall hat. The set-back that occurred between your lessons occurs again. The race learns exactly as the individual learns. Your son relapses, not to the very beginning, but to a point which no mortal method of measurement can distinguish from the beginning. Now this is odd; for certain other habits of yours, equally acquired (to the Evolutionist, of course, all habits are acquired), equally unconscious, equally automatic, are transmitted without any perceptible relapse. For instance, the very first act of your son when he enters the world as a separate individual is to yell with indignation: that yell which Shakespear thought the most tragic and piteous of all sounds. In the act of yelling he begins to breathe: another habit, and not even a necessary one, as the object of breathing can be achieved in other ways, as by deep sea fishes. He circulates his blood by pumping it with his heart. He demands a meal, and proceeds at once to perform the most elaborate chemical operations on the food he swallows. He manufactures teeth; discards them; and replaces them with fresh ones. Compared

to these habitual feats, walking, standing upright, and bicycling are the merest trifles; yet it is only by going through the wanting, trying process that he can stand, walk, or cycle, whereas in the other and far more difficult and complex habits he not only does not consciously want nor consciously try, but actually consciously objects very strongly. Take that early habit of cutting the teeth: would he do that if he could help it? Take that later habit of decaying and eliminating himself by death—equally an acquired habit, remember—how he abhors it! Yet the habit has become so rooted, so automatic, that he must do it in spite of himself, even to his own destruction.

We have here a routine which, given time enough for it to operate, will finally produce the most elaborate forms of organized life on Lamarckian lines without the intervention of Circumstantial Selection at all. If you can turn a pedestrian into a cyclist, and a cyclist into a pianist or violinist, without the intervention of Circumstantial Selection, you can turn an *amœba* into a man, or a man into a superman, without it. All of which is rank heresy to the Neo-Darwinian, who imagines that if you stop Circumstantial Selection, you not only stop development but inaugurate a rapid and disastrous degeneration.

Let us fix the Lamarckian evolutionary process well in our minds. You are alive; and you want to be more alive. You want an extension of consciousness and of power. You want, consequently, additional organs, or additional uses of your existing organs: that is, additional habits. You get them because you want them badly enough to keep trying for them until they come. Nobody knows how: nobody knows why: all we know is that the thing actually takes place. We relapse miserably from effort to effort until the old organ is modified or the new one created, when suddenly the impossible becomes possible and the habit is formed. The moment we form it we want to get rid of the consciousness of it so as to economize our consciousness for fresh conquests of life; as all consciousness means preoccupation and obstruction. If we had to think about breathing or digesting or circulating our blood we should have no attention to spare for anything else, as we find to our cost when anything goes wrong with these operations. We want to be unconscious of them just as we wanted to acquire them; and we finally win what we want. But we win unconsciousness of our habits at the cost of losing our control of them; and we also build one habit and

its corresponding functional modification of our organs on another, and so become dependent on our old habits. Consequently we have to persist in them even when they hurt us. We cannot stop breathing to avoid an attack of asthma, or to escape drowning. We can lose a habit and discard an organ when we no longer need them, just as we acquired them; but this process is slow and broken by relapses; and relics of the organ and the habit long survive its utility. And if other and still indispensable habits and modifications have been built on the ones we wish to discard, we must provide a new foundation for them before we demolish the old one. This is also a slow process and a very curious one.

The relapses between the efforts to acquire a habit are important because, as we have seen, they recur not only from effort to effort in the case of the individual, but from generation to generation in the case of the race. This relapsing from generation to generation is an invariable characteristic of the evolutionary process. For instance, Raphael, though descended from eight uninterrupted generations of painters, had to learn to paint apparently as if no Sanzio had ever handled a brush before. But he had also to learn to breathe, and digest, and circulate his blood. Although his father and mother were fully grown adults when he was conceived, he was not conceived or even born fully grown: he had to go back and begin as a speck of protoplasm, and to struggle through an embryonic lifetime, during part of which he was indistinguishable from an embryonic dog, and had neither a skull nor a backbone. When he at last acquired these articles, he was for some time doubtful whether he was a bird or a fish. He had to compress untold centuries of development into nine months before he was human enough to break loose as an independent being. And even then he was still so incomplete that his parents might well have exclaimed "Good Heavens! have you learnt nothing from our experience that you come into the world in this ridiculously elementary state? Why cant you talk and walk and paint and behave decently?" To that question Baby Raphael had no answer. All he could have said was that this is how evolution or transformation happens. The time may come when the same force that compressed the development of millions of years into nine months may pack many more millions into even a shorter space; so that Raphaels may be born painters as they are now born breathers and blood circulators. But they will still begin as

specks of protoplasm, and acquire the faculty of painting in their mother's womb at quite a late stage of their embryonic life. They must recapitulate the history of mankind in their own persons, however briefly they may condense it.

Nothing was so astonishing and significant in the discoveries of the embryologists, nor anything so absurdly little appreciated as this recapitulation, as it is now called: this power of hurrying up into months a process which was once so long and tedious that the mere contemplation of it is unendurable by men whose span of life is three-score-and-ten. It widened human possibilities to the extent of enabling us to hope that the most prolonged and difficult operations of our minds may yet become instantaneous, or, as we call it, instinctive. It also directed our attention to examples of this packing up of centuries into seconds which were staring us in the face in all directions. As I write these lines the newspapers are occupied by the exploits of a child of eight, who has just defeated twenty adult chess players in twenty games played simultaneously, and has been able afterwards to reconstruct all the twenty games without any apparent effort of memory. Most people, including myself, play chess (when they play it at all) from hand to mouth, and can hardly recall the last move but one, or foresee the next but two. Also, when I have to make an arithmetical calculation, I have to do it step by step with pencil and paper, slowly, reluctantly, and with so little confidence in the result that I dare not act on it without "proving" the sum by a further calculation involving more ciphering. But there are men who can neither read, write, nor cipher, to whom the answer to such sums as I can do is instantly obvious without any conscious calculation at all; and the result is infallible. Yet some of these natural arithmeticians have but a small vocabulary; are at a loss when they have to find words for any but the simplest everyday occasions; and cannot for the life of them describe mechanical operations which they perform daily in the course of their trade; whereas to me the whole vocabulary of English literature, from Shakespear to the latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, is so completely and instantaneously at my call that I have never had to consult even a thesaurus except once or twice when for some reason I wanted a third or fourth synonym. Again, though I have tried and failed to draw recognizable portraits of persons I have seen every day for years, Mr Bernard Partridge, having seen a man once, will, without more strain than is involved in eating a sand-

wich, draw him to the life. The keyboard of a piano is a device I have never been able to master; yet Mr Cyril Scott uses it exactly as I use my own fingers; and to Sir Edward Elgar an orchestral score is as instantaneously intelligible at sight as a page of Shakespear is to me. One man cannot, after trying for years, finger the flute fluently. Another will take up a flute with a newly invented arrangement of keys on it, and play it at once with hardly a mistake. We find people to whom writing is so difficult that they prefer to sign their name with a mark, and beside them men who master systems of shorthand and improvise new systems of their own as easily as they learnt the alphabet. These contrasts are to be seen on all hands, and have nothing to do with variations in general intelligence, nor even in the specialized intelligence proper to the faculty in question: for example, no composer or dramatic poet has ever pretended to be able to perform all the parts he writes for the singers, actors, and players who are his executants. One might as well expect Napoleon to be a fencer, or the Astronomer Royal to know how many beans make five any better than his bookkeeper. Even exceptional command of language does not imply the possession of ideas to express; Mezzofanti, the master of fifty-eight languages, had less to say in them than Shakespear with his little Latin and less Greek; and public life is the paradise of voluble wind-bags.

All these examples, which might be multiplied by millions, are cases in which a long, laborious, conscious, detailed process of acquirement has been condensed into an instinctive and unconscious inborn one. Factors which formerly had to be considered one by one in succession are integrated into what seems a single simple factor. Chains of hardly soluble problems have coalesced in one problem which solves itself the moment it is raised. What is more, they have been pushed back (or forward, if you like) from post-natal to pre-natal ones. The child in the womb may take some time over them; but it is a miraculously shortened time.

JOAN AND HER VOICES

From the Preface to Saint Joan

1924

WHAT...is the modern view of Joan's voices and visions and messages from God? The nineteenth century said that they were delusions, but that as she was a pretty girl, and had been abominably ill-treated and finally done to death by a superstitious rabble of medieval priests hounded on by a corrupt political bishop, it must be assumed that she was the innocent dupe of these delusions. The twentieth century finds this explanation too vapidly commonplace, and demands something more mystic. I think the twentieth century is right, because an explanation which amounts to Joan being mentally defective instead of, as she obviously was, mentally excessive, will not wash. I cannot believe, nor, if I could, could I expect all my readers to believe, as Joan did, that three ocularly visible well dressed persons, named respectively Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and Saint Michael, came down from heaven and gave her certain instructions with which they were charged by God for her. Not that such a belief would be more improbable or fantastic than some modern beliefs which we all swallow; but there are fashions and family habits in belief, and it happens that, my fashion being Victorian and my family habit Protestant, I find myself unable to attach any such objective validity to the form of Joan's visions.

But that there are forces at work which use individuals for purposes far transcending the purpose of keeping these individuals alive and prosperous and respectable and safe and happy in the middle station in life, which is all any good bourgeois can reasonably require, is established by the fact that men will, in the pursuit of knowledge and of social readjustments for which they will not be a penny the better, and are indeed often many pence the worse, face poverty, infamy, exile, imprisonment, dreadful hardship, and death. Even the selfish pursuit of personal power does not nerve

men to the efforts and sacrifices which are eagerly made in pursuit of extensions of our power over nature, though these extensions may not touch the personal life of the seeker at any point. There is no more mystery about this appetite for knowledge and power than about the appetite for food; both are known as facts and as facts only, the difference between them being that the appetite for food is necessary to the life of the hungry man and is therefore a personal appetite, whereas the other is an appetite for evolution, and therefore a super-personal need.

The diverse manners in which our imaginations dramatize the approach of the super-personal forces is a problem for the psychologist, not for the historian. Only, the historian must understand that visionaries are neither impostors nor lunatics. It is one thing to say that the figure Joan recognized as St Catherine was not really St Catherine, but the dramatization by Joan's imagination of that pressure upon her of the driving force that is behind evolution which I have just called the evolutionary appetite. It is quite another to class her visions with the vision of two moons seen by a drunken person, or with Brocken spectres, echoes and the like. Saint Catherine's instructions were far too cogent for that; and the simplest French peasant who believes in apparitions of celestial personages to favored mortals is nearer to the scientific truth about Joan than the Rationalist and Materialist historians and essayists who feel obliged to set down a girl who saw saints and heard them talking to her as either crazy or mendacious. If Joan was mad, all Christendom was mad too; for people who believe devoutly in the existence of celestial personages are every whit as mad in that sense as the people who think they see them. Luther, when he threw his inkhorn at the devil, was no more mad than any other Augustinian monk: he had a more vivid imagination, and had perhaps eaten and slept less: that was all.

CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

*From The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism
and Capitalism*

1928

...WE must bear in mind that our beliefs are continually passing from the metaphysical and legendary into the scientific stage. In China, when an eclipse of the sun occurs, all the intelligent and energetic women rush out of doors with pokers and shovels, trays and saucepan lids, and bang them together to frighten away the demon who is devouring the sun; and the perfect success of this proceeding, which has never been known to fail, proves to them that it is the right thing to do. But you, who know all about eclipses, sit calmly looking at them through bits of smoked glass, because your belief about them is a scientific belief and not a metaphysical one. You probably think that the women who are banging the saucepans in China are fools; but they are not: you would do the same yourself if you lived in a country where astronomy was still in the metaphysical stage.

You must also beware of concluding, because their conduct seems to you ridiculous, and because you know that there is no demon, that there is no eclipse. You may say that nobody could make a mistake like that; but I assure you that a great many people, seeing how many childish fables and ridiculous ceremonies have been attached to the conception of divinity, have rushed to the conclusion that no such thing as divinity exists. When they grow out of believing that God is an old gentleman with a white beard, they think they have got rid of everything that the old gentleman represented to their infant minds. On the contrary, they have come a little nearer to the truth about it.

Now the English nation consists of many million parents and children of whom hardly any two are in precisely the same stage of belief as to the sanctions of good conduct. Many of the parents are still in the nursery stage: many of the children are in the comparatively scientific stage. Most of

them do not bother much about it, and just do what their neighbors do, and say they believe what most of their neighbors say they believe. But those who do bother about it differ very widely and differ very fiercely. Take those who, rejecting the first article of the Church of England, attach to the word God the conception of a Ruler of the universe with the body, parts, and passions of a man, but with unlimited knowledge and power. Here at least, you might think, we have agreement. But no. There are two very distinct parties to this faith. One of them believes in a God of Wrath, imposing good conduct on us by threats of casting us for ever into an inconceivably terrible hell. Others believe in a God of Love, and openly declare that if they could be brought to believe in a God capable of such cruelty as hell implies, they would spit in his face. Others hold that conduct has nothing to do with the matter, and that though hell exists, anyone, however wicked, can avoid it by believing that God accepted the cruel death of his own son as an expiation of their misdeeds, whilst nobody, however virtuous, can avoid it if she has the slightest doubt on this point. Others declare that neither conduct nor belief has anything to do with it, as every person is from birth predestined to fall into hell or mount into heaven when they die, and that nothing that they can say or do or believe or disbelieve can help them. Voltaire described us as a people with thirty religions and only one sauce, and though this was a great compliment to the activity and independence of our minds, it held out no hope of our ever agreeing about religion.

ALL SORTS OF PRAYERS

From Everybody's Political What's What

1944

ANTHROPOMORPHIC Deism will remain for long as a workable hypothesis not only for children but for many adults. Prayer consoles, heals, builds the soul in us; and to enact a Prohibition of Prayer, as some Secularists would if they had

the power, would be as futile as it would be cruel. But there are all sorts of prayers, from mere beggars' petitions and magic incantations to contemplative soul building, and all sorts of divinities to pray to. A schoolboy who witnessed a performance of my play *St Joan*, told his schoolmaster that he disliked Jesus and could not pray to him, but that he could pray to Joan. An Ulster Orange schoolmaster would probably have given him an exemplary thrashing to make a proper young Protestant of him; but this schoolmaster was wiser: he told the boy to pray to Joan by all means; it is the prayer and not the prayee that matters. To the Franciscan, Francis and not Jesus is the redeemer; and to countless Catholics and not a few Anglicans Our Lady is the intercessor. To the Jains God is Unknowable; but their temple in Bombay is full of images of all sorts of saints, from nameless images of extraordinary beatific peace to crude elephant-headed idols. As a Protestant child I was taught that my Roman Catholic fellowcountrymen would all go to hell because they said Hail, Mary! At the same time my English contemporary Arthur Conan Doyle was being taught at Stonyhurst that I should be damned for not saying it. I have lived to see modern Germany discard Hail, Mary! and substitute Heil, Hitler!; and for the life of me I cannot bring myself to regard the change as an improvement. It looks too like a revival of the worship of the ancient Egyptian god Ra, whose head was the head of a hawk. Still, I think the Church of England wrong in imposing Jesus, whom many people dislike as my schoolboy devotee of Joan did, as the sole form in which God can be prayed to. Every Church should be a Church of All Saints, and every cathedral a place for pure contemplation by the greatest minds of all races, creeds, and colors.

VIII
SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL
SCIENCE

THE DOCKS AS THEY WERE

From 'The Common Sense of Municipal Trading'
(Essays in Fabian Socialism)

1904

... CONSIDER the case of a great dock company. Near the docks three institutions are sure to be found: a workhouse, an infirmary, and a police court. The loading and unloading of ships is dangerous labor, and to a great extent casual labor, because the ships do not arrive in regular numbers of regular tonnage at regular intervals, nor does the work average itself sufficiently to keep a complete staff regularly employed as porters are at a railway station. Numbers of men are taken on and discharged just as they are wanted, at sixpence an hour (in London) or less. This is convenient for the dock company; but it surrounds the dock with a demoralized, reckless, and desperately poor population. No human being, however solid his character and careful his training, can loaf at the street corner waiting to be picked up for a chance job without becoming more or less a vagabond: one sees this even in the artistic professions, where the same evil exists under politer conditions, as unmistakeably as in the ranks of casual labor. The shareholders and directors do not live near the docks; so this does not affect them personally. But the ratepayers who do live near the dock are affected very seriously both in person and pocket. A visit to the workhouse and a chat with one of the Poor Law Guardians will help to explain matters.

Into that workhouse every dock laborer can walk at any moment, and, by announcing himself as a destitute person, compel the guardians to house and feed and clothe him at the expense of the ratepayers. When he begins to tire of the monotony of "the able bodied ward" and its futile labor, he can wait until a ship comes in; demand his discharge; do a day's work at the docks; spend the proceeds in a carouse and a debauch; and return to the workhouse next morning, again a destitute person. This is systematically done at present

by numbers of men who are by no means the least intelligent or capable of their class. Occasionally the carouse ends in their being taken to the police station instead of returning immediately to the workhouse. And if they are unlucky at their work, they may be carried for surgical treatment to the infirmary; for in large docks accidents that require hospital treatment occur in busy times at intervals of about fifteen minutes. Finally, when they are worn out, they subside into the workhouse permanently as aged paupers until they are buried by the guardians.

Now workhouses, infirmaries, and police courts cannot be maintained for nothing. Of late years workhouses have become much more expensive: in fact the outcry against the increase of the rates, which is being so vigorously used to discredit municipal trading, is due primarily and overwhelmingly to Poor Law, and only secondarily to educational and police expenditure, and has actually forced forward those branches of municipal trading which promise contributions out of their profits in relief of the general rate. This expenditure out of the rates on the workhouse is part of the cost of poverty and demoralization; and if these are caused in any district by the employment of casual labor, and its remuneration at less than subsistence rates, then it is clear that a large part of the cost of the casual labor is borne by the ratepayer and not by the dock company. The dividends, in fact, come straight out of the ratepayers' pockets, and are not in any real sense profits at all. Thus is it one of the many ironies of the situation that the sacrifices the ratepayer makes to relieve the poor really go largely to subsidize the rich.

A municipality cannot pick the ratepayer's pocket in this fashion. Transfer the docks to the municipality, and it will not be able to justify loss at the workhouse and police station by a profit at the docks. The ratepayer does not go into the accounts: all he knows is whether the total number of pence in the pound has risen or fallen. Consequently the municipality, on taking over the docks, would be forced to aim in the first instance at organizing its work so as to provide steady permanent employment for its laborers at a living wage, even at the cost of being overstaffed on slack days, until the difficulty had been solved by new organization and machinery, as such difficulties always are when they can no longer be shirked. Under these conditions it is quite possible that the profits made formerly by the dock company might disappear; but if a considerable part of the pauperism and

crime of the neighborhood disappeared simultaneously, the bargain would be a very profitable one indeed for the rate-payers, though *The Times* would abound with letters contrasting the former commercial prosperity of the dock company with the present "indebtedness" of the municipality.

ON DEMOCRACY

From the Preface to The Apple Cart

1930

DEMOCRACY, as you know it, is seldom more than a long word beginning with a capital letter, which we accept reverently or disparage contemptuously without asking any questions. Now we should never accept anything reverently until we have asked it a great many very searching questions, the first two being What are you? and Where do you live? When I put these questions to Democracy the answer I get is "My name is Demos; and I live in the British Empire, the United States of America, and wherever the love of liberty burns in the heart of man. You, my friend Shaw, are a unit of Democracy: your name is also Demos: you are a citizen of a great democratic community: you are a potential constituent of the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World." At this I usually burst into loud cheers, which do credit to my enthusiastic nature. To-night, however, I shall do nothing of the sort: I shall say "Dont talk nonsense. My name is not Demos: it is Bernard Shaw. My address is not the British Empire, nor the United States of America, nor wherever the love of liberty burns in the heart of man: it is at such and such a number in such and such a street in London; and it will be time enough to discuss my seat in the Parliament of Man when that celebrated institution comes into existence. I dont believe your name is Demos: nobody's name is Demos; and all I can make of your address is that you have no address, and are just a tramp—if indeed you exist at all."

You will notice that I am too polite to call Demos a windbag or a hot air merchant; but I am going to ask you to

begin our study of Democracy by considering it first as a big balloon, filled with gas or hot air, and sent up so that you shall be kept looking up at the sky whilst other people are picking your pockets. When the balloon comes down to earth every five years or so you are invited to get into the basket if you can throw out one of the people who are sitting tightly in it; but as you can afford neither the time nor the money, and there are forty millions of you and hardly room for six hundred in the basket, the balloon goes up again with much the same lot in it and leaves you where you were before. I think you will admit that the balloon as an image of Democracy corresponds to the parliamentary facts.

Now let us examine a more poetic conception of Democracy. Abraham Lincoln is represented as standing amid the carnage of the battlefield of Gettysburg, and declaring that all the slaughter of Americans by Americans occurred in order that Democracy, defined as government *of* the people *for* the people *by* the people, should not perish from the earth. Let us pick this famous peroration to pieces and see what there really is inside it. (By the way, Lincoln did not really declaim it on the field of Gettysburg; and the American Civil War was not fought in defence of any such principle, but, on the contrary, to enable one half of the United States to force the other half to be governed as they did not wish to be governed. But never mind that. I mentioned it only to remind you that it seems impossible for statesmen to make speeches about Democracy, or journalists to report them, without obscuring it in a cloud of humbug.)

Now for the three articles of the definition. Number One: Government *of* the people: that, evidently, is necessary: a human community can no more exist without a government than a human being can exist without a co-ordinated control of its breathing and blood circulation. Number Two: Government *for* the people, is most important. Dean Inge put it perfectly for us when he called Democracy a form of society which means equal consideration for all. He added that it is a Christian principle, and that, as a Christian, he believes in it. So do I. That is why I insist on equality of income. Equal consideration for a person with a hundred a year and one with a hundred thousand is impossible. But Number Three: Government *by* the people, is quite a different matter. All the monarchs, all the tyrants, all the dictators, all the Die-hard Tories are agreed that we must be governed. Democrats like the Dean and myself are agreed that

we must be governed with equal consideration for everybody. But we repudiate Number Three on the ground that the people cannot govern. The thing is a physical impossibility. Every citizen cannot be a ruler any more than every boy can be an engine driver or a pirate king. A nation of prime ministers or dictators is as absurd as an army of field marshals. Government by the people is not and never can be a reality: it is only a cry by which demagogues humbug us into voting for them. If you doubt this—if you ask me “Why should not the people make their own laws?” I need only ask you “Why should not the people write their own plays?” They cannot. It is much easier to write a good play than to make a good law. And there are not a hundred men in the world who can write a play good enough to stand daily wear and tear as long as a law must.

Now comes the question, If we cannot govern ourselves, what can we do to save ourselves from being at the mercy of those who *can* govern, and who may quite possibly be thoroughpaced grafters and scoundrels? The primitive answer is that as we are always in a huge majority we can, if rulers oppress us intolerably, burn their houses and tear them to pieces. This is not satisfactory. Decent people never do it until they have quite lost their heads; and when they have lost their heads they are as likely as not to burn the wrong house and tear the wrong man to pieces. When we have what is called a popular movement very few people who take part in it know what it is all about. I once saw a real popular movement in London. People were running excitedly through the streets. Everyone who saw them doing it immediately joined in the rush. They ran simply because everyone else was doing it. It was most impressive to see thousands of people sweeping along at full speed like that. There could be no doubt that it was literally a popular movement. I ascertained afterwards that it was started by a runaway cow. That cow had an important share in my education as a political philosopher; and I can assure you that if you will study crowds, and lost and terrified animals, and things like that, instead of reading books and newspaper articles, you will learn a great deal about politics from them.

ECONOMICS SIMPLIFIED

From Everybody's Political What's What

1944

TWENTIETH-CENTURY sociologists must begin with an emphatic repudiation of the eighteenth-century . . . delusion that all men are born free. They must rub in the fact that we are all born in a slavery to Nature which compels us to work x hours a day, as cows are compelled to graze, on pain of death by hunger, thirst, cold, and exposure. No one can shirk this burden of work except by imposing a double burden of it on somebody else, or, if this is impossible, a tenth of the burden on ten other people. This can happen only when the shirkers are the political masters of the workers, and the workers the political slaves of the shirkers as well as the slaves of Nature.

Everyone, worker or shirker, must sleep for eight hours out of the twentyfour, and reserve two hours more for meals, dressing, washing, and . . . locomotion . . . However, as eating, drinking, sleeping, and moderate exercise are agreeable, nobody wants to be relieved from them; and as, anyhow, they cannot be materially altered by legislation, the statesman is troubled only with the fourteen hours left available for productive or serviceable work.

Thus, though Man as the slave of Nature must work, his dislike of compulsory work urges him to a constant effort to reduce it and leave him free to do what he likes, or to do nothing but amuse himself. This freedom is called Leisure. It is, like labor, transferable. When tools, division of labor and mass production, machines, machine tools, and the harnessing to the machine tools and machines of horse power, steam power, electricity, and volcanic pressure make labor power so productive that, say, 14 hours of labor by one worker can produce a day's subsistence for several families in addition to that of the worker's family, it can maintain a single chieftain's family in royal splendor alongside fewer workers' families with barely enough to live on, or any distributive arrange-

ment between these two extremes. And when there are, say, fourteen millions of workers available, they can, by working as hard as ever, and consuming only what is barely necessary to keep them living and reproducing themselves, make it possible for a million families to have fourteen hours of leisure daily in the greatest purchaseable luxury without contributing a stroke of work for the community except the childbearing of their women.

No sane person would propose or expect such an arrangement *ab initio*. The original intention of all human societies except bands of robbers was to make sure that "if a man will not work neither shall he eat." But when civilization began by agriculture, the readiest means of securing this moral end was to give every man the land he cultivated as his private property, and make laws to prevent anyone from trespassing on it without obtaining his permission by grace or by purchase. Whilst there was enough equally fertile land for everybody this worked fairly enough; but when the best land, and finally all land within reach, was appropriated, and populations increased from hundreds to millions, the very anomaly which property in land was instituted to prevent was automatically produced by it; that is, the proprietors took all the leisure and the rest did all the work.

As under these conditions the landless were serfs with barely enough to live on, and the landlords had much more than enough, the monopoly of land created a monopoly of spare money. Spare money made factory industry possible, and when used to establish it was called capital. The proprietors came to be called capitalists, and the serfs who had no capital to be called, classically, proletarians, and, *en masse*, the proletariat. This class monopoly of capital made schooling and aesthetic culture also a class monopoly. These monopolies passed from generation to generation by inheritance or bequest because there is no other way of disposing of them until the State develops into a Commune equipped for owning, conducting, and administering land and industry for the public benefit.

Simple inheritance subdivides land and scatters capital into smaller and smaller parcels until they are not worth owning. To prevent this the proprietors instituted primogeniture, by which estates descended intact to the eldest son, thus producing a new class of younger sons with the education, culture, and expensive habits of their class, but without bread and cheese, which they had to earn by engaging in the businesses

and professions from which the proletariat were excluded by their illiteracy.

Thus automatically, without anyone knowing what was happening, a Three Class System established itself: upper class, middle class, and illiterate lower class. The lower class outnumbered the two others combined; but, being too poor, ignorant, and leisureless for political work, and having no weapons but sticks and stones, nor any tactics except strikes and riots, they could do only what their masters planned and ordered, receiving just enough money to save them from extinction as a class in spite of frightful infantile mortality and brevity of adult life.

Such a state of things inevitably produces a chronic class war, in which the middle and upper classes are in league against the lower; for the men of business, being the active instruments of the exploitation of the proletariat, live by sharing the plunder, leaving legislation and diplomacy to such members of the propertied class as have any fancy or capacity for it, whilst the rest live unproductively on rents, and in France are frankly called renters.

Protests and revolts against the Three Class System and against its iniquities were made long before anyone understood it as a system. Sages, seers, prophets, agitators, and demagogues of all classes have denounced it. Many of them were martyred, perhaps the best known of these being Jesus, who declared that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. He should have taught that it was quite easy for the rich men to be virtuous, and desperately hard for the poor men; but not understanding the capitalist system he was led by his compassion for the poor and his indignation at their treatment to attribute all virtue to the poor and all villainy to the rich, the fact being that "the poor in the lump is bad" and the rich in the lump comparatively good, poverty and not wealth being the evil to attack and abolish.

IX

MISCELLANEOUS

A BOXING MATCH

From Cashel Byron's Profession

1881

LYDIA turned away from him, and gave all her attention to the boxers. Of the two, Paradise shocked her least. She saw that he was nervous and conscious of a screwed-up condition as to his courage; but his sly grin implied a wild sort of good humor, and seemed to promise the spectators that he would shew them some fun presently. Cashel watched his movements with a relentless vigilance and a sidelong glance in which, to Lydia's apprehension, there was something infernal.

Suddenly the eyes of Paradise lit up: he lowered his head; made a rush; baulked himself purposely: and darted at Cashel. There was a sound like the pop of a champagne cork, after which Cashel was seen undisturbed in the middle of the ring, and Paradise, flung against the ropes and trying to grin at his discomfiture, shewed his white teeth through a mask of blood. . . .

. . . The remaining minutes of the round were unhappy ones for Paradise. He struck viciously at his opponent's ribs; but Cashel stepped back just out of his reach, and then returned with extraordinary swiftness and dealt him blows from which, with the ropes behind him, he had no room to retreat, and which he was too slow to stop or avoid. His attempts to reach his enemy's face were greatly to the disadvantage of his own; for Cashel's blows were never so tremendous as when he turned his head deftly out of harm's way, and met his advancing foe with a counter hit. There was no chivalry and no mercy in him; but his grace could not have been surpassed by his mother. He revelled in the hardness of his hitting, and gathered fresh vigor as his gloves resounded on Paradise's face or seemed to go almost through his body. The better sort among the spectators were disgusted by the sight; for as Paradise bled profusely, and as his blood smeared the gloves, and the gloves smeared the heads and bodies of both combatants, they were soon stained with it from their

waists upward. The managers held a whispered consultation as to whether the sparring exhibition had not better be stopped; but they decided to let it proceed on seeing the African king, who had watched the whole entertainment up to the present without displaying the least interest, now raise his hands and clap them with delight. . . .

Time was called; and the pugilists, who had by dint of sponging been made somewhat cleaner, rose with mechanical promptitude at the sound. They had hardly advanced two steps, when Cashel, though his adversary seemed far out of his reach, struck him on the forehead with such force as to stagger him, and then jumped back laughing. Paradise rushed forward; but Cashel eluded him, and fled round the ring, looking back derisively over his shoulder. Paradise now dropped all pretence of good humor. With reckless ferocity he dashed in; endured a startling blow without flinching; and fought savagely at close quarters. For a moment the falling of their bows reminded Lydia of the rush of raindrops against a pane in a sudden gust of wind. The next moment Cashel was away; and Paradise, whose blood was again flowing, was trying to repeat his manœuvre, to be met this time by a blow that brought him upon one knee. He had scarcely risen when Cashel sprang at him and drove him once more against the ropes with four dazzlingly rapid blows; but this time, with tigerish coquetry, released him by again running away prettily in the manner of a child at play. Paradise, with foam as well as blood at his lips, uttered a howl, and tore off his gloves. There was a shout of protest from the audience; and Cashel, warned by it, tried to get off his gloves in turn. But Paradise was upon him before he could accomplish this; and the two men laid hold of one another amid a great clamor: Lord Worthington and others rising and excitedly shouting, "Against rules! No wrestling!" followed by a roar of indignation as Paradise was seen to seize Cashel's shoulder in his teeth as they struggled for the throw. Lydia, for the first time in her life, screamed. Then she saw Cashel, his face fully as fierce as his foe's, get his arm about Paradise's neck; lift him as a coal-heaver lifts a sack; and fling him over his back, heels over head, to the ground, where he instantly dropped on him with his utmost weight and impetus. The two were at once separated by a crowd of managers, umpires, policemen and others who had rushed towards the ring when Paradise had taken off his gloves. A distracting wrangle followed. Skene had climbed over the palisade, and was hurling oaths, threats, and

epithets at Paradise, who, unable to stand without assistance, was trying to lift his leaden eyelids and realize what had happened to him. A dozen others, encouraging him to sit up, remonstrating with him on his conduct, or trying to pacify Skene, only added to the confusion. Cashel, on the other side, raged at the managers, who were reminding him that the rules of glove exhibitions did not allow wrestling and throwing.

"Rules be damned!" Lydia heard him shouting. "He bit me; and I'll throw him to—" Then everybody spoke at once; and she could only conjecture where he would throw him to. He seemed to have no self-control: Paradise, when he came to himself, behaved better. Lord Worthington descended into the ring, and tried to calm the hubbub; but Cashel shook his hand fiercely from his arm; menaced a manager who attempted to call him sternly to order; frantically pounded his wounded shoulder with his clenched fist; and so outswore and outwangled them all that even Skene began to urge that there had been enough fuss made. Then Lord Worthington whispered a word more; and Cashel suddenly subsided, pale and ashamed, and sat down on a chair in his corner as if to hide himself. Five minutes afterwards, he stepped out from the crowd with Paradise, and shook hands with him amid much cheering. Cashel was the humbler of the two. He did not raise his eyes to the balcony once; and he seemed in a hurry to retire. But he was intercepted by an officer in uniform, accompanied by a black chief, who came to conduct him to the dais and present him to the African king: an honor he was not permitted to decline.

The king informed him, through an interpreter, that he had been unspeakably gratified by what he had just witnessed, and expressed great surprise that Cashel, notwithstanding his prowess, was neither in the army nor in parliament. He also offered to provide him with three handsome wives if he would come out to Africa in his suite. Cashel was much embarrassed; but he came off with credit, thanks to the interpreter, who was accustomed to invent appropriate speeches for the king on public occasions, and was kind enough to invent an equally appropriate one for Cashel on this.

A SUNDAY ON THE SURREY HILLS

From The Black Girl and Some Lesser Tales

[1888]

As I am not a born cockney I have no illusions on the subject of the country. The uneven, ankle-twisting roads, the dusty hedges; the ditch with its dead dogs, rank weeds, and swarms of poisonous flies; the groups of children torturing something; the dull, toil-broken, prematurely old agricultural laborer; the savage tramp; the manure heaps with their horrible odor; the chain of mile-stones from inn to inn, from cemetery to cemetery: all these I pass heavily by until a distant telegraph pole or signal-post tells me that the blessed rescuing train is at hand. From the village street into the railway station is a leap across five centuries from the brutalizing torpor of Nature's tyranny over Man into the order and alertness of Man's organized dominion over Nature.

And yet last week I allowed myself to be persuaded by my friend Henry Salt and his wife to "come down and stay until Monday" among the Surrey hills. Salt, a man of exceptional intelligence on most subjects, is country mad, and keeps a house at a hole called Tilford, down Farnham way, to which he retires at intervals, subsisting on the fungi of the neighborhood, and writing articles advocating that line of diet and justifying the weather and the season to "pent-up" London. He entertained no doubt that a day at Tilford would convert me from rurophobia to rurolatry; and as he is a sensible companion for a walk and a talk—if only he would, like a sensible man, confine himself to the Thames Embankment—I at last consented to the experiment, and even agreed to be marched to the summit of a scenic imposture called Hindhead, and there shewn the downs of the South Coast, the Portsmouth Road (the Knightsbridge end of which I prefer), and, above all, the place where three men were hanged for murdering someone who had induced them to take a country walk with him.

London was clean, fresh, and dry as I made my way to

Waterloo after rising at the unnatural hour of seven on Sunday morning. Opening a book, I took care not to look out of the window between the stations until, after traversing a huge cemetery and a huge camp, we reached Farnham. As usual in the country, it was raining heavily. I asked my way to Tilford, and was told to go straight on for four miles or so. As I had brought nothing that could hurt Salt's feelings by betraying my mistrust of his rustic paradise, I was without an umbrella; and the paradise, of course, took the fullest advantage of the omission. I do not know what the downs of the South Coast may be; but I can vouch for both ups and downs as far as the Surrey roads are concerned. Between Farnham and Tilford there are nearly half a dozen hills and not one viaduct. Over these I trudged uphill on my toes and pounded downhill on my heels, making at each step an oozy quagmire full of liquid gamboge. As the landscape grew less human, the rain came down faster, reducing my book to a pulp and transferring the red of the cover to my saturated grey jacket. Some waterproof variety of bird, screaming with laughter at me from a plantation, made me understand better than before why birds are habitually shot. The road presently passed a pine wood, with a gorgeous carpet of wet moss, and a notice that trespassers will be prosecuted. Truly it is worth while travelling thirty miles to be turned back by the curmudgeonism of a country gentleman. My sleeves by this time struck cold to my wrists. Hanging my arms disconsolately so as to minimize the unpleasant repercussion, I looked down at my clinging knees, and instantly discharged a pint of rain water and black dye over them from my hat brim. At this I laughed, much as criminals broken on the wheel used to laugh at the second stroke. A mile or two more of treadmill and gamboge churning, and I came to the outposts of a village, with a river hurrying over a bed of weeds of wonderful colors, spanned by a bridge constructed on the principle of the Gothic arch, so as to extort from horses the maximum of effort both when drawing carts up one side, and preventing the carts from overrunning them when slithering precipitously down the other.

This was Tilford, uninhabited as far as I could see except by one man, whose surly looks asked me, more plainly than words could, what the devil I wanted there. Then up another hill between meeting house and church, and out upon an exposed stretch of road where the rain and wind had an unobstructed final pelt at me. Salt is mistaken in supposing

that he lives at Tilford: as a matter of fact he lives considerably beyond it; and I was on the point of turning whilst I had yet strength enough left to get back to London, when he hailed me from his door with a delighted shout of, "Here he is!" and beamed at me as if my condition left nothing to be desired, and Tilford had done itself the highest credit. In no time my clothes were filling the kitchen with steam; and I, invested in some garments belonging to Salt's brother-in-law, a promising poet whose figure is somewhat dissimilar to mine, was distending myself with my host's latest discoveries in local fungology.

My clothes dried fast. Quite early in the afternoon I put them on again, and found them some two inches shorter and tighter, but warm and desiccated. Nevertheless I had a fit of sneezing; and Mrs Salt produced a bottle of spirits of camphor. Unfamiliar with the violent nature of this remedy, I incautiously took a spoonful of it. It all but killed me; but I had the satisfaction, when I came to, of feeling tolerably sure that the influenza bacillus had not survived it. Then, the rain having ceased, we went out for a walk, and followed the road between the hills, which were like streaks of wet peat beneath the cloudy sky. Eventually we got out upon the uplands, where the mud was replaced by soft quicksand and heather already swept dry by the stark wind from the North Sea. Frensham Pond, like a waterworks denuded of machinery, lay to leeward of us, with a shudder passing over it from head to foot at every squall. I sympathized with it, and looked furtively at Salt, to see whether the ineffable dreariness of the scene had not dashed him. But he was used to it; and, when we got home, began to plan an excursion to Hindhead for the morrow. The mere suggestion brought on a fresh fit of sneezing. I positively declined further camphor; and Mrs Salt, by no means at the end of her resources, administered black currant jam and boiling water, which I rather liked.

Next morning I got up at eight to see the sun and hear the birds. I found, however, that I was up before them; and I neither saw nor heard them until I got back to the metropolis. Salt was jubilant because the wind was north-east, which made rain impossible. So after breakfast we started across the hills to Hindhead, through a mist that made the cows look like mammoths and the ridges like Alpine chains. When we were well out of reach of shelter the rain began. Salt declared that it would be nothing; that it could never hold out against

the north-east wind. Nevertheless it did. When, after staggering and slipping up and down places which Salt described as lanes, but which were, in fact, rapidly filling beds of mountain mud torrents, we at last got upon Hindhead (which was exactly like all the other mounds), we could hardly see one another, much less the south coast, through the mist. I saw the place where the men were hanged; and I cannot deny that I felt a certain vindictive satisfaction in the idea of somebody having been served out there.

When we started homeward Salt was in the highest spirits. The discovery of a wet day in a north-east wind elated him as the discovery of a comet elates an astronomer. As to Mrs Salt, the conclusion she drew from it all was that I must come down another day. The rain gave her no more concern than if she had been a duck; and I could not help wondering whether her walking costume was not in reality a skilfully contrived bathing dress. She seemed perfectly happy, though the very sheep were bawling plaintively at the sky, and a cow to which I gave a friendly slap in passing was so saturated that the water squirted up my sleeve to the very armpit. Her chief theme whilst we were on the hills was the gentleness of her dog Nigger, whose movements in the direction of the sheep Salt was meanwhile carefully frustrating. Before we got home, my clothes contained three times as much water as they had gathered the day before. When I again resumed them they seemed to have been borrowed in an emergency from a very young brother.

I need not describe my walk back to Farnham after dinner. It rained all the way; but at least I was getting nearer to London. I have had change of air and a holiday; and I have no doubt I shall be able to throw off their effect in a fortnight or so. Should my experience serve to warn any tempted Londoner against too high an estimate of the vernal delights of the Surrey hills, it will perhaps not have been wasted.

SETTING THE SCENE

From the Opening of *Candida*

1898

A fine morning in October 1894 in the north east quarter of London, a vast district miles away from the London of Mayfair and St James's, and much less narrow, squalid, fetid and airless in its slums. It is strong in unfashionable middle class life; wide streeted; myriad-populated; well served with ugly iron urinals, Radical clubs, and tram lines carrying a perpetual stream of yellow cars; enjoying in its main thoroughfares the luxury of grass-grown "front gardens" untrod-den by the foot of man save as to the path from the gate to the hall door; blighted by a callously endured monotony of miles and miles of unlovely brick houses, black iron railings, stony pavements, slated roofs, and respectably ill dressed or disreputably worse dressed people, quite accustomed to the place, and mostly plodding uninterestedly about somebody else's work. The little energy and eagerness that crop up shew themselves in cockney cupidity and business "push." Even the policemen and the chapels are not infrequent enough to break the monotony. The sun is shining cheerfully; there is no fog; and though the smoke effectually prevents anything, whether faces and hands or bricks and mortar, from looking fresh and clean, it is not hanging heavily enough to trouble a Londoner.

This desert of unattractiveness has its oasis. Near the outer end of the Hackney Road is a park of 217 acres, fenced in, not by railings, but by a wooden paling, and containing plenty of greensward, trees, a lake for bathers, flower beds which are triumphs of the admired cockney art of carpet gardening, and a sandpit, originally imported from the seaside for the delight of children, but speedily deserted on its becoming a natural vermin preserve for all the petty fauna of Kingsland, Hackney, and Hoxton. A bandstand, an unfurnished forum for religious, anti-religious, and political orators, cricket pitches, a gymnasium, and an old fashioned stone

kiosk are among its attractions. Wherever the prospect is bounded by trees or rising green grounds, it is a pleasant place. Where the ground stretches flat to the grey palings, with bricks and mortar, sky signs, crowded chimneys and smoke beyond, the prospect makes it desolate and sordid.

The best view of Victoria Park is commanded by the front window of St Dominic's Parsonage, from which not a brick is visible. The parsonage is semi-detached, with a front garden and porch. Visitors go up the flight of steps to the porch; tradespeople and members of the family go down by a door under the steps to the basement, with a breakfast room, used for all meals, in front, and the kitchen at the back. Upstairs, on the level of the hall door, is the drawing room, with its large plate glass window looking out on the park. In this, the only sitting room that can be spared from the children and the family meals, the parson, the Reverend James Mavor Morell, does his work. He is sitting in a strong round backed revolving chair at the end of a long table, which stands across the window, so that he can cheer himself with a view of the park over his left shoulder. At the opposite end of the table, adjoining it, is a little table only half as wide as the other, with a typewriter on it. His typist is sitting at this machine, with her back to the window. The large table is littered with pamphlets, journals, letters, nests of drawers, an office diary, postage scales and the like. A spare chair for visitors having business with the parson is in the middle, turned to his end. Within reach of his hand is a stationery case, and a photograph in a frame. The wall behind him is fitted with bookshelves, on which an adept eye can measure the parson's casuistry and divinity by Maurice's Theological Essays and a complete set of Browning's poems, and the reformer's politics by a yellow backed Progress and Poverty, Fabian Essays, A Dream of John Ball, Marx's Capital, and half a dozen other literary landmarks in Socialism. Facing him on the other side of the room, near the typewriter, is the door. Further down opposite the fireplace, a bookcase stands on a cellaret, with a sofa near it. There is a generous fire burning; and the hearth, with a comfortable armchair and a black japanned flower-painted coal scuttle at one side, a miniature chair for children on the other, a varnished wooden mantelpiece, with neatly moulded shelves, tiny bits of mirror let into the panels, a travelling clock in a leather case (the inevitable wedding present), and on the wall above a large autotype of the chief figure in Titian's

Assumption of the Virgin, is very inviting. Altogether the room is the room of a good housekeeper, vanquished, as far as the table is concerned, by an untidy man, but elsewhere mistress of the situation. The furniture, in its ornamental aspect, betrays the style of the advertized "drawingroom suite" of the pushing suburban furniture dealer; but there is nothing useless or pretentious in the room, money being too scarce in the house of an east end parson to be wasted on snobbish trimmings.

The Reverend James Mavor Morell is a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England, and an active member of the Guild of St Matthew and the Christian Social Union. A vigorous, genial, popular man of forty, robust and good-looking, full of energy, with pleasant, hearty, considerate manners, and a sound unaffected voice, which he uses with the clean athletic articulation of a practised orator, and with a wide range and perfect command of expression. He is a first rate clergyman, able to say what he likes to whom he likes, to lecture people without setting himself up against them, to impose his authority on them without humiliating them, and, on occasion, to interfere in their business without impertinence. His well-spring of enthusiasm and sympathetic emotion has never run dry for a moment: he still eats and sleeps heartily enough to win the daily battle between exhaustion and recuperation triumphantly. Withal, a great baby, pardonably vain of his powers and unconsciously pleased with himself. He has a healthy complexion: good forehead, with the brows somewhat blunt, and the eyes bright and eager, mouth resolute but not particularly well cut, and a substantial nose, with the mobile spreading nostrils of the dramatic orator, void, like all his features, of subtlety.

The typist, Miss Proserpine Garnett, is a brisk little woman of about thirty, of the lower middle class, neatly but cheaply dressed in a black merino skirt and a blouse, notably pert and quick of speech, and not very civil in her manner, but sensitive and affectionate. She is clattering away busily at her machine whilst Morell opens the last of his morning's letters. He realizes its contents with a comic groan of despair.

PORTRAIT OF TWO LADIES

From Man and Superman

1903

... Whether Ann [Whitefield] is good-looking or not depends upon your taste; also and perhaps chiefly on your age and sex. To Octavius she is an enchantingly beautiful woman, in whose presence the world becomes transfigured, and the puny limits of individual consciousness are suddenly made infinite by a mystic memory of the whole life of the race to its beginnings in the east, or even back to the paradise from which it fell. She is to him the reality of romance, the inner good sense of nonsense, the unveiling of his eyes, the freeing of his soul, the abolition of time, place and circumstance, the etherealization of his blood into rapturous rivers of the very water of life itself, the revelation of all the mysteries and the sanctification of all the dogmas. To her mother she is, to put it as moderately as possible, nothing whatever of the kind. Not that Octavius's admiration is in any way ridiculous or discreditable. Ann is a well formed creature, as far as that goes; and she is perfectly ladylike, graceful, and comely, with ensnaring eyes and hair. Besides, instead of making herself an eyesore, like her mother, she has devised a mourning costume of black and violet silk which does honor to her late father and reveals the family tradition of brave unconventionality by which Ramsden sets such store.

But all this is beside the point as an explanation of Ann's charm. Turn up her nose, give her a cast to her eye, replace her black and violet confection by the apron and feathers of a flower girl, strike all the aitches out of her speech, and Ann would still make men dream. Vitality is as common as humanity; but, like humanity, it sometimes rises to genius; and Ann is one of the vital geniuses. Not at all, if you please, an oversexed person: that is a vital defect, not a true excess. She is a perfectly respectable, perfectly self-controlled woman, and looks it; though her pose is fashionably frank and impulsive. She inspires confidence as a person who will do nothing she does not mean to do; also some fear, perhaps, as a

woman who will probably do everything she means to do without taking more account of other people than may be necessary and what she calls right. In short, what the weaker of her own sex sometimes call a cat. . . .

Mrs Whitefield . . . is a little woman, whose faded flaxen hair looks like straw on an egg. She has an expression of muddled shrewdness, a squeak of protest in her voice, and an air of continually elbowing away some larger person who is crushing her into a corner. One guesses her as one of those women who are conscious of being treated as silly and negligible, and who, without having strength enough to assert themselves effectually, at any rate never submit to their fate.

ON JOURNALISM

From the Preface to 'The Sanity of Art'
(Major Critical Essays)

1907

...WHAT the journalist writes about is what everybody is thinking about (or ought to be thinking about) at the moment of writing. To revive his utterances when everybody is thinking about something else; when the tide of public thought and imagination has turned; when the front of the stage is filled with new actors; when many lusty crows have either survived their vogue or perished with it; when the little men you patronized have become great, and the great men you attacked have been sanctified and pardoned by popular sentiment in the tomb; all these inevitables test the quality of your journalism very severely. Nevertheless, journalism can claim to be the highest form of literature; for all the highest literature is journalism. The writer who aims at producing the platitudes which are "not for an age, but for all time" has his reward in being unreadable in all ages; whilst Plato and Aristophanes trying to knock some sense into the Athens of their day, Shakespear peopling that same Athens with Elizabethan mechanics and Warwickshire hunts, Ibsen photographing the local doctors and vestrymen of a Norwegian

parish, Carpaccio painting the life of St Ursula exactly as if she were a lady living in the next street to him, are still alive and at home everywhere among the dust and ashes of many thousands of academic, punctilious, most archæologically correct men of letters and art who spent their lives haughtily avoiding the journalist's vulgar obsession with the ephemeral. I also am a journalist, proud of it, deliberately cutting out of my works all that is not journalism, convinced that nothing that is not journalism will live long as literature, or be of any use whilst it does live. I deal with all periods; but I never study any period but the present, which I have not yet mastered and never shall; and as a dramatist I have no clue to any historical or other personage save that part of him which is also myself, and which may be nine tenths of him or ninety-nine hundredths, as the case may be (if, indeed, I do not transcend the creature), but which, anyhow, is all that can ever come within my knowledge of his soul. The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time. The other sort of man, who believes that he and his period are so distinct from all other men and periods that it would be immodest and irrelevant to allude to them or assume that they could illustrate anything but his own private circumstances, is the most infatuated of all the egotists, and consequently the most unreadable and negligible of all the authors. And so, let others cultivate what they call literature: journalism for me!

IMAGINATION

From the Preface to Misalliance

1910

... It is necessary to clear up the confusion made by our use of the word imagination to denote two very different powers of mind. One is the power to imagine things as they are not: this I call the romantic imagination. The other is the power

to imagine things as they are without actually sensing them; and this I will call the realistic imagination. Take for example marriage and war. One man has a vision of perpetual bliss with a domestic angel at home, and of flashing sabres, thundering guns, victorious cavalry charges, and routed enemies in the field. That is romantic imagination; and the mischief it does is incalculable. It begins in silly and selfish expectations of the impossible, and ends in spiteful disappointment, sour grievance, cynicism, and misanthropic resistance to any attempt to better a hopeless world. The wise man knows that imagination is not only a means of pleasing himself and beguiling tedious hours with romances and fairy tales and fools' paradises (a quite defensible and delightful amusement when you know exactly what you are doing and where fancy ends and facts begin), but also a means of foreseeing and being prepared for realities as yet unexperienced, and of testing the feasibility and desirability of serious Utopias. He does not expect his wife to be an angel; nor does he overlook the facts that war depends on the rousing of all the murderous blackguardism still latent in mankind; that every victory means a defeat; that fatigue, hunger, terror, and disease are the raw material which romancers work up into military glory; and that soldiers for the most part go to war as children go to school, because they are afraid not to. They are afraid even to say they are afraid, as such candor is punishable by death in the military code.

A very little realistic imagination gives an ambitious person enormous power over the multitudinous victims of the romantic imagination. For the romancer not only pleases himself with fictitious glories: he also terrifies himself with imaginary dangers. He does not even picture what these dangers are: he conceives the unknown as always dangerous. When you say to a realist "You must do this" or "You must not do that," he instantly asks what will happen to him if he does (or does not, as the case may be). Failing an unromantic convincing answer, he does just as he pleases unless he can find for himself a real reason for refraining. In short, though you can intimidate him, you cannot bluff him. But you can always bluff the romantic person: indeed his grasp of real considerations is so feeble that you find it necessary to bluff him even when you have solid considerations to offer him instead. The campaigns of Napoleon, with their atmosphere of glory, illustrate this. In the Russian campaign Napoleon's marshals achieved miracles of

bluff, especially Ney, who, with a handful of men, monstrously outnumbered, repeatedly kept the Russian troops paralysed with terror by pure bounce. Napoleon himself, much more a realist than Ney (that was why he dominated him), would probably have surrendered; for sometimes the bravest of the brave will achieve successes never attempted by the cleverest of the clever. Wellington was a completer realist than Napoleon. It was impossible to persuade Wellington that he was beaten until he actually was beaten. He was unbluffable; and if Napoleon had understood the nature of Wellington's strength instead of returning Wellington's snobbish contempt for him by an academic contempt for Wellington, he would not have left the attack at Waterloo to Ney and D'Erlon, who, on that field, did not know when they were beaten, whereas Wellington knew precisely when he was not beaten. The unbluffable would have triumphed anyhow, probably, because Napoleon was an academic soldier, doing the academic thing (the attack in columns and so forth) with superlative ability and energy; whilst Wellington was an original soldier who, instead of outdoing the terrible academic columns with still more terrible and academic columns, outwitted them with the thin red line, not of heroes, but, as this uncompromising realist never hesitated to testify, of the scum of the earth.

ON STYLE

From the Preface to Immaturity

1921

... I HAVE never aimed at style in my life: style is a sort of melody that comes into my sentences by itself. If a writer says what he has to say as accurately and effectively as he can, his style will take care of itself, if he has a style. But I did set up one condition in my early days. I resolved that I would write nothing that should not be intelligible to a foreigner with a dictionary, like the French of Voltaire; and I therefore avoided idiom. (Later on I came to seek idiom as being the most highly vitalized form of language.) ...

CRUELTY, MODERN AND MEDIEVAL

From the Preface to Saint Joan

1924

FIRST, let us get rid of the notion that the mere physical cruelty of the burning has any special significance. Joan was burnt just as dozens of less interesting heretics were burnt in her time. Christ, in being crucified, only shared the fate of thousands of forgotten malefactors. They have no pre-eminence in mere physical pain: much more horrible executions than theirs are on record, to say nothing of the agonies of so-called natural death at its worst.

Joan was burnt more than five hundred years ago. More than three hundred years later: that is, only about a hundred years before I was born, a woman was burnt on Stephen's Green in my native city of Dublin for coining, which was held to be treason. In my preface to the recent volume on English Prisons under Local Government, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, I have mentioned that when I was already a grown man I saw Richard Wagner conduct two concerts, and that when Richard Wagner was a young man he saw and avoided a crowd of people hastening to see a soldier broken on the wheel by the more cruel of the two ways of carrying out that hideous method of execution. Also that the penalty of hanging, drawing, and quartering, unmentionable in its details, was abolished so recently that there are men living who have been sentenced to it. We are still flogging criminals, and clamoring for more flogging. Not even the most sensationally frightful of these atrocities inflicted on its victim the misery, degradation, and conscious waste and loss of life suffered in our modern prisons, especially the model ones, without, as far as I can see, rousing any more compunction than the burning of heretics did in the Middle Ages. We have not even the excuse of getting some fun out of our prisons as the Middle Ages did out of their stakes and wheels and gibbets. Joan herself judged this matter when she had to choose between imprisonment and the stake, and chose the stake.

'BOSSES'

From the Preface to The Millionairess

1935

How does the captain of a pirate ship obtain his position and maintain his authority over a crew of scoundrels who are all, like himself, outside the law? How does an obscure village priest, the son of humble fisherfolk, come to wear the triple crown and sit in the papal chair? How do common soldiers become Kings, Shahs, and Dictators? Why does a hereditary peer find that he is a nonentity in a grand house organized and ruled by his butler?

Questions like these force themselves on us so continually and ruthlessly that many turn in despair from Socialism and political reform on the ground that to abolish all the institutional tyrannies would only deliver the country helplessly into the hands of the born bosses. A king, a prelate, a squire, a capitalist, a justice of the peace may be a good kind Christian soul, owing his position, as most of us do, to being the son of his father; but a born boss is one who rides roughshod over us by some mysterious power that separates him from our species and makes us fear him: that is, hate him.

What is to be done with that section of the possessors of specific talents whose talent is for moneymaking? History and daily experience teach us that if the world does not devise some plan of ruling them, they will rule the world. Now it is not desirable that they should rule the world; for the secret of moneymaking is to care for nothing else and to work at nothing else; and as the world's welfare depends on operations by which no individual can make money, whilst its ruin by war and drink and disease and drugs and debauchery is enormously profitable to moneymakers, the supremacy of the moneymaker is the destruction of the State. A society which depends on the incentive of private profit is doomed.

And what about ambitious people who possess commanding business ability or military genius or both? They are irresistible unless they are restrained by law; for ordinary in-

dividuals are helpless in their hands. Are they to be the masters of society or its servants?

What should the nineteenth century have done in its youth with Rothschild and Napoleon? What is the United States to do with its money kings and bosses? What are we to do with ours? How is the mediocre private citizen to hold his own with the able bullies and masterful women who establish family despotisms, school despotisms, office despotisms, religious despotisms in their little circles all over the country? Our boasted political liberties are a mockery to the subjects of such despotisms. They may work well when the despot is benevolent; but they are worse than any political tyranny in the selfish cases.

It is much more difficult to attack a personal despotism than an institutional one. Monarchs can be abolished: they have been abolished in all directions during the last century and a half, with the result, however, of sometimes replacing a personally amiable and harmless monarch, reigning under strict constitutional and traditional restraints, by energetic dictators and presidents who, having made hay of constitutions and traditions, are under no restraints at all. A hereditary monarch, on the throne because he is the son of his father, may be a normal person, amenable to reasonable advice from his councils, and exercising no authority except that conferred on him (or her) by the Constitution. Behead him, as we beheaded our Charles, or the French their Louis, and the born despot Cromwell or Napoleon (I purposely avoid glaring contemporary examples because I am not quite sure where they will be by the time this book is published) takes his place. The same mysterious personal force that makes the household tyrant, the school tyrant, the office tyrant, the brigand chief and the pirate captain, brings the born boss to the top by a gravitation that ordinary people cannot resist.

The successful usurpers of thrones are not the worst cases. The political usurper may be an infernal scoundrel, ruthless in murder, treachery, and torture; but once his ambition is achieved and he has to rule a nation, the magnitude and difficulty of his job, and the knowledge that if he makes a mess of it he will fall as suddenly as he has risen, will civilize him with a ruthlessness greater than his own. When Henry IV usurped the English crown he certainly did not intend to die of political overwork; but that is what happened to him. No political ruler could possibly be as wickedly selfish and

cruel as the tyrant of a private house. Queen Elizabeth was a *maîtresse femme*; but she could have had her own way much more completely as landlady of the Mermaid Tavern than she had as sovereign of England. Because Nero and Paul I of Russia could not be made to understand this, they were killed like mad dogs by their own courtiers. But our petty fireside tyrants are not killed. Christina of Sweden would not have had to abdicate if her realm had been a ten-roomed villa. Had Catherine II reigned over her husband only, she need not nor could not have had him murdered; but as Tsarina she was forced to liquidate poor Peter very much against her own easy good nature, which prevented her from scolding her maids properly.

Modern Liberal democracy claims unlimited opportunities for tyranny: qualification for rule by heredity and class narrows it and puts it in harness and blinkers. Especially does such democracy favor money rule. It is in fact not democracy at all, but unashamed plutocracy. And as the meanest creature can become rich if he devotes his life to it, and the people with wider and more generous interests become or remain poor with equal certainty, plutocracy is the very devil socially, because it creates a sort of Gresham law by which the baser human currency drives out the nobler coinage. This is quite different from the survival of the fittest in the contests of character and talent which are independent of money. If Moses is the only tribesman capable of making a code of laws, he inevitably becomes Lawgiver to all the tribes, and, equally inevitably, is forced to add to what he can understand of divine law a series of secular regulations designed to maintain his personal authority. If he finds that it is useless to expect the tribesmen to obey his laws as a matter of common sense, he must persuade them that his inspiration is the result of direct and miraculous communication with their deity. Moses and Mahomet and Joseph Smith the Mormon had to plead divine revelations to get them out of temporary and personal difficulties as well as out of eternal and impersonal ones. As long as an individual of their calibre remains the indispensable man (or woman) doing things that the common man can neither do without nor do for himself, he will be, up to a point, the master of the common man in spite of all the democratic fudge that may be advanced to the contrary.

Of course there are limits. He cannot go to the lengths at which the common man will believe him to be insane or

impious: when measures of that complexion are necessary, as they very often are, he must either conceal them or mask them as follies of the sort the common man thinks splendid. If the ruler thinks it well to begin a world war he must persuade his people that it is a war to end war, and that the people he wants them to kill are diabolical scoundrels; and if he is forced to suspend hostilities for a while, and does so by a treaty which contains the seeds of half a dozen new wars and is impossible enough in its conditions to make its violation certain, he must create a general belief that it is a charter of eternal peace and a monument of retributive justice.

In this way the most honest ruler becomes a tyrant and a fabricator of legends and falsehoods, not out of any devilment in himself, but because those whom he rules do not understand his business, and, if they did, would not sacrifice their own immediate interests to the permanent interests of the nation or the world. In short, a ruler must not only make laws, and rule from day to day: he must, by school instruction and printed propaganda, create and maintain an artificial mentality which will endorse his proceedings and obey his authority. This mentality becomes what we call Conservatism; and the revolt against it when it is abused oppressively or becomes obsolete as social conditions change, is classed as sedition, and reviled as Radicalism, Anarchism, Bolshevism, or what you please.

NOTES

*The notes in this edition are intended
to serve the needs of Overseas students
as well as those of English-born readers*

SIXTEEN SELF SKETCHES

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21. *Letting a calf stray into every china shop*: a humorous adaptation of the proverbial phrase, 'a bull in a china shop'—a person who clumsily or thoughtlessly causes destruction all around him.
Bohemian: from the old word for a gipsy. Applied loosely to artists, writers, musicians, etc., who find it difficult to conform to the ordinary rules and conventions of society.
mezzo-soprano: between soprano and contralto.
22. *downstart*: a word of Shaw's own invention, implying the opposite of 'upstart'. It also explains, as Shaw points out elsewhere, the position of the younger sons of middle-class families who inherited little or nothing from their fathers but, because they belonged to a class that did not work for a living, were seldom trained for any profession; they were therefore 'down' from 'the start'.
William the Conqueror: in this case, William III, who, in 1690-91, defeated the Irish supporters of the Roman Catholic king, James II. As Protestants the Shaws would regard William III as their champion and hero, but there is a touch of comic irony in Shaw's title.
23. *Orange*: William III was known as William of Orange, so named after the small principality of Orange (in France) whence his family had sprung before they became (from the sixteenth century) rulers of the Netherlands. After William became also King of England, his supporters in Ireland, extreme Protestants in a predominantly Catholic country, were called Orangemen and the word 'Orange' became loosely applied to all Irish Protestants.
24. *Stopford Brooke*: (1832-1916), Anglo-Irish literary critic.
Vice-Regal: from 'viceroy'. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was to all intents and purposes a viceroy.
abomination of desolation: see St Matthew xxiv, 15.

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buffo: a comic actor or singer in a comic opera.

house of Belial: Belial was a Hebrew name for Satan. Shaw used the term ironically, of course.

25. *Frank*: this was Frank Harris, who wrote a biography of Shaw.

26. *the Serpentine*: a lake in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, London.

PREFACE TO IMMATURITY

27. *power of appointment*: a legal term denoting powers conferred by law to decide what may be done with an inheritance.

28. *Annie Laurie*: a very popular Scots ballad of the eighteenth century, by William Douglas. It is still well known.

29. *our blood's blueness*: a reference to the legend that the blood of people of noble families is blue.

31. *serpent(s) of Old Nile*: Antony's nickname for Cleopatra in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The Pilgrim's Progress: by John Bunyan (1628-88); the greatest English prose allegory.

Adventures of Munchausen: by Rudolf Erich Raspe (1737-94).

32. *skeletons in the cupboard*: family secrets, more or less discreditable, which are kept hidden from the outside world.

33. *Noah*: for his 'single lapse', see Genesis, chapter ix.

'the governor': a colloquial term for 'father'—not common today.

34. *Elijah*: see 2 Kings ii, 11.

35. *Evangelical*: used loosely to mean 'Low Church' or Protestant.

36. *Onslow Gardens*: in South Kensington (S.W. London).

Cheapside: in the City of London.

37. *Valuation Office*: a Government Department concerned with assessing the value of land or property for rates, taxes, etc.

a business of professional rank: Shaw means that at that time a land agent ranked with a lawyer, doctor, etc., as a member of a profession, rather than as a business-man or a tradesman.

38. *carpet bag*: an old-fashioned travelling bag or holdall, originally made of carpet, although the term was used long after more hard-wearing material was substituted for carpet.

the North Wall boat: presumably the boat which left from part of Dublin Harbour called the North Wall.

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Euston: the London terminus for trains coming from the North-west.

Hansom: a two-wheeled cab, peculiar to London, introduced about 1847 and named after its inventor.

growler: colloquial name for a slower, more sedate cab, with four wheels.

Victoria Grove: a quiet little street in south-west London, not far from Kensington.

ghost: one who does work (usually literary work) for another person because the latter is either too busy or is incapable of doing it, receiving part of the fee but none of the credit.

39. *Way Leave*: permission to carry something (in this case telephone cables) across somebody's property.

Leyton: a municipal borough to the east of, and adjoining, London.

40. *demy . . . quarto*: paper sizes—half and quarter of a full sheet.

Blackwood . . . Macmillan: these publishers still flourish.

41. *Lord Morley*: (1838-1923), historian, essayist, and statesman.

BACK TO METHUSELAH (PREFACE)

41. *Brompton Oratory*: an important and fashionable Roman Catholic church in Kensington.

LONDON MUSIC (PREFACE)

42. *Hatch Street*: the street in Dublin where Shaw's family had lived.

43. *Stainer . . . Ouseley*: Professors of Music at Cambridge and Oxford Universities respectively.

plucked: failed in examinations.

MISALLIANCE (PREFACE)

48. *a stalled pound*: an enclosed space ('pound' or 'compound') fitted with 'stalls'—fixed seats.

Squeers and Creakle: stern schoolmasters from Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield* respectively.

just as I escaped Johnson and Carlyle: Shaw probably meant that he had escaped being brought up on the writings of Johnson and Carlyle.

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50. *another Shakespear*: Shakespeare was said by Ben Jonson to know 'little Latin and less Greek'.

SIXTEEN SELF SKETCHES

51. *Newton*: Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). He was not only 'the founder of the modern science of optics' but also a great mathematician and astronomer and dabbled in various other studies, including theology.
John Stuart Mill: (1806-73), famous writer on political and sociological subjects. Educated by his father, he had mastered Greek by the age of eight, when he began Latin, Euclid, and algebra.

SAINT JOAN (PREFACE)

52. *Louis Pasteur* (1822-95) and *Paul Bert* (1833-86): French scientists, the former famous for his work on inoculation and sterilization, the latter for more general research in physiology.

hagiology: the literature concerning the lives and legends of the saints.

iconography: any representation of a subject by means of drawings or illustrations; in this case (as often), the representation of a sacred subject.

Galileo: Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Italian astronomer. For declaring his acceptance of the theory that the earth moves around the sun he was imprisoned for heresy and forced by the Church to retract.

Saint Teresa: (1515-82), Spanish nun famous for her 'visions' and for her reforms within her 'Order'.

hormones . . . hyperpituitary . . . hyperadrenal . . . hysteroid . . . epileptoid. The hormones are minute substances in the body which affect the growth and development of various organs and functions. 'Hyper-' means excessive, and the wrong proportions of hormones may lead to excessive growth of the *pituitary* or *adrenal* glands. *Hysteroid* and *epileptoid* mean showing symptoms of hysteria or epilepsy. Shaw is writing ironically, of course, as the use of the word *asteroid* reveals. This means 'star-like' and is not a term used in medical science.

vaccination and vivisection: subjects on which Shaw held violent opinions which he aired on every possible occasion.

muckraking: muck is the old word for farmyard manure, which was spread over the soil with a rake. The word is

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often used figuratively to mean spreading scandal, but it is also applied by their opponents to reformers who bring social evils into the open.

Edipus complex: (usually spelt *Œdipus*); a term invented by Freud, the pioneer of psychoanalysis, to describe unnatural love of a son for his mother or a daughter for her father. *Œdipus*, a king in Greek legend, ignorant of his parents' identity, killed his father in a fight and then married his mother.

the consecrated wafer: In the Protestant communion service and the Catholic mass, the worshipper is given bread ('wafer') which has been blessed ('consecrated') and wine, representing the body and blood of Christ, in accordance with his injunctions to the disciples at his last meal with them.

53. *thyroid extract*, etc.: from here to the end of the paragraph Shaw is referring sarcastically to the practice of vaccination and inoculation, used in medicine to prevent or cure various illnesses and, in the case of monkey gland, to renew some of the vigour of youth.

quackeries: A quack is a medical fraud or impostor who claims to be able to cure the sick but has little or no medical knowledge or training. Note that although Shaw appears to be admitting some 'genuine scientific physiology' in the practices he has been castigating, he persists in calling them 'quackeries'!

the Pre-Raphaelite movement: the doctrine of certain British artists of the mid-nineteenth century that only in painters before Raphael (1483-1520) was art to be found free from artificiality. Some of the painters, notably Rossetti, also wrote poetry and professed to apply their Pre-Raphaelite theories to their writing.

our Academy pictures: the Pre-Raphaelite movement was largely a revolt against the current theories of art as illustrated by the pictures selected for exhibition by the Royal Academy of Arts, founded by George III in 1768, which still holds an annual exhibition in its London galleries and is still regarded as old-fashioned and conventional by many 'progressive' artists.

Gadarene swine: See St Mark v, 11-16.

Florence Nightingale: (1820-1910), famous for her work for the sick and wounded in the Crimean War (1853-56) in the face of jealousy and ignorance in high quarters. She is regarded as the founder of modern nursing.

panjandrums: a contemptuous word for people who occupy high positions for which they have no qualification or aptitude.

INTELLIGENT WOMAN'S GUIDE

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54. *Nonconformist*: belonging to a church or sect which, although accepting Protestant beliefs in general, does not 'conform' to all the beliefs of the Church of England.
Peter's Pence: used figuratively. 'Peter's Pence' was an annual tribute of one penny paid to Rome on St Peter's day by every family. The tax was abolished in England by Henry VIII in 1534.
the Scarlet Woman: an abusive term for the Roman Catholic Church. Probably derived from 'the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet' of Revelations xlvii, 4; but perhaps also a reference to the scarlet robes of the cardinals.
55. *the three Rs*: a popular term for Reading, (W)riting, and (A)rithmetic.
Copernican astronomy: Copernicus (1473-1543) was a Pole, Nicolas Koppernik, who first stated that the earth moved around the sun. His views were regarded as contrary to Biblical authority and therefore heretical. (See under Galileo, p. 230.)
58. *Voltaire*: pseudonym of François Marie Arouet (1694-1778), famous French philosopher and author.

EVERYBODY'S POLITICAL WHAT'S WHAT

58. *They love authority . . .*: this paragraph is mainly a criticism of the English Public School system. Older boys are given the title and office of 'prefect' (or 'præpostor' in some schools) which carries with it certain privileges as well as certain duties. They may inflict punishment, the severity of which may vary from one school to another, and in some schools may employ younger boys as 'fags' to carry out menial tasks like cleaning boots and shoes, making toast and running errands. The system, which was largely the invention of Dr Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School (1795-1842), is less generally observed than it was in Shaw's day and has undergone many reforms.
59. *Hohenzollerns*: the family name of the rulers of Prussia and of the German Empire after 1871.
Eton and Harrow, with their preparatories: the two schools Shaw names are traditionally but inaccurately regarded as typical of the English Public Schools. Their 'preparatories' are the so-called Preparatory Schools, which, since they are usually boarding schools preparing boys for entry to the Public Schools and catering mainly for the wealthier classes, tend to imitate Public School customs and traditions.

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60. *the Reform Act of 1832*: the first great step in Parliamentary reform, giving the vote for the first time to many sections of the population.

the Old School Tie: by wearing a necktie in the colours and design of their 'Old Boys' Club' men not only show loyalty to their old school but proclaim it to the world. Moreover, men can recognize from the tie other men who were educated at their school, thus forming a kind of secret society and, according to critics like Shaw, giving rise to undesirable favouritism and mutual assistance based solely on the accident of education (or, rather, schooling). This exaggerated loyalty, with all it implies, is referred to generally as 'the Old School tie' and Shaw's use of the phrase to denote the wearer of the tie is unusual. (The Old School tie phenomenon is almost peculiar to Great Britain, although it has its counterpart in the 'fraternities' of American universities, etc.)

61. *Loch Ness monster*: Loch Ness is a long narrow lake in Scotland. From time to time in the present century, stories have been told of a large creature, resembling the 'sea-serpent' of legend, seen swimming in the loch. Although descriptions (and even photographs) of the apparition suggest a creature unknown to modern zoology, scientists remain sceptical, though the evidence suggests to many that there is something there to account for the stories.

Alsatia: a district in London, consisting mainly of narrow streets and dark lanes, where thieves and other refugees from justice could find sanctuary. Once within the boundaries of Alsatia they were safe from the law. The privileges were abolished in 1697 and probably owed their origin to the existence in earlier days of a religious house, the White Friars, on the site.

Junker: a young German nobleman. The name came to be applied to the overbearing aristocracy of Prussia before 1914.

Nordic: typical of the northern Germanic peoples, including the early inhabitants of Scandinavia.

Wotan: (Woden, or Odin), the supreme God of the Nordic people.

French No-God: Shaw here refers to the secular State set up by the French Revolution, but this is an example of his skill as a debater rather than of his customary intellectual honesty. The people of France, as a nation, have been less ready to 'abolish' God than were the extremists of the Revolution.

62. *Rugby . . . Oundle*: two famous Public Schools.

Sanderson: (Frederick William Sanderson, 1857-1922), one of the great Public School headmasters. He was not him-

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self educated in the classical tradition of English Public School and University and, while maintaining the teaching of classics, he broke new ground by developing the teaching of the sciences beyond anything formerly attempted, and he even introduced engineering into the school curriculum.

63. *Butler's Erewhonians*: Samuel Butler (1835-1902) wrote a satirical novel about 'Erewhon' ('nowhere', in reverse), where it was a crime to be ill, crime itself was a form of sickness, religion was a kind of banking system conducted to music, and machines were banished because they showed signs of evolving on their own and becoming the masters.

expropriation: depriving the owner of his property and (usually) transferring it to the State.

LONDON MUSIC

67. *Mozart's funeral*: the account in the *Life of Mozart* by Edward Holmes (1845) reads: 'The funeral... was unostentatious to meanness, and far from such as befitted the obsequies of so great a man.... A common undistinguished grave received the coffin, which was then left without memorial—almost forgotten—for nearly twenty years; and when, in 1808, some enquiries were made as to the precise spot of the interment, all that the sexton could tell was that, at the latter end of 1791, the space about the third and fourth row from the cross was being occupied with graves; but the contents of these graves being from time to time exhumed, nothing could be determined concerning that which was once Mozart.'

MUSIC IN LONDON

67. *Spohr*: Ludwig Spohr (1784-1859), German composer more famous for his oratorios than for his symphonies.
Offenbach: Jacques Offenbach (1819-80), French composer of numerous light operas and one grand opera.
Praxiteles: the greatest of the Greek sculptors (4th cent. B.C.).
Raphael: Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520), a great Italian painter of the Renaissance.
Molière: pseudonym of Jean Baptiste Poquelin (1622-73), French comic and satirical dramatist.
68. *Beethoven's Eroica*: his Symphony No. 3 in E flat.

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Gluck: Cristoph Willibald Gluck (1714-87), German composer, chiefly of opera.

Captain Mayne Reid: (1818-83), his novels were chiefly of exciting adventures, often in wars with Red Indians.

69. *Meyerbeer*: Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864), born Jakob Meyer Beer. Composer of romantic operas, mainly with French words.

Oulibicheff: (1794-1858) Russian author of a now almost forgotten book on Mozart.

70. *Prince's Hall*: one of the London concert halls in Shaw's day.

71. *Cyclopean . . . Titan*: The Cyclopes and Titans were great figures of Greek mythology.

Walkürenritt: the Ride of the Valkyries from Wagner's opera, *The Valkyries* (part of the cycle called *The Ring of the Nibelungs*).

Raff (1822-82), *Liszt* (1811-86), and *Berlioz* (1803-69): three nineteenth-century composers who occasionally produced works requiring 'vigor and passion of the more muscular kind' in their performance. The comparison with 'the finale to the seventh', i.e. Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, would not now be generally considered fair to that great work.

- a *Local Option Bill*: a bill giving powers to a local authority, as distinct from the central government, to decide on the regulation of the drink trade in its own area. Shaw humorously suggests that it might be necessary in the interests of musical 'temperance' to restrict the performance of some of the more passionate (and therefore emotionally intoxicating) works which he has been describing.

Monostatos . . . Queen of Night: characters in Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*.

The true Parnassian air: Parnassus was a mountain in Greece, sacred to the Muses.

- a *true Brahmin*: a member of the priestly caste of Hindus—the highest class. This sentence (from 'Even if I did not . . .') is a good example of Shaw's spirit of fun, which breaks in every now and then on even his most serious criticism.

72. *with their mutes on*: a mute is a small clip made of wood, metal or ivory, which is placed over the bridge of a violin and has the effect of softening the sound. Among its uses is to suggest romantic sentiment.

Marta: the opera *Martha*, by Flotow (1812-83), very popular in Shaw's day and still often performed.

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tonic pedals: devices for sustaining the tonic (i.e. the key-note) by using a lever worked by the foot.

Gounod (1818-93) and *Bizet* (1838-75): French composers, most famous for their operas, including *Faust* (Gounod) and *Carmen* (Bizet).

73. *Covent Garden Theatre*: London's principal Opera House, with a vast stage.

Cibber's Richard III and Garrick's Katharine and Petruchio: Colley Cibber (1671-1757) and David Garrick (1717-79) were eighteenth-century men of the theatre (Garrick was a great actor) who rewrote plays by Shakespeare, believing that as he wrote them they were not suitable for their own times. Cibber's version of *Richard III* was more popular than Garrick's of *The Taming of the Shrew* (which he called *Katharine and Petruchio*).

74. *the Crystal Palace*: a large building of iron and glass originally erected in Hyde Park in 1851 to house the Great Exhibition and subsequently removed to Sydenham, south of London. It stood for nearly a century and was used for concerts, exhibitions, and varied forms of entertainment.

Bulwer Lytton: (1803-73), a prolific novelist, seldom read today; but *The Last Days of Pompeii* was extremely popular up to the present century.

Chambers's Miscellany: 'Chambers' Miscellany of useful and entertaining Tracts', an early 'popular' magazine, was published between 1844 and 1847. Bound volumes are still seen occasionally and there may have been a set in Shaw's home when he was a boy.

Leitmotif: a musical theme in opera always associated with a particular character or scene.

Aïda: Verdi's great opera (1871), set in ancient Egypt.

Nazarene: a follower of Jesus of Nazareth; a Christian.

Gérôme: a French painter (1824-84) best known for a vast historical painting called *The Age of Augustus and the Birth of Christ*.

75. *Salve eternum*: the English equivalent is 'Farewell for ever!' The final chorus of George Fox's (now forgotten) opera *Nydia* is:

Nydia! Lost! Lost!
Farewell! O soul departed,
Farewell, O sacred urn;
Bereaved and broken-hearted
To Earth the mourners turn.
To the dim and dreary shore,
Thou art gone our steps before.
Salve Eternum! Salve Eternum!

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- '*Rosy lips*', etc.: a stanza from a popular students' song, 'Clementine'.
- a *big big D*: a quotation, besides a reference to the singer's loud top note. The Captain in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, one of the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas, claimed that he was not given to bad language, in fact he never ('well, hardly ever') 'used a big big D' (i.e. 'damn!').
76. *Dr Parry*: (1848-1918), Professor at the Royal College of Music and composer of works for choir and orchestra.
- chrysolites*: semi-precious stones.
- Gloucester Festival*: Festivals of music are held from time to time (in some cases at regular intervals of three years or so) in several provincial cities where there is an outstanding organ (and organist), the nucleus at least of a trained choir, and a vigorous musical life. Famous conductors and singers are hired and the best-known composers of the day are frequently invited to write works to be performed for the first time at the Festival.
77. *when you go out into the fields to kill something*: a reference to the pursuits of the English country gentleman—especially hunting and shooting.
78. *There was a man in the land of Uz . . .*: the opening words of the Book of Job.
- the morning stars singing together . . .*: from the Book of Job.
79. *The Man that broke the Bank*: a popular music-hall song of the day: 'The Man that broke the Bank at Monte Carlo'.
- Judith*, *L'Allegro*, etc., *Prometheus*: earlier choral works by Parry.
- Loki*, *Klingsor*: characters in Wagner's operas.
- Iago*: from Verdi's *Otello*.
- Mefistofele*: from an opera with that title by Boito, an Italian.
- Gounod's stage devil*: Mephistopheles in *Faust*.
80. *Brixton and Bayswater*: London suburbs, from which came the members of the Middlesex Choral Union, presumably.
- Mackenzie's Jason*: a choral work by Sir Alexander Mackenzie (1847-1935).

PEN PORTRAITS AND REVIEWS

82. *greenhorns*: raw recruits; simpletons.
- The Maiden's Prayer*: a popular sentimental piano-piece.
- corobbery*: usually spelt *corroboree*. A festive or war dance of the Australian aborigines.
83. *Don Giovanni*: the chief character in Mozart's opera with that title.

Sarastro: a character in Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*.

PLAYS PLEASANT (PREFACE)

87. *the pit*: the seats in the part behind the stalls on the ground floor of the theatre, underneath the circle. Next to the gallery, these were the cheapest seats, but the pit is now usually included in the stalls at higher prices.
88. *actor-manager*: as the word implies, this was one who not only acted in the play, usually taking the leading male part, but was also manager of the theatre in which it was performed.
- Joachim*: (1831-1907), one of the world's greatest violinists.
89. *beanfeasters*: a beanfeast was an annual dinner given by employers to their staffs. The word is also used of any jolly gathering or outing.
- the seamy side of life*: a Shakespearean expression for the less respectable side of life. The seamy side of a garment or cloth was the underside, where the seams could be seen.
- Moy Thomas*: (1828-1910), a minor writer, now forgotten.
90. *Stambouloff*: Bulgarian statesman (1854-95).
- Gladstone*: W. E. Gladstone (1809-98), Liberal Prime Minister and one of the great British statesmen.

OUR THEATRES IN THE NINETIES

91. [Sir] *Henry Irving*: (1838-1905), his original name was John Brodribb, but he later assumed his first stage-name (Henry Irving) by royal licence. His long period as manager of the Lyceum Theatre revolutionized the whole art of acting and stage-craft in England and he became a national idol. He was the first actor ever to be knighted (1895) and this honour is said to have made acting a 'respectable' profession. Shaw, as will be obvious, refused to be over-awed by Irving's reputation and popularity.
- William Archer*: (1856-1924), famous dramatic critic and author and close friend of Shaw.
92. *Mr Gladstone's tree-felling exploits*: the great statesman sought relaxation from the cares of state by chopping down trees.
93. *Sir Joshua Reynolds*: (1723-92), first President of the Royal Academy.
- Sir John Hare* and *Sir Charles Wyndham*: these two actors were eventually knighted, but not 'in the next list of birth-

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day honours'. (A list of honours conferred by the Crown on the occasion of the birthday of the King or Queen. Another list is issued on New Year's Day—the 'New Year Honours List'.)

94. *Slade scholars*: art students at the Slade School of Art in London, named after its founder, a collector and patron of the arts.

Blondin: a tight-rope walker and circus entertainer. *Mr Spurgeon*: a popular preacher. Both, Shaw implies, were members of Irving's profession but not therefore comparable with Irving.

penny-a-liner's fustian: a penny-a-liner was a hack journalist paid at the lowest rate and more concerned with filling as many lines as possible than with simplicity or purity of style. Hence he often wrote 'fustian'—high-flown, bombastic language.

95. *stereo*: short for stereotype, here used figuratively for something repeated pointlessly over and over again.

96. *Mr Conan Doyle*: (afterwards Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), English author (1859-1930), famous as the inventor of Sherlock Holmes.

97. *the Seven Ages of Man*: a reference to Jaques' speech in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

paregoric: an old-fashioned medicine for dulling pain.

98. *'owdacious*: audacious.

Brown Bess: popular name for the old type of musket formerly used in the British Army.

'hamber: amber.

99. *business*: the actor's word for stage action, usually small actions by one character.

The Dook: The Duke (of Wellington).

Mr Pinero: Sir Arthur Pinero (1859-1934), popular British playwright. The occasion was an address to The Players' Club.

the stock-company: a company regularly acting together in a number of plays at a particular theatre. Commonly called repertory company nowadays.

100. *Sullivan* and (101) *Macready*: famous actors of the nineteenth century.

101. *Ireland's Vortigern*: William Henry Ireland produced in 1796 documents said to be concerned with Shakespeare's life, including a play called *Vortigern*, which was produced at Drury Lane Theatre. It was clearly not Shakespeare's work, and when the forgery was exposed Ireland confessed. *Vortigern* was an ancient British king.

102. *the late Wills*: W. G. Wills wrote a play called *Olivia*, an adaptation of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, in which Irving scored a popular success.

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Tennyson: Irving also played the part of Becket in the play of that name by Lord Tennyson. It was not a good stage-play and only Irving's dramatic presentation of the name-part kept it alive in the theatre.

kitcat: a kind of small-sized portrait, so called from the eighteenth-century Kit-Cat Club, where the dining-room was too low to take portraits of any larger size.

Stevenson: presumably Robert Louis Stevenson (1856-94), but the reference is obscure.

103. *diabolus ex machina*: the usual expression is *deus ex machina*, an unlikely event or person introduced suddenly to rescue somebody from an awkward predicament in a novel or play. (Literally 'a god' let down from 'a machine'—a device on the ancient Greek and Roman stage.) Shaw has invented the phrase *diabolus* (i.e. devil) *ex machina*, to imply that the villain Iachimo in *Cymbeline* is only in the play to make mischief and has no other dramatic significance.

105. *British troops in the Peninsula*: i.e. in the Peninsular War (1809-1814), in which the Duke of Wellington and his armies defeated the armies of Napoleon in Spain.

107. *Houndsditch*: a narrow street in London known at the time for the cheap and shoddy goods sold in its shops.

Ibsen: Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) was the Norwegian dramatist who changed the whole face of Western drama. His plays were satirical and had a reforming social message, but the great new thing about them was that they concerned characters who were ordinary men and women, acting and speaking naturally. It was this realism, this absence of 'stagy' artificiality, which appealed most strongly to Shaw and which deeply affected his own work. Ibsen's plays were translated by Shaw's friend William Archer and Shaw did a great deal to get them a hearing in England, in the face of bitter opposition. *Ghosts*, the play here discussed by Shaw, was violently attacked. *Mrs Alving and Pastor Manders* are, of course, characters in the play. *The [Diamond] Jubilee* marked sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign.

Canute: the eleventh-century king of England who was said to have rebuked the flattery of his courtiers, who had maintained that even the waves of the sea would obey him, by having his chair set down by the sea and remaining there until the waves were washing round him.

108. *Spithead*: a stretch of water off the Isle of Wight, the scene of a formal review of the fleet on all such occasions as Jubilees.

Adelphi: a London theatre.

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109. *the First Gentleman in Europe*: a nickname given to George IV.

PLAYS UNPLEASANT (PREFACE)

110. *a cuckoo*: The cuckoo lays its eggs in another bird's nest. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century actor-managers (among them Garrick) rewrote considerable portions of Shakespeare's plays to suit themselves and their times.
111. *prompt copies*: copies used by the prompter and therefore containing the text of the play as it was actually performed.
- the folio*: the First (and later) Folios—collections of most of Shakespeare's plays published after his death.
- Meredith*: George Meredith (1828-1909), English novelist and poet. His novels were often highly complicated in plot and elaborate in language.
- the spectators seated round the reciter*: the front part of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage projected into the audience, so that some members of the latter 'sat round' the actors, who would come forward to the front to deliver certain effective speeches. In addition there were actually a few (expensive) seats on the stage itself.
112. *divination*: literally, discovering the truth by secret and mysterious signs; more loosely, guess-work.
- the Astronomer Royal*: Shaw apparently means 'tell the time from the heavens'—otherwise there is no reason why the Astronomer Royal, or anybody else, should be unable to tell the time in a catacomb.

THE SHEWING-UP OF BLANCO POSNET (PREFACE)

ON THE CENSORSHIP

The censorship of plays has been the cause of much thought and abuse for generations. In 1908 the Liberal Government appointed a committee of selected members of Parliament to consider the whole question of the censorship of 'stage plays' and to make recommendations. This committee interviewed many leading men and women in literary and dramatic circles. Shaw himself, following a precedent that had been set on a similar occasion in 1892, asked permission to submit a written statement, which he would have printed and read to the Committee,

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also presenting each member with a copy. This was granted, but the Statement apparently so shocked the Committee that after all they refused Shaw permission to read it and it was not included in the volume of evidence which accompanied the Committee's published Report. Shaw therefore reprinted his statement as a Preface to his next published play, *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*. Extracts from the Rejected Statement are given here; they may at least explain why the Select Committee was 'shocked'.

114. *leading-strings*: a figurative expression derived from the strings with which children were 'led' when they were learning to walk.

115. *Linnaeus*, etc.: all the writers Shaw mentions were concerned more or less with the scientific conception of the Universe, which was often opposed to Biblical or other scriptural doctrines. Carlyle and Ruskin fit less easily into the list than the others. They were unconventional in their beliefs and outspoken in their opinions but were not primarily scientific in their approach.

Hampden and Washington: John Hampden, in 1637, refused to pay a tax called 'Ship Money' levied by Charles I, on the ground that it was a tax to assist shipbuilding, a trade which was no concern of people living inland, as he did. He lost his case, but it was the first step in the opposition to the monarchy which came to a head in the Civil War and the execution of the king. Washington, in America, led the opposition to the payment of taxes to England without representation in the government which ruled the American colonies and levied the taxes. His stand led to the War of Independence and the birth of the United States of America.

Luther: Once Martin Luther had broken with the Roman Catholic authority he no longer held himself bound by its rules; he had been a monk but gave up the cloister. He now felt himself free to marry, and his bride was a woman who had formerly been a nun but had been converted to Luther's views and also abandoned the cloister. The marriage is said to have been very happy.

Galileo: see page 230.

Clapham: a suburb of South London.

Constantinople: the modern Istanbul. In Shaw's day it was the capital of Turkey and regarded as the chief city of Islam or Mohammedanism.

116. *Whigs*: one of the great political parties of Great Britain. Before Conservative, Liberal, and Labour became the party labels the Whigs represented roughly the more progressive element, the Tories the more conservative.

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their deceased wife's sisters: the Churches have always been opposed to the marriage of a widower to the sister of his first wife and regarded any children of such a marriage as illegitimate. The Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Act of 1907, however, made such marriages legal, though the Church still does not approve as a whole. It would be a very extreme churchman, however, who now considered them incestuous.

Catholic Emancipation: After the abdication of James II in 1688 the country had to face the realization that religious differences might lead to treasonable actions against the State. It therefore decided that no Roman Catholic could hold office in any government or be a Member of Parliament. This prohibition was not removed until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1828. (It would still be impossible for a Roman Catholic to become King or Queen of England.)

Jews: were not admitted to Parliament until 1858.

117. *a few bold Englishwomen:* one of Shaw's unfulfilled prophecies. There are still enough women who prefer side-saddles to justify their continued manufacture.

to affirm instead of to swear: correctly, to make a 'solemn affirmation' instead of to 'swear an oath'. English law allows the alternative to atheists and others who have conscientious objections to the normal procedure of swearing, on oath (*i.e.* by the word of God), that they will speak 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' in giving evidence.

an exemption certificate: Vaccination against smallpox is legally compulsory in Britain, but the law exempts those who have conscientious objections to the practice (as Shaw himself had). A magistrate must grant a certificate of exemption if he is satisfied that the objection is genuine.

118. *Act of 1843:* The Theatre Regulation Act which gave equal rights to all theatres and also set up the still existing procedure for the censorship of plays.

THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS

119. *Bankside:* in Shakespeare's day, and for long afterwards, acting was regarded as a low profession, and theatres were held to be disorderly immoral places. The City of London and its 'Fathers' therefore refused to allow any theatre to be built within its boundaries. Since the public wanted theatres and intended to have them, they were accordingly

built outside the City, but as near to it as was conveniently possible. One of the selected places was on the south, or right, bank of the Thames at Southwark, where there were several theatres.

Blackfriars: this was an exception. In 1596, Richard Burbage, a successful actor—and a friend of Shakespeare's—bought part of a disused monastery in the City and adapted it as a theatre. Possibly the City Fathers were influenced by the known reputation of Burbage and by the fact that the Blackfriars Theatre was indoors, with a roof, in contrast with the theatres on Bankside, which were roofless structures, more or less open-air theatres, and therefore cheaper.

must needs compel men to frequent them: In the reign of Elizabeth I there was a law which compelled attendance at Church; it was not always rigorously enforced.

a pretty youth in petticoats: Female parts were played by boys.

two noble and excellent plays: Shakespeare refers to *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, two plays which Shaw rated highly although they have never been among the more popular of Shakespeare's works.

two of the most damnable foolishnesses: *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Shakespeare took the main story of each of these (as of most of his plays) from various sources.

the groundlings: those who sat or stood on ground level in the lowest-priced part of the playhouse.

one of the same kidney: of the same temperament or type.

120. *the Church taught the people by means of plays*: a reference to the 'miracle plays' in which Biblical stories were enacted, at first in church and later in the churchyard, to mark certain saints' days and other feasts of the Church. As they grew more riotous the Church withdrew its approval of them, and their connection with the Biblical stories, etc., grew more remote, but they continued to please the public and were the forerunners of English drama.

your royal father: Henry VIII who, by severing all connection with Rome and disbanding the monasteries, reduced the income of the Church.

Lord Treasurer: Keeper of the State accounts before the days of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

my unruly Puritans: The Puritans were an extreme sect of Protestants who were opposed to all forms of entertainment and caused trouble by 'unruly' demonstrations against certain practices of the Church which they disapproved.

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three hundred years and more: England still has no National Theatre in the sense Shakespeare meant.

121. *Muscovy*: literally the district or Principality of Moscow, but used for Russia as a whole.

hamlets of the boorish Germans: hamlets (*i.e.* tiny villages) is a picturesque exaggeration; but, when Shaw wrote, a number of quite small German States still had their State theatres.

the Scottish minstrel: It was not until a century after Queen Elizabeth I, however, that Andrew Fletcher, a Scots writer, said: 'I knew a very wise man of Sir Christopher Musgrave's sentiment. He believed, if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws.'

interludes: short plays—sometimes plays 'within a play'.

HEARTBREAK HOUSE (PREFACE)

For four years: *i.e.* 1914-18.

122. *Alboni*: a leading operatic singer. Shaw means that he mistook the audience for the cast—until the curtain rose.

variety theatres: theatres in which, instead of a play, a number of 'turns' were performed—singers, instrumentalists, acrobats, etc. Also called music halls. Sometimes short plays or 'sketches' were (and still are) included in the programme.

flappers: at about this time girls 'put their hair up' at about the age of 18; before that it hung to the shoulders or was worn in plaits. Young girls who had not yet put their hair up were known as flappers. 'Often as innocent as themselves' implies, of course, that often they were not so innocent.

George Barnwell, etc.: examples of crude melodrama popular in the nineteenth century.

123. *hyperaesthesia*: extreme sensitivity.

practicable: real; a window (in this case) which could be used.

an army moves on its belly: an army cannot move effectively unless the soldiers are well fed.

124. *potboilers*: comparatively trivial works which, however, prove popular and therefore 'keep the pot boiling'—*i.e.* bring in enough money to allow the author to live while he is writing.

125. *the dog would never go back . . .*: See 2 Peter ii, 22: 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'

BACK TO METHUSELAH (PREFACE)

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126. *iconographer*: illustrator; one who demonstrates by pictures. *Holinshed's Chronicle and Plutarch's biographies*: two of the sources from which Shakespeare drew freely for the subject-matter of many of his plays. Holinshed's Chronicles were of old English and Scottish history; Plutarch's Lives were of great Greeks and Romans.
The Soliloquy on Suicide: Hamlet's speech (Act III, Sc. i.) beginning 'To be, or not to be'.
127. '*as flies to wanton boys . . .*': from *King Lear* (IV, i).
Congreve (1670-1729) and *Sheridan* (1751-1816): writers of witty and light-hearted comedy.

SAINT JOAN (PREFACE)

128. *stand in queues*: this practice is dying out. At some theatres it is now possible to book in advance any seat in the house; at others those who used to queue for the cheapest seats may now pay a small fee and reserve a stool outside the theatre. They may leave the stool, so long as they return to it shortly before the theatre door is opened.
129. *Ober-Ammergau*: in Bavaria, where the famous Passion Play is performed.
though purgatorial in its Aristotelian moments: presumably Shaw means that when the drama adheres strictly to the rules laid down by Aristotle it can seem as long drawn out as purgatory.

CÆSAR AND CLEOPATRA

133. *white paper on your breasts*: a reference to the evening-dress shirts of the men in the stalls.
134. *beggar on horseback*: the old proverb said: 'Set a beggar on horseback and he'll ride straight to the devil', meaning that one who has had nothing and suddenly acquires riches will go to the bad.
135. *Mammon*: the God of worldly wealth.
Pharsalia: (or Pharsalus), the last battle in which Cæsar defeated Pompey, 48 B.C.

MAN AND SUPERMAN

This speech is from Act III, the scene in Hell, which is devoted mainly to a discussion between The Devil, Don

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Juan, and a statue. (These characters bear some relationship and some resemblance to characters in the rest of the play.)

140. *The Italian*: Dante, in *Inferno*. *The Englishman*: Milton, in *Paradise Lost*.

SAINT JOAN

141. *Hus*: (usually spelt Huss) was a preacher from Bohemia who was declared a heretic by the Church and burnt. His followers, the Hussites, became a formidable army in the cause of Protestantism. Huss lived from 1373 to 1415.
WcLeef: Cauchon's pronunciation of the English Wycliffe (c. 1320-84), religious reformer and translator of the Bible.
die in his bed: Cauchon suggests that in any country but England Wycliffe would have been burnt for heresy.
an Arab camel driver: Mahomet.
Gabriel: one of the archangels.
Saint Catherine: Catherine of Alexandria, beheaded in A.D. 307 because she professed Christianity.
Saint Margaret: an English princess, wife of King Malcolm III of Scotland. After a lifetime of good works she died of grief in 1093 on hearing that her husband had been killed.
Blessed Michael: one of the archangels; mentioned in the Koran also.
Mother of God: the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus.
142. *kennel*: in this case the gutter by the side of the street.
Brother Martin: Martin Ladvenu has shown some sympathy for Joan, asking 'Is there any great harm in the girl's heresy? Is it not merely her simplicity? Many saints have said as much as Joan.'
- the Holy Inquisition*: (also called the Holy Office) a court set up by the Church of Rome to enquire into offences against her teaching and regulations. Torture was used if necessary to extort information or recantation and those found guilty were handed over to the civil authorities to be dealt with according to the law.
144. *unshriven*: without having made the last confession and being absolved.
145. *My sword shall conquer . . .*: the chorus of praise that follows is from the Epilogue, in which Shaw shows how Saint Joan, although apparently a failure in her mission, triumphed after her death. Several of the characters who played a part in her story appear in a series of visions or dreams. Critics with little insight have condemned

the Epilogue and some have admitted that they do not understand it.

THE APPLE CART

147. *a sweated trade*: a trade in which the employees have to work very hard for very low wages.

My civil list: the amount which Parliament grants to the ruling monarch from government funds to meet 'civil' expenses—originally all except military expenses, but today all semi-private expenses such as the upkeep of the royal houses and estates, the entertainment of distinguished guests, certain pensions.

in the city: in business and commerce, conducted in offices in the City of London, and presumably in King Magnus's capital city.

the woolsack: The Lord Chancellor is, in Britain, the highest legal officer in the land and acts as chairman, or Speaker, of the House of Lords. There he sits upon a throne in which is a sack of wool for a cushion. Until the seventeenth century wool was the source of Britain's wealth. For a Lord Chancellor to abandon the woolsack would mean to resign his position as Lord Chancellor and leave the Government service.

chicaneries: dishonest tricks.

a gentleman-statesman: Mr Stanley Baldwin (later Earl Baldwin) (1867-1947), Conservative Prime Minister on several occasions.

148. *who have the Press in their pockets*: who have control of the newspapers. The phrase 'having somebody in their pockets' usually implies that control has been achieved by some slightly dishonourable bargain.

St James's Palace: in London, St James's Palace is regarded as the centre of Court life, although the royal family lives in Buckingham Palace. King Magnus means that if he let it be known that no newspaper magnate's wife and daughters would be invited to Court if the magnate in question offended him, he would retain the support of the Press. In other words, he has the Press in *his* pocket, no less than the 'adventurers' he has just been criticizing.

LONDON MUSIC

151. *Covent Garden*: the Opera House.

Her Majesty's: Her Majesty's Theatre—first named after Queen Victoria, renamed His Majesty's after her death

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and until the accession of Elizabeth II. It is not owned, however, by either the monarch or the State.

152. *debutante*: the word was originally used for a young lady appearing at Court to be 'presented' to the Sovereign. Here Shaw uses it for a young singer or other performer, who is making her *début* before the public.

Arditi's Il Bacio: Il Bacio (The Kiss) was a popular composition (a 'vocal waltz') by Luigi Arditi (1822-1903).

153. *after these dissipations*: Shaw had been to the ballet.

Fitzroy Square: in the west-central district of London, nearer the theatres and concert halls than the south-west district where Shaw had previously lived.

hippodrome: originally a circus for horse-races; Shaw used the word to suggest any circular empty space. There was less traffic in Fitzroy Square in 1890 than there would be today.

Vincenti: the principal dancer at the evening's performance.

I've bin: I have been.

macadam: hard road-surface, named after the engineer, John McAdam, who invented the process.

I allow . . . I'll lay: I admit . . . I'll bet.

PYGMALION

154. *Eliza*: this is the flower-girl with an uneducated London ('cockney') street-accent whom Professor Higgins had taught to speak perfectly.

Covent Garden . . . What a damned thing!: Higgins suddenly remembers the night he first met Eliza on the steps of Covent Garden Opera House. Freddy Eynsford-Hill had also been there.

155. *Killing!*: Freddy thinks Eliza is being purposely humorous; he considers her performance 'killingly funny'.

[*darkly*]: Shaw means that the actress is to suggest something sinister in the way she makes this remark—mainly to prepare the audience for what is to follow.

they done the old woman in: they murdered her. Not only is the expression itself very 'common' (*i.e.* low-class) but Eliza also uses—as many cockneys still do—'done' instead of 'did'.

she came to so sudden: she revived so suddenly.

What become . . .: illiterate use of the present tense for the past.

Somebody pinched it: somebody stole it.

small talk: light conversation; gossip.

156. *Something chronic*: correctly used (of illness, etc.), 'chronic' means long-standing, as opposed to 'acute'. Used col-

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loquially it means simply 'bad' or 'awful'. 'Something chronic' is a familiar expression among uneducated Londoners.

It never did him no harm: Double negative. ('It did him no harm.')

what I could see: i.e., from what I could see.

regular: regularly.

On the burst: on the spree, on a wild drinking-bout.

If I was doing it proper . . .: Eliza, carried away—and now suspecting she is being laughed at—forgets everything she has been taught. She should have said 'If I was doing it properly, what were you laughing at?'

Not bloody likely: The word 'bloody' caused a sensation which filled the newspapers on the morning after the first performance and was the talk of London. It was a normal word for Eliza to use and quite meaningless, like most 'swear-words'; but the public pretended to be shocked and has ever since greeted the word in this context with extravagant amusement.

ANDROCLES AND THE LION

Critics have complained about the 'low comedy' of this play, and especially of this Prologue, since the theme of the play as a whole is religion. But Shaw intentionally set out to mix farce with serious discussion because he believed that people will pay more attention to serious issues if they are at the same time kept in a good humor. The mediæval 'miracle plays' and 'moralities' were basically religious in their origins and purpose although they included elements of low comedy and knockabout farce.

158. *butter wouldnt melt in your mouth:* you could not seem more gentle and kind. A popular colloquialism.

159. *dont take on:* don't upset yourself, or be distressed.

160. *um's tootsums wootsums:* Androcles speaks to the lion in 'baby talk'—the language little children use to animals and dolls, and parents sometimes use to children. In this language feet are often 'tootsies' or 'tootsy-wootsies'.

make velvet paws: a child's command to a kitten to draw in its claws when playing.

PEN PORTRAITS AND REVIEWS

162. *Macbeth:* Shaw was reviewing (in a weekly paper, *The Nation*) a book by Arnold Bennett called *The Author's Craft*. Bennett had written that 'one reason why a play

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is easier to write than a novel' is that 'a play is shorter than a novel'. Shaw called this 'a stroke of novelist's bluff' and proceeded to show how much easier it was to write a novel than a play, although a novel is indeed longer than a play.

164. *the Forth Bridge*: the famous iron bridge which spans the wide River Forth near Edinburgh; the reference by Shaw in this context is an intentionally absurd anachronism.

Tak two coos, Taffy: 'Take two cows, Taffy.' This is one of the many phrases which are supposed to represent the 'song' of the wood-pigeon. 'Tak' and 'coos' are Scots; 'Taffy' is a Welsh nickname (for David).

DOCTORS' DELUSIONS

169. *The King and the Doctors*: this story is a fair example of Shaw's general attitude to the medical profession, but is written with more good humor than most of his remarks on the subject. It appeared at a time when King George V, convalescing from an illness, had gone to stay on the south coast of England.

171. *Stow that*: a slang expression meaning 'That's enough of that'.

bunk: humbug; empty talk.

172. *materia medica*: the whole body of materials or substances used in medicine.

homeopaths: those who follow homeopathy—a system which treats diseases by administering, in minute doses, drugs which would produce in normal persons symptoms like those of the disease which is being treated.

a famous motor-car manufacturer: Henry Ford, who once said 'History is bunk'. He claimed that the sentence had been torn from its context and did not represent his views accurately.

admitted to our communion: One of Shaw's complaints against the medical profession was that it refused to allow any 'doctor' to practice who had not obtained the qualifications deemed essential, however gifted or successful the unqualified man might prove himself to be. A homeopath (unless he also possessed the recognized medical degrees) would not be recognized by the medical profession.

173. *wash-out*: failure; disappointment.

only about a dozen years ago: another of Shaw's complaints; the profession seemed to him too slow in acting on new discoveries especially if the discoveries came from abroad.

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our Vatican: used figuratively here to denote the doctors' highest authority (the British Medical Council).

174. *Quacks*: unqualified 'doctors'; ignorant impostors who claim to have medical knowledge and skill.

Christian Science: a religious sect which believes that all illness is an error of the mind and may be cured by right thinking on Christian principles.

Who's Who: a reference book, published annually, giving brief biographies of outstanding people in most walks of life.

175. *give you the sack*: dismiss you.

MAN AND SUPERMAN

179. *The Life Force*: 'Though he used the word God, Shaw rejected the idea of God as a person. He more frequently employed the term "Life Force"—the vital spirit in mankind through which "we evolve towards greater abundance of life".' (A. C. Ward.)

bob: the weight on the pendulum which decides the rate at which it swings (oscillates).

180. *husbandman*: an old and more stately word for a farmer, or one who lives by tilling the soil.

no-whither: to no place. 'Nowhere' would be the word normally used.

On the rocks: i.e. to shipwreck.

BACK TO METHUSELAH (PREFACE)

Evolution: In this long play, in five parts, and in the long Preface to it, Shaw dilates upon his gospel of Creative Evolution, or the Life Force. 'In Darwin's theory the Survival of the Fittest comes about through the displacing of the weak by the strong, but the idea of Shaw's Creative Evolution is that the fittest are those who survive by superior intelligence and by the exercise of will power. Shaw held that if we desire with passionate strength of will to be better and finer people and to live longer, in fact to be changed into Supermen, and if that strength of will is passed on to our descendants, what we desire will ultimately be brought about. The nations would then be ruled in wisdom and virtue, and war and all other evils would vanish from the earth.' (A. C. Ward.)

Lamarck: French naturalist (1744-1829) whose ideas on evolution are approximately those set out here by Shaw, much simplified, of course, for the general reader. These

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views are also those of Samuel Butler (see page 234), a writer who strongly influenced Shaw in many ways.

at the first blush: at first glance.

supine: lying flat.

occiput: the back of the skull.

182. *amæba*: a microscopic form of animal life.

183. *Sanzio*: the family surname of Raphael. (See page 234.)

184. *three-score-and-ten*: seventy. (A score is twenty.) Usually regarded as the average length of life of a man—from Psalm 90: 'The days of our years are threescore years and ten'.

from hand to mouth: literally, eating one's food as soon as it is gathered (or killed). Figuratively, without thought for the future, or (as in this case) making things up as one goes along.

thesaurus: a treasure-house. A name given to some kinds of dictionary.

Mr Bernard Partridge: British artist, later Sir Bernard (1861-1945), famous as a leading cartoonist for *Punch*.

185. *Mr Cyril Scott*: (born 1879), British pianist and composer. *Sir Edward Elgar*: (1857-1934), one of England's greatest composers.

with a mark: the 'mark' is usually a cross. The law allows those who cannot write their names to make a cross or 'mark' and to have this mark attested as the person's 'signature' by another person.

how many beans make five: to say that somebody knows how many beans make five is a popular way of saying that he has his wits about him and is no fool. Here Shaw uses the expression a little more specifically to mean 'knows how to count'.

Mezzofanti: (1774-1849) Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and at one time chief keeper at the Vatican Library.

SAINT JOAN (PREFACE)

186. *will not wash*: slang for 'will not do'—is not good enough, or is untrue.

187. *Brocken spectres*: in the Harz Mountains of Germany there is a high peak named the Brocken. Shadows of climbers on the Brocken are thrown on the mist above neighboring peaks, with sinister effect.

Rationalist and Materialist: holding religious views based on reason and on material things, rather than on spiritual beliefs.

Luther . . . threw his inkhorn at the devil: an inkhorn was,

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as the word implies, a horn in which ink was carried. Whether Shaw uses this expression figuratively—*i.e.* Martin Luther (1483-1546) attacked the devil in his writings—or whether he refers to some obscure legend is not clear. *any other Augustinian monk*: Luther was a monk of the Augustinian Order before his famous attack on the Church of Rome.

INTELLIGENT WOMAN'S GUIDE

188. *sanctions*: a useful word which can mean not only what is or is not allowed, but the penalties which can be imposed for breaking the law. Here Shaw seems to use both meanings at once.

EVERYBODY'S POLITICAL WHAT'S WHAT

189. *Anthropomorphic*: ascribing to the Deity human attributes and qualities.
Secularists: those who believe that morality should be based on human well-being in this world and not on religious ideas or theories of an after life. (The word is also used for those who believe that education should be entirely divorced from any creed or form of organized religion.)
 190. *prayee*: the one to whom the prayer is addressed. (One of Shaw's invented words.)
Francis: St Francis of Assisi.
Our Lady: the Virgin Mary.
Jains: an Indian sect holding views similar to the Buddhists'.
Stonyhurst: a Roman Catholic Public School.

ESSAYS IN FABIAN SOCIALISM

193. *workhouse*: under English law, in Shaw's day, local authorities had to appoint Guardians (*i.e.* Guardians of the Poor), who were not expected to be particularly indulgent to the poor. They could give them temporary lodging but the paupers had to help towards the cost of their keep by working. The houses in which the Guardians lodged the homeless poor who were brought to their notice were therefore called workhouses.
infirmiry: similarly the Guardians had to look after the sick and aged poor if there was nowhere else for them to go. To call the places where these unfortunates were looked

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after by the name of hospitals would have brought discredit on these latter, since hospitals were for those who could afford to pay, if only a little. So the places for the sick and aged poor, which were often cheerless and depressing, were called infirmaries. Both these names ('work-house' and 'infirmary') have been abolished and the poor, whether sick or well, are treated with much greater humanity today.

casual labor (Shaw's spelling of 'labour'): irregular employment which lasted only while the job lasted. Dock labour is better organized now and a large part of the labour employed is permanent, *i.e.* wages are paid at a weekly rate irrespective of the actual number of hours spent loading or unloading. But there is still much casual labour, which attracts some of the least desirable elements of the population to the dock areas.

sixpence an hour: not such a bad rate in 1904 as it may seem. It would be roughly equivalent to nearly 4s. an hour today.

loaf: 'hang about' waiting for something to do.

the able-bodied ward: the part of the workhouse for men (and women) who were fit and well enough to work.

futile: pointless work like chopping wood or cleaning rooms which were already clean—anything to keep the men 'working'.

194. *rates*: taxes paid not to the central government but to the local authority, based usually on the value of house-property or land owned or occupied by the rate-payer.

municipal trading: participation by a municipality (*i.e.* a local authority such as a Borough Council or a County Council) in certain trades usually conducted by private business interests. The Fabians (a Socialist society of which Shaw was a member) believed that certain trades, *e.g.* the (alcoholic) drink trade, ought not to be in private hands because of their opportunities of exploiting human weakness for profit; while others, so the Fabians declared, could be more efficiently managed by public bodies than by private companies.

The dividends: the share of profits paid out to those who have invested money in a company, according to the amount they have invested. Shaw's argument is that if the dock companies had treated dock labourers more generously the latter would not have had to seek assistance from public funds. Though the companies' profits would have been smaller, and the dividends therefore lower, why, he argues, should the rich (those who receive the dividends) prosper at the expense of the rate-payers?

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Under municipal trading the rate-payers' money could have been spent on improving the lot of the dock labourers instead of on workhouses and infirmaries.
the total number of pence in the pound: a reference to the basis of rate-assessment.

THE APPLE CART (PREFACE)

195. *as you know*: this part of the Preface is from a broadcast talk on Democracy given by Shaw in October 1929.
Demos: Greek for 'the people'.
hot air merchant: one who deals in empty talk.
196. *every five years or so*: Under the constitutional law of Britain Parliament must be dissolved at the end of five years (if it has not been defeated and has not resigned before the end of that period) and a new Government chosen at a General Election.
six hundred: there are about 625 members of the House of Commons.
Dean Inge (pronounced Ing): (1860-1954), famous Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, London, who held unorthodox views on many social and political subjects and wrote about them freely in the press and in several books.
197. *grafters*: people who secure their ends by bribery or other corrupt means.
lost their heads: the phrase means 'lost their normal powers of reasoning and self-control'.

EVERYBODY'S POLITICAL WHAT'S WHAT

198. *volcanic pressure*: from time to time schemes have been put forward for harnessing the power of active volcanoes. Shaw would most probably have added atomic power to his list if he had been writing today.
199. *ab initio*: from the beginning, in the first place.
serfs: 'landless' workers under the Feudal System.
en masse: in the lump; as a whole. This theory that poverty is a crime is elaborated by Undershaft in *Major Barbara*.

CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION

204. *sparring exhibition*: Today the words 'sparring exhibition' would suggest an idle interchange of light blows to amuse the audience—exactly the opposite of what was going on between Paradise and Cashel Byron. At the time Shaw wrote, however, this was a familiar colloquialism for a boxing match.
Time was called: the boxers have had a short rest between

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rounds and have now been called back into the ring.

A SUNDAY ON THE SURREY HILLS

This light-hearted essay, reprinted in *The Black Girl and Some Lesser Tales*, was one of Shaw's earliest published works. It appeared in a London evening paper in 1888, two years before he became a regular music critic.

206. *cockney*: Londoner. Sometimes restricted to those born 'within sound of Bow Bells' (Bow Church is in Cheapside, near the centre of the City of London), but loosely applied to any Londoner.

Henry Salt: a friend of Shaw's and a fellow Fabian.

Surrey: the county on the south side of the Thames and including part of the County of London. Though so near the capital, Surrey has retained much of its rural nature. Tilford is a village near Farnham, a small town.

fungi: e.g. mushrooms and toadstools. Humorous exaggeration.

rurophobia . . . rurolatry: Shaw's words (formed from 'rural') for hatred and worship, respectively, of the countryside.

Thames Embankment: a road that runs, with many interruptions, alongside the Thames in London, on its left, or north, bank.

a scenic imposture called Hindhead: most people are impressed with the scenery around Hindhead, in Surrey. (So, in all probability, was Shaw.)

the downs—gentle uplands—are a feature of the landscape.

the Portsmouth Road: the road from London to Portsmouth.

The Knightsbridge end of it, which Shaw preferred, is in the part of London where he was living at the time.

207. *Waterloo*: the London terminus of the railway into Surrey.
gamboge: a yellow pigment used in painting. The colour of mud.

curmudgeonism: another of Shaw's own words. A curmudgeon is a bad-tempered, aggressive, greedy fellow.

broken on the wheel: in ancient torture the victim was stretched and bound to a wheel, when his longer bones were broken by blows with an iron bar.

treadmill: an ancient instrument of prison discipline. By treading on steps which continually disappeared beneath him as he trod, the prisoner turned a wheel—to grind corn or to raise water from a well, or simply to tire out the prisoner.

Gothic arch: the pointed, as compared with the Norman (rounded) arch. This was obviously an ancient 'hump-backed' bridge.

meeting house: the nonconformist's chapel or place of worship.

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208. *fungology*: the study of fungi.
spirits of camphor: an old-fashioned remedy for a cold.
peat: turf. In Ireland and some other countries it is cut in blocks, dried, and burnt as fuel.
served out: received due punishment.
209. *vernal*: springtime. The trip took place in April.

CANDIDA

- Shaw took great pains over details, and some of his stage-directions are short essays in themselves. Other playwrights, notably J. M. Barrie, followed his example.
210. *Mayfair and St. James's*: the fashionable 'west end' of London.
Radical: the Radicals were the extreme, left-wing Liberals before there was a Labour Party.
a natural vermin preserve, etc.: an example of Shaw's keen sense of authentic detail. Most London parks contained a sandpit for children; and many London parents forbade their children to play in them as they were believed (not without reason) to be a breeding-ground ('preserve') for fleas, lice, and other vermin (the 'petty fauna').
Kingsland, Hackney, Hoxton: working-class districts of north-east London.
211. *kiosk*: 'shelter' or resting-place. Sometimes for the sale of sweets, cigarettes, etc.
Parsonage: the residence of the parson. More usually called the vicarage or the rectory.
Maurice: Rev. F. D. Maurice (1805-72), a famous clergyman of his day, pioneer of working men's education and of Christian Socialism.
Progress and Poverty, etc.: standard works, as Shaw points out, of nineteenth-century Socialism.
a cellaret: a kind of sideboard, with compartments to hold wine-bottles. Obsolete.
japanned: painted with a hard black varnish.
autotype: a process by which paintings were reproduced photographically in a dull shade, usually of brown.
Titian: Tiziano Vecelli (1477-1576), one of the greatest of Italian painters.
212. *Assumption of the Virgin*: a painting showing the reception of the Virgin Mary into heaven.
Guild of St Matthew: a Society founded in 1877 to support the Christian Socialist movement.
Christian Social Union: a similar organization.

MAN AND SUPERMAN

213. *To Octavius . . .*: Note the 'poetry' in Shaw's description of a

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man in love. See Introduction, page 16.

214. *Mrs Whitefield*: Ann's mother.

THE SANITY OF ART

'An Exposure of the Current Nonsense about Artists being Degenerate.' This essay is reprinted in *Major Critical Essays*.

214. *lusty crows*: loud, boastful people, like cocks.
'not for an age, but for all time': Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare, 'not of an age, but for all time'.
peopling that same Athens, etc.: a reference to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although the scene is laid in a wood near Athens many of the characters are frankly Elizabethans from Shakespeare's native county.
Ibsen photographing the local doctors, etc.: Ibsen's characters, on the other hand, were true and faithful portraits of typical Norwegians of his own day.
vestrymen: members of a vestry, i.e. a parish meeting which looks after some of the affairs of a parish; so-called because it used to meet in the vestry of the parish church, a room originally used by the clergy as a dressing-room.
215. *Carpaccio*: (1465-1522), Italian painter.
St Ursula: an early Christian martyr.

MISALLIANCE (PREFACE)

216. *fools' paradises*: a fool's paradise is a state of bliss which rests on fanciful foundations and is likely to be ended at any moment by cold facts.
Utopias: imaginary countries in which everything is ideally organized and managed. From *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More (1478-1555).
217. *bounce*: swagger; boastful lying.
thin red line: red was the colour of the soldiers' tunics. 'The thin red line of heroes' is an echo of a line by Kipling, though 'thin red line' was an expression used much earlier by the war correspondent Sir William Russell in a book on the Crimean War.
the scum of the earth: the roughest, dirtiest, most immoral element of the population. Wellington declared that his soldiers were mainly of this type, and the conditions under which they served made it unlikely that men of any feeling who could get any other employment would ever join the army. But Wellington understood his men and respected their finer qualities in action; while they worshipped their Commander-in-Chief.

SAINT JOAN (PREFACE)

218. *coining*: issuing counterfeit money.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb: (later Lord and Lady Passfield).

Sidney Webb (1859-1947) was a civil servant who wrote extensively, with the aid of his wife, on social and economic questions. He was a friend of Shaw's and introduced him to the Fabian Society. He was also one of the founders of the London School of Economics.

Richard Wagner: (1813-83), the popular German composer and writer. Shaw did much to popularize his work in England.

THE MILLIONAIRESS (PREFACE)

219. *Bosses*: those who are in a position to give orders.

the triple crown: the Pope's tiara.

hereditary peer: one who has inherited his peerage from his ancestors.

220. *Rothschild*: the Jewish family who acquired enormous wealth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mainly by lending large sums to various states and reigning monarchs.

made hay: to make hay of something is to confuse and thoroughly upset it.

Henry IV: Henry of Bolingbroke who deposed and succeeded Richard II.

221. *maîtresse femme*: a masterful woman.

Mermaid Tavern: a tavern, or drinking house, which stood in Bread Street, in the City of London, in the seventeenth century and was frequented by Shakespeare and other writers of the day.

Tsarina: wife of the Tsar (or Czar), former ruler of Russia.

liquidate: have removed. A polite way of saying 'murder'.

Gresham law (or Gresham's Law): Put simply—'that bad money drives out good'; but it is in fact a more difficult and technical matter.

Joseph Smith the Mormon: Joseph Smith, author of the *Book of Mormon* and founder of the religious sect called the Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, who established a prosperous community in Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A. He was killed by an anti-Mormon mob in 1844.

