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George Bernard Shaw

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Introduction to the First Edition

Most people either say that they agree with Bernard Shaw or that they do not understand him. I am the only person who understands him, and I do not agree with him.

G. K. C.

The Problem of a Preface

A peculiar difficulty arrests the writer of this rough study at the very start. Many people know Mr. Bernard Shaw chiefly as a man who would write a very long preface even to a very short play. And there is truth in the idea; he is indeed a very prefatory sort of person. He always gives the explanation before the incident; but so, for the matter of that, does the Gospel of St. John. For Bernard Shaw, as for the mystics, Christian and heathen (and Shaw is best described as a heathen mystic), the philosophy of facts is anterior to the facts themselves. In due time we come to the fact, the incarnation; but in the beginning was the Word.

This produces upon many minds an impression of needless preparation and a kind of bustling prolixity. But the truth is that the very rapidity of such a man's mind makes him seem slow in getting to the point. It is positively because he is quick-witted that he is long-winded. A quick eye for ideas may actually make a writer slow in reaching his goal, just as a quick eye for landscapes might make a motorist slow in reaching Brighton. An original man has to pause at every allusion or simile to re-explain historical parallels, to re-shape distorted words. Any ordinary leader-writer (let us say) might write swiftly and smoothly something like this: "The element of religion in the Puritan rebellion, if hostile to art, yet saved the movement from some of the evils in which the French Revolution involved morality." Now a man like Mr. Shaw, who has his own views on everything, would be forced to make the sentence long and broken instead of swift and smooth. He would say something like: "The element of religion, as I explain religion, in the Puritan rebellion (which you wholly misunderstand) if hostile to art--that is what I mean by art--may have saved it from some evils (remember my definition of evil) in which the French Revolution--of which I have my own opinion--involved morality, which I will define for you in a minute." That is the worst of being a really universal sceptic and philosopher; it is such slow

work. The very forest of the man's thoughts chokes up his thoroughfare. A man must be orthodox upon most things, or he will never even have time to preach his own heresy.

Now the same difficulty which affects the work of Bernard Shaw affects also any book about him. There is an unavoidable artistic necessity to put the preface before the play; that is, there is a necessity to say something of what Bernard Shaw's experience means before one even says what it was. We have to mention what he did when we have already explained why he did it. Viewed superficially, his life consists of fairly conventional incidents, and might easily fall under fairly conventional phrases. It might be the life of any Dublin clerk or Manchester Socialist or London author. If I touch on the man's life before his work, it will seem trivial; yet taken with his work it is most important. In short, one could scarcely know what Shaw's doings meant unless one knew what he meant by them. This difficulty in mere order and construction has puzzled me very much. I am going to overcome it, clumsily perhaps, but in the way which affects me as most sincere. Before I write even a slight suggestion of his relation to the stage, I am going to write of three soils or atmospheres out of which that relation grew. In other words, before I write of Shaw I will write of the three great influences upon Shaw. They were all three there before he was born, yet each one of them is himself and a very vivid portrait of him from one point of view. I have called these three traditions: "The Irishman," "The Puritan," and "The Progressive." I do not see how this prefatory theorising is to be avoided; for if I simply said, for instance, that Bernard Shaw was an Irishman, the impression produced on the reader might be remote from my thought and, what is more important, from Shaw's. People might think, for instance, that I meant that he was "irresponsible." That would throw out the whole plan of these pages, for if there is one thing that Shaw is not, it is irresponsible. The responsibility in him rings like steel. Or, again, if I simply called him a Puritan, it might mean something about nude statues or "prudes on the prowl." Or if I called him a Progressive, it might be supposed to mean that he votes for Progressives at the County Council election, which I very much doubt. I have no other course but this: of briefly explaining such matters as Shaw himself might explain them. Some fastidious persons may object to my thus putting the moral in front of the fable. Some may imagine in their innocence that they already understand the word Puritan or the yet more mysterious word Irishman. The only person, indeed, of whose approval I feel fairly certain is Mr. Bernard Shaw himself, the man of many introductions.

The Irishman

The English public has commonly professed, with a kind of pride, that it cannot understand Mr. Bernard Shaw. There are many reasons for it which ought to be adequately considered in such a book as this. But the first and most obvious reason is the mere statement that George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. At least one reason why Englishmen cannot understand Mr. Shaw is that Englishmen have never taken the trouble to understand Irishmen. They will sometimes be generous to Ireland; but never just to Ireland. They will speak to Ireland; they will speak for Ireland; but they will not hear Ireland speak. All the real amiability which most Englishmen undoubtedly feel towards Irishmen is lavished upon a class of Irishmen which unfortunately does not exist. The Irishman of the English farce, with his brogue, his buoyancy, and his tender-hearted irresponsibility, is a man who ought to have been thoroughly pampered with praise and sympathy, if he had only existed to receive them. Unfortunately, all the time that we were creating a comic Irishman in fiction, we were creating a tragic Irishman in fact. Never perhaps has there been a situation of such excruciating cross-purposes even in the three-act farce. The more we saw in the Irishman a sort of warm and weak fidelity, the more he regarded us with a sort of icy anger. The more the oppressor looked down with an amiable pity, the more did the oppressed look down with a somewhat unamiable contempt. But, indeed, it is needless to say that such comic cross-purposes could be put into a play; they have been put into a play. They have been put into what is perhaps the most real of Mr. Bernard Shaw's plays, John Bull's Other Island.

It is somewhat absurd to imagine that any one who has not read a play by Mr. Shaw will be reading a book about him. But if it comes to that it is (as I clearly perceive) absurd to be writing a book about Mr. Bernard Shaw at all. It is indefensibly foolish to attempt to explain a man whose whole object through life has been to explain himself. But even in nonsense there is a need for logic and consistency; therefore let us proceed on the assumption that when I say that all Mr. Shaw's blood and origin may be found in John Bull's Other Island, some reader may answer that he does not know the play. Besides, it is more important to put the reader right about England and Ireland even than to put him right about Shaw. If he reminds me that this is a book about Shaw, I can only assure him that I will reasonably, and at proper intervals, remember the fact.

Mr. Shaw himself said once, "I am a typical Irishman; my family came from

Yorkshire." Scarcely anyone but a typical Irishman could have made the remark. It is in fact a bull, a conscious bull. A bull is only a paradox which people are too stupid to understand. It is the rapid summary of something which is at once so true and so complex that the speaker who has the swift intelligence to perceive it, has not the slow patience to explain it. Mystical dogmas are much of this kind. Dogmas are often spoken of as if they were signs of the slowness or endurance of the human mind. As a matter of fact, they are marks of mental promptitude and lucid impatience. A man will put his meaning mystically because he cannot waste time in putting it rationally. Dogmas are not dark and mysterious; rather a dogma is like a flash of lightning--an instantaneous lucidity that opens across a whole landscape. Of the same nature are Irish bulls; they are summaries which are too true to be consistent. The Irish make Irish bulls for the same reason that they accept Papal bulls. It is because it is better to speak wisdom foolishly, like the Saints, rather than to speak folly wisely, like the Dons.

This is the truth about mystical dogmas and the truth about Irish bulls; it is also the truth about the paradoxes of Bernard Shaw. Each of them is an argument impatiently shortened into an epigram. Each of them represents a truth hammered and hardened, with an almost disdainful violence until it is compressed into a small space, until it is made brief and almost incomprehensible. The case of that curt remark about Ireland and Yorkshire is a very typical one. If Mr. Shaw had really attempted to set out all the sensible stages of his joke, the sentence would have run something like this: "That I am an Irishman is a fact of psychology which I can trace in many of the things that come out of me, my fastidiousness, my frigid fierceness and my distrust of mere pleasure. But the thing must be tested by what comes from me; do not try on me the dodge of asking where I came from, how many batches of three hundred and sixty-five days my family was in Ireland. Do not play any games on me about whether I am a Celt, a word that is dim to the anthropologist and utterly unmeaning to anybody else. Do not start any drivelling discussions about whether the word Shaw is German or Scandinavian or Iberian or Basque. You know you are human; I know I am Irish. I know I belong to a certain type and temper of society; and I know that all sorts of people of all sorts of blood live in that society and by that society; and are therefore Irish. You can take your books of anthropology to hell or to Oxford." Thus gently, elaborately and at length, Mr. Shaw would have explained his meaning, if he had thought it worth his while. As he did not he merely flung the symbolic, but very complete sentence, "I am a typical Irishman; my family came from Yorkshire."

What then is the colour of this Irish society of which Bernard Shaw, with all his individual oddity, is yet an essential type? One generalisation, I think,

may at least be made. Ireland has in it a quality which caused it (in the most ascetic age of Christianity) to be called the "Land of Saints"; and which still might give it a claim to be called the Land of Virgins. An Irish Catholic priest once said to me, "There is in our people a fear of the passions which is older even than Christianity." Everyone who has read Shaw's play upon Ireland will remember the thing in the horror of the Irish girl at being kissed in the public streets. But anyone who knows Shaw's work will recognize it in Shaw himself. There exists by accident an early and beardless portrait of him which really suggests in the severity and purity of its lines some of the early ascetic pictures of the beardless Christ. However he may shout profanities or seek to shatter the shrines, there is always something about him which suggests that in a sweeter and more solid civilisation he would have been a great saint. He would have been a saint of a sternly ascetic, perhaps of a sternly negative type. But he has this strange note of the saint in him: that he is literally unworldly. Worldliness has no human magic for him; he is not bewitched by rank nor drawn on by conviviality at all. He could not understand the intellectual surrender of the snob. He is perhaps a defective character; but he is not a mixed one. All the virtues he has are heroic virtues. Shaw is like the Venus of Milo; all that there is of him is admirable.

But in any case this Irish innocence is peculiar and fundamental in him; and strange as it may sound, I think that his innocence has a great deal to do with his suggestions of sexual revolution. Such a man is comparatively audacious in theory because he is comparatively clean in thought. Powerful men who have powerful passions use much of their strength in forging chains for themselves; they alone know how strong the chains need to be. But there are other souls who walk the woods like Diana, with a sort of wild chastity. I confess I think that this Irish purity a little disables a critic in dealing, as Mr. Shaw has dealt, with the roots and reality of the marriage law. He forgets that those fierce and elementary functions which drive the universe have an impetus which goes beyond itself and cannot always easily be recovered. So the healthiest men may often erect a law to watch them, just as the healthiest sleepers may want an alarum clock to wake them up. However this may be, Bernard Shaw certainly has all the virtues and all the powers that go with this original quality in Ireland. One of them is a sort of awful elegance; a dangerous and somewhat inhuman daintiness of taste which sometimes seems to shrink from matter itself, as though it were mud. Of the many sincere things Mr. Shaw has said he never said a more sincere one than when he stated he was a vegetarian, not because eating meat was bad morality, but because it was bad taste. It would be fanciful to say that Mr. Shaw is a vegetarian because he comes of a race of vegetarians, of peasants who are compelled to accept the simple life in the shape of

potatoes. But I am sure that his fierce fastidiousness in such matters is one of the allotropic forms of the Irish purity; it is to the virtue of Father Matthew what a coal is to a diamond. It has, of course, the quality common to all special and unbalanced types of virtue, that you never know where it will stop. I can feel what Mr. Shaw probably means when he says that it is disgusting to feast off dead bodies, or to cut lumps off what was once a living thing. But I can never know at what moment he may not feel in the same way that it is disgusting to mutilate a pear-tree, or to root out of the earth those miserable mandrakes which cannot even groan. There is no natural limit to this rush and riotous gallop of refinement.

But it is not this physical and fantastic purity which I should chiefly count among the legacies of the old Irish morality. A much more important gift is that which all the saints declared to be the reward of chastity: a queer clearness of the intellect, like the hard clearness of a crystal. This certainly Mr. Shaw possesses; in such degree that at certain times the hardness seems rather clearer than the clearness. But so it does in all the most typical Irish characters and Irish attitudes of mind. This is probably why Irishmen succeed so much in such professions as require a certain crystalline realism, especially about results. Such professions are the soldier and the lawyer; these give ample opportunity for crimes but not much for mere illusions. If you have composed a bad opera you may persuade yourself that it is a good one; if you have carved a bad statue you can think yourself better than Michael Angelo. But if you have lost a battle you cannot believe you have won it; if your client is hanged you cannot pretend that you have got him off.

There must be some sense in every popular prejudice, even about foreigners. And the English people certainly have somehow got an impression and a tradition that the Irishman is genial, unreasonable, and sentimental. This legend of the tender, irresponsible Paddy has two roots; there are two elements in the Irish which made the mistake possible. First, the very logic of the Irishman makes him regard war or revolution as extra-logical, an ultima ratio which is beyond reason. When fighting a powerful enemy he no more worries whether all his charges are exact or all his attitudes dignified than a soldier worries whether a cannon-ball is shapely or a plan of campaign picturesque. He is aggressive; he attacks. He seems merely to be rowdy in Ireland when he is really carrying the war into Africa--or England. A Dublin tradesman printed his name and trade in archaic Erse on his cart. He knew that hardly anybody could read it; he did it to annoy. In his position I think he was quite right. When one is oppressed it is a mark of chivalry to hurt oneself in order to hurt the oppressor. But the English (never having had a real revolution since the Middle Ages) find it very hard

to understand this steady passion for being a nuisance, and mistake it for mere whimsical impulsiveness and folly. When an Irish member holds up the whole business of the House of Commons by talking of his bleeding country for five or six hours, the simple English members suppose that he is a sentimentalist. The truth is that he is a scornful realist who alone remains unaffected by the sentimentalism of the House of Commons. The Irishman is neither poet enough nor snob enough to be swept away by those smooth social and historical tides and tendencies which carry Radicals and Labour members comfortably off their feet. He goes on asking for a thing because he wants it; and he tries really to hurt his enemies because they are his enemies. This is the first of the queer confusions which make the hard Irishman look soft. He seems to us wild and unreasonable because he is really much too reasonable to be anything but fierce when he is fighting.

In all this it will not be difficult to see the Irishman in Bernard Shaw. Though personally one of the kindest men in the world, he has often written really in order to hurt; not because he hated any particular men (he is hardly hot and animal enough for that), but because he really hated certain ideas even unto slaying. He provokes; he will not let people alone. One might even say that he bullies, only that this would be unfair, because he always wishes the other man to hit back. At least he always challenges, like a true Green Islander. An even stronger instance of this national trait can be found in another eminent Irishman, Oscar Wilde. His philosophy (which was vile) was a philosophy of ease, of acceptance, and luxurious illusion; yet, being Irish, he could not help putting it in pugnacious and propagandist epigrams. He preached his softness with hard decision; he praised pleasure in the words most calculated to give pain. This armed insolence, which was the noblest thing about him, was also the Irish thing; he challenged all comers. It is a good instance of how right popular tradition is even when it is most wrong, that the English have perceived and preserved this essential trait of Ireland in a proverbial phrase. It is true that the Irishman says, "Who will tread on the tail of my coat?"

But there is a second cause which creates the English fallacy that the Irish are weak and emotional. This again springs from the very fact that the Irish are lucid and logical. For being logical they strictly separate poetry from prose; and as in prose they are strictly prosaic, so in poetry they are purely poetical. In this, as in one or two other things, they resemble the French, who make their gardens beautiful because they are gardens, but their fields ugly because they are only fields. An Irishman may like romance, but he will say, to use a frequent Shavian phrase, that it is "only romance." A great part of the English energy in fiction arises from the very fact that their fiction half deceives them. If Rudyard Kipling, for instance, had written his short stories

in France, they would have been praised as cool, clever little works of art, rather cruel, and very nervous and feminine; Kipling's short stories would have been appreciated like Maupassant's short stories. In England they were not appreciated but believed. They were taken seriously by a startled nation as a true picture of the empire and the universe. The English people made haste to abandon England in favour of Mr. Kipling and his imaginary colonies; they made haste to abandon Christianity in favour of Mr. Kipling's rather morbid version of Judaism. Such a moral boom of a book would be almost impossible in Ireland, because the Irish mind distinguishes between life and literature. Mr. Bernard Shaw himself summed this up as he sums up so many things in a compact sentence which he uttered in conversation with the present writer, "An Irishman has two eyes." He meant that with one eye an Irishman saw that a dream was inspiring, bewitching, or sublime, and with the other eye that after all it was a dream. Both the humour and the sentiment of an Englishman cause him to wink the other eye. Two other small examples will illustrate the English mistake. Take, for instance, that noble survival from a nobler age of politics--I mean Irish oratory. The English imagine that Irish politicians are so hot-headed and poetical that they have to pour out a torrent of burning words. The truth is that the Irish are so clear-headed and critical that they still regard rhetoric as a distinct art, as the ancients did. Thus a man makes a speech as a man plays a violin, not necessarily without feeling, but chiefly because he knows how to do it. Another instance of the same thing is that quality which is always called the Irish charm. The Irish are agreeable, not because they are particularly emotional, but because they are very highly civilised. Blarney is a ritual; as much of a ritual as kissing the Blarney Stone.

Lastly, there is one general truth about Ireland which may very well have influenced Bernard Shaw from the first; and almost certainly influenced him for good. Ireland is a country in which the political conflicts are at least genuine; they are about something. They are about patriotism, about religion, or about money: the three great realities. In other words, they are concerned with what commonwealth a man lives in or with what universe a man lives in or with how he is to manage to live in either. But they are not concerned with which of two wealthy cousins in the same governing class shall be allowed to bring in the same Parish Councils Bill; there is no party system in Ireland. The party system in England is an enormous and most efficient machine for preventing political conflicts. The party system is arranged on the same principle as a three-legged race: the principle that union is not always strength and is never activity. Nobody asks for what he really wants. But in Ireland the loyalist is just as ready to throw over the King as the Fenian to throw over Mr. Gladstone; each will throw over anything except the thing that he wants. Hence it happens that even the

follies or the frauds of Irish politics are more genuine as symptoms and more honourable as symbols than the lumbering hypocrisies of the prosperous Parliamentarian. The very lies of Dublin and Belfast are truer than the truisms of Westminster. They have an object; they refer to a state of things. There was more honesty, in the sense of actuality, about Piggott's letters than about the Times' leading articles on them. When Parnell said calmly before the Royal Commission that he had made a certain remark "in order to mislead the House" he proved himself to be one of the few truthful men of his time. An ordinary British statesman would never have made the confession, because he would have grown quite accustomed to committing the crime. The party system itself implies a habit of stating something other than the actual truth. A Leader of the House means a Misleader of the House.

Bernard Shaw was born outside all this; and he carries that freedom upon his face. Whether what he heard in boyhood was violent Nationalism or virulent Unionism, it was at least something which wanted a certain principle to be in force, not a certain clique to be in office. Of him the great Gilbertian generalisation is untrue; he was not born either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative. He did not, like most of us, pass through the stage of being a good party man on his way to the difficult business of being a good man. He came to stare at our general elections as a Red Indian might stare at the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, blind to all its irrelevant sentimentalities and to some of its legitimate sentiments. Bernard Shaw entered England as an alien, as an invader, as a conqueror. In other words, he entered England as an Irishman.

The Puritan

It has been said in the first section that Bernard Shaw draws from his own nation two unquestionable qualities, a kind of intellectual chastity, and the fighting spirit. He is so much of an idealist about his ideals that he can be a ruthless realist in his methods. His soul has (in short) the virginity and the violence of Ireland. But Bernard Shaw is not merely an Irishman; he is not even a typical one. He is a certain separated and peculiar kind of Irishman, which is not easy to describe. Some Nationalist Irishmen have referred to him contemptuously as a "West Briton." But this is really unfair; for whatever Mr. Shaw's mental faults may be, the easy adoption of an unmeaning phrase like "Briton" is certainly not one of them. It would be much nearer the truth to put the thing in the bold and bald terms of the old Irish song, and to call him "The anti-Irish Irishman." But it is only fair to say that the description is far less of a monstrosity than the anti-English Englishman would be; because the Irish are so much stronger in self-criticism. Compared with the constant self-flattery of the English, nearly every Irishman is an anti-Irish Irishman. But here again popular phraseology hits the right word. This fairly educated and fairly wealthy Protestant wedge which is driven into the country at Dublin and elsewhere is a thing not easy superficially to summarise in any term. It cannot be described merely as a minority; for a minority means the part of a nation which is conquered. But this thing means something that conquers, and is not entirely part of a nation. Nor can one even fall back on the phrase of aristocracy. For an aristocracy implies at least some chorus of snobbish enthusiasm; it implies that some at least are willingly led by the leaders, if only towards vulgarity and vice. There is only one word for the minority in Ireland, and that is the word that public phraseology has found; I mean the word "Garrison." The Irish are essentially right when they talk as if all Protestant Unionists lived inside "The Castle." They have all the virtues and limitations of a literal garrison in a fort. That is, they are valiant, consistent, reliable in an obvious public sense; but their curse is that they can only tread the flagstones of the court-yard or the cold rock of the ramparts; they have never so much as set their foot upon their native soil.

We have considered Bernard Shaw as an Irishman. The next step is to consider him as an exile from Ireland living in Ireland; that, some people would say, is a paradox after his own heart. But, indeed, such a complication is not really difficult to expound. The great religion and the great national tradition which have persisted for so many centuries in Ireland have encouraged these clean and cutting elements; but they have

encouraged many other things which serve to balance them. The Irish peasant has these qualities which are somewhat peculiar to Ireland, a strange purity and a strange pugnacity. But the Irish peasant also has qualities which are common to all peasants, and his nation has qualities that are common to all healthy nations. I mean chiefly the things that most of us absorb in childhood; especially the sense of the supernatural and the sense of the natural; the love of the sky with its infinity of vision, and the love of the soil with its strict hedges and solid shapes of ownership. But here comes the paradox of Shaw; the greatest of all his paradoxes and the one of which he is unconscious. These one or two plain truths which quite stupid people learn at the beginning are exactly the one or two truths which Bernard Shaw may not learn even at the end. He is a daring pilgrim who has set out from the grave to find the cradle. He started from points of view which no one else was clever enough to discover, and he is at last discovering points of view which no one else was ever stupid enough to ignore. This absence of the red-hot truisms of boyhood; this sense that he is not rooted in the ancient sagacities of infancy, has, I think, a great deal to do with his position as a member of an alien minority in Ireland. He who has no real country can have no real home. The average autochthonous Irishman is close to patriotism because he is close to the earth; he is close to domesticity because he is close to the earth; he is close to doctrinal theology and elaborate ritual because he is close to the earth. In short, he is close to the heavens because he is close to the earth. But we must not expect any of these elemental and collective virtues in the man of the garrison. He cannot be expected to exhibit the virtues of a people, but only (as Ibsen would say) of an enemy of the people. Mr. Shaw has no living traditions, no schoolboy tricks, no college customs, to link him with other men. Nothing about him can be supposed to refer to a family feud or to a family joke. He does not drink toasts; he does not keep anniversaries; musical as he is I doubt if he would consent to sing. All this has something in it of a tree with its roots in the air. The best way to shorten winter is to prolong Christmas; and the only way to enjoy the sun of April is to be an April Fool. When people asked Bernard Shaw to attend the Stratford Tercentenary, he wrote back with characteristic contempt: "I do not keep my own birthday, and I cannot see why I should keep Shakespeare's." I think that if Mr. Shaw had always kept his own birthday he would be better able to understand Shakespeare's birthday--and Shakespeare's poetry.

In conjecturally referring this negative side of the man, his lack of the smaller charities of our common childhood, to his birth in the dominant Irish sect, I do not write without historic memory or reference to other cases. That minority of Protestant exiles which mainly represented Ireland to England during the eighteenth century did contain some specimens of the

Irish lounge and even of the Irish blackguard; Sheridan and even Goldsmith suggest the type. Even in their irresponsibility these figures had a touch of Irish tartness and realism; but the type has been too much insisted on to the exclusion of others equally national and interesting. To one of these it is worth while to draw attention. At intervals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there has appeared a peculiar kind of Irishman. He is so unlike the English image of Ireland that the English have actually fallen back on the pretence that he was not Irish at all. The type is commonly Protestant; and sometimes seems to be almost anti-national in its acrid instinct for judging itself. Its nationalism only appears when it flings itself with even bitterer pleasure into judging the foreigner or the invader. The first and greatest of such figures was Swift. Thackeray simply denied that Swift was an Irishman, because he was not a stage Irishman. He was not (in the English novelist's opinion) winning and agreeable enough to be Irish. The truth is that Swift was much too harsh and disagreeable to be English. There is a great deal of Jonathan Swift in Bernard Shaw. Shaw is like Swift, for instance, in combining extravagant fancy with a curious sort of coldness. But he is most like Swift in that very quality which Thackeray said was impossible in an Irishman, benevolent bullying, a pity touched with contempt, and a habit of knocking men down for their own good. Characters in novels are often described as so amiable that they hate to be thanked. It is not an amiable quality, and it is an extremely rare one; but Swift possessed it. When Swift was buried the Dublin poor came in crowds and wept by the grave of the broadest and most free-handed of their benefactors. Swift deserved the public tribute; but he might have writhed and kicked in his grave at the thought of receiving it. There is in G. B. S. something of the same inhumane humanity. Irish history has offered a third instance of this particular type of educated and Protestant Irishman, sincere, unsympathetic, aggressive, alone. I mean Parnell; and with him also a bewildered England tried the desperate dodge of saying that he was not Irish at all. As if any thinkable sensible snobbish law-abiding Englishman would ever have defied all the drawing-rooms by disdaining the House of Commons! Despite the difference between taciturnity and a torrent of fluency there is much in common also between Shaw and Parnell; something in common even in the figures of the two men, in the bony bearded faces with their almost Satanic self-possession. It will not do to pretend that none of these three men belong to their own nation; but it is true that they belonged to one special, though recurring, type of that nation. And they all three have this peculiar mark, that while Nationalists in their various ways they all give to the more genial English one common impression; I mean the impression that they do not so much love Ireland as hate England.

I will not dogmatise upon the difficult question as to whether there is any religious significance in the fact that these three rather ruthless Irishmen were Protestant Irishmen. I incline to think myself that the Catholic Church has added charity and gentleness to the virtues of a people which would otherwise have been too keen and contemptuous, too aristocratic. But however this may be, there can surely be no question that Bernard Shaw's Protestant education in a Catholic country has made a great deal of difference to his mind. It has affected it in two ways, the first negative and the second positive. It has affected him by cutting him off (as we have said) from the fields and fountains of his real home and history; by making him an Orangeman. And it has affected him by the particular colour of the particular religion which he received; by making him a Puritan.

In one of his numerous prefaces he says, "I have always been on the side of the Puritans in the matter of Art"; and a closer study will, I think, reveal that he is on the side of the Puritans in almost everything. Puritanism was not a mere code of cruel regulations, though some of its regulations were more cruel than any that have disgraced Europe. Nor was Puritanism a mere nightmare, an evil shadow of eastern gloom and fatalism, though this element did enter it, and was as it were the symptom and punishment of its essential error. Something much nobler (even if almost equally mistaken) was the original energy in the Puritan creed. And it must be defined with a little more delicacy if we are really to understand the attitude of G. B. S., who is the greatest of the modern Puritans and perhaps the last.

I should roughly define the first spirit in Puritanism thus. It was a refusal to contemplate God or goodness with anything lighter or milder than the most fierce concentration of the intellect. A Puritan meant originally a man whose mind had no holidays. To use his own favourite phrase, he would let no living thing come between him and his God; an attitude which involved eternal torture for him and a cruel contempt for all the living things. It was better to worship in a barn than in a cathedral for the specific and specified reason that the cathedral was beautiful. Physical beauty was a false and sensual symbol coming in between the intellect and the object of its intellectual worship. The human brain ought to be at every instant a consuming fire which burns through all conventional images until they were as transparent as glass.

This is the essential Puritan idea, that God can only be praised by direct contemplation of Him. You must praise God only with your brain; it is wicked to praise Him with your passions or your physical habits or your gesture or instinct of beauty. Therefore it is wicked to worship by singing or dancing or drinking sacramental wines or building beautiful churches or

saying prayers when you are half asleep. We must not worship by dancing, drinking, building or singing; we can only worship by thinking. Our heads can praise God, but never our hands and feet. That is the true and original impulse of the Puritans. There is a great deal to be said for it, and a great deal was said for it in Great Britain steadily for two hundred years. It has gradually decayed in England and Scotland, not because of the advance of modern thought (which means nothing), but because of the slow revival of the mediæval energy and character in the two peoples. The English were always hearty and humane, and they have made up their minds to be hearty and humane in spite of the Puritans. The result is that Dickens and W. W. Jacobs have picked up the tradition of Chaucer and Robin Hood. The Scotch were always romantic, and they have made up their minds to be romantic in spite of the Puritans. The result is that Scott and Stevenson have picked up the tradition of Bruce, Blind Harry and the vagabond Scottish kings. England has become English again; Scotland has become Scottish again, in spite of the splendid incubus, the noble nightmare of Calvin. There is only one place in the British Islands where one may naturally expect to find still surviving in its fulness the fierce detachment of the true Puritan. That place is the Protestant part of Ireland. The Orange Calvinists can be disturbed by no national resurrection, for they have no nation. In them, if in any people, will be found the rectangular consistency of the Calvinist. The Irish Protestant rioters are at least immeasurably finer fellows than any of their brethren in England. They have the two enormous superiorities: first, that the Irish Protestant rioters really believe in Protestant theology; and second, that the Irish Protestant rioters do really riot. Among these people, if anywhere, should be found the cult of theological clarity combined with barbarous external simplicity. Among these people Bernard Shaw was born.

There is at least one outstanding fact about the man we are studying; Bernard Shaw is never frivolous. He never gives his opinions a holiday; he is never irresponsible even for an instant. He has no nonsensical second self which he can get into as one gets into a dressing-gown; that ridiculous disguise which is yet more real than the real person. That collapse and humorous confession of futility was much of the force in Charles Lamb and in Stevenson. There is nothing of this in Shaw; his wit is never a weakness; therefore it is never a sense of humour. For wit is always connected with the idea that truth is close and clear. Humour, on the other hand, is always connected with the idea that truth is tricky and mystical and easily mistaken. What Charles Lamb said of the Scotchman is far truer of this type of Puritan Irishman; he does not see things suddenly in a new light; all his brilliancy is a blindingly rapid calculation and deduction. Bernard Shaw never said an indefensible thing; that is, he never said a thing that he was not prepared brilliantly to defend. He never breaks out into that cry beyond

reason and conviction, that cry of Lamb when he cried, "We would indict our dreams!" or of Stevenson, "Shall we never shed blood?" In short he is not a humorist, but a great wit, almost as great as Voltaire. Humour is akin to agnosticism, which is only the negative side of mysticism. But pure wit is akin to Puritanism; to the perfect and painful consciousness of the final fact in the universe. Very briefly, the man who sees the consistency in things is a wit--and a Calvinist. The man who sees the inconsistency in things is a humorist--and a Catholic. However this may be, Bernard Shaw exhibits all that is purest in the Puritan; the desire to see truth face to face even if it slay us, the high impatience with irrelevant sentiment or obstructive symbol; the constant effort to keep the soul at its highest pressure and speed. His instincts upon all social customs and questions are Puritan. His favourite author is Bunyan.

But along with what was inspiring and direct in Puritanism Bernard Shaw has inherited also some of the things that were cumbersome and traditional. If ever Shaw exhibits a prejudice it is always a Puritan prejudice. For Puritanism has not been able to sustain through three centuries that native ecstasy of the direct contemplation of truth; indeed it was the whole mistake of Puritanism to imagine for a moment that it could. One cannot be serious for three hundred years. In institutions built so as to endure for ages you must have relaxation, symbolic relativity and healthy routine. In eternal temples you must have frivolity. You must "be at ease in Zion" unless you are only paying it a flying visit.

By the middle of the nineteenth century this old austerity and actuality in the Puritan vision had fallen away into two principal lower forms. The first is a sort of idealistic garrulity upon which Bernard Shaw has made fierce and on the whole fruitful war. Perpetual talk about righteousness and unselfishness, about things that should elevate and things which cannot but degrade, about social purity and true Christian manhood, all poured out with fatal fluency and with very little reference to the real facts of anybody's soul or salary--into this weak and lukewarm torrent has melted down much of that mountainous ice which sparkled in the seventeenth century, bleak indeed, but blazing. The hardest thing of the seventeenth century bids fair to be the softest thing of the twentieth.

Of all this sentimental and deliquescent Puritanism Bernard Shaw has always been the antagonist; and the only respect in which it has soiled him was that he believed for only too long that such sloppy idealism was the whole idealism of Christendom and so used "idealist" itself as a term of reproach. But there were other and negative effects of Puritanism which he did not escape so completely. I cannot think that he has wholly escaped that

element in Puritanism which may fairly bear the title of the taboo. For it is a singular fact that although extreme Protestantism is dying in elaborate and over-refined civilisation, yet it is the barbaric patches of it that live longest and die last. Of the creed of John Knox the modern Protestant has abandoned the civilised part and retained only the savage part. He has given up that great and systematic philosophy of Calvinism which had much in common with modern science and strongly resembles ordinary and recurrent determinism. But he has retained the accidental veto upon cards or comic plays, which Knox only valued as mere proof of his people's concentration on their theology. All the awful but sublime affirmations of Puritan theology are gone. Only savage negations remain; such as that by which in Scotland on every seventh day the creed of fear lays his finger on all hearts and makes an evil silence in the streets.

By the middle of the nineteenth century when Shaw was born this dim and barbaric element in Puritanism, being all that remained of it, had added another taboo to its philosophy of taboos; there had grown up a mystical horror of those fermented drinks which are part of the food of civilised mankind. Doubtless many persons take an extreme line on this matter solely because of some calculation of social harm; many, but not all and not even most. Many people think that paper money is a mistake and does much harm. But they do not shudder or snigger when they see a cheque-book. They do not whisper with unsavoury slyness that such and such a man was "seen" going into a bank. I am quite convinced that the English aristocracy is the curse of England, but I have not noticed either in myself or others any disposition to ostracise a man simply for accepting a peerage, as the modern Puritans would certainly ostracise him (from any of their positions of trust) for accepting a drink. The sentiment is certainly very largely a mystical one, like the sentiment about the seventh day. Like the Sabbath, it is defended with sociological reasons; but those reasons can be simply and sharply tested. If a Puritan tells you that all humanity should rest once a week, you have only to propose that they should rest on Wednesday. And if a Puritan tells you that he does not object to beer but to the tragedies of excess in beer, simply propose to him that in prisons and workhouses (where the amount can be absolutely regulated) the inmates should have three glasses of beer a day. The Puritan cannot call that excess; but he will find something to call it. For it is not the excess he objects to, but the beer. It is a transcendental taboo, and it is one of the two or three positive and painful prejudices with which Bernard Shaw began. A similar severity of outlook ran through all his earlier attitude towards the drama; especially towards the lighter or looser drama. His Puritan teachers could not prevent him from taking up theatricals, but they made him take theatricals seriously. All his plays were indeed "plays for Puritans." All his

criticisms quiver with a refined and almost tortured contempt for the indulgencies of ballet and burlesque, for the tights and the double entente. He can endure lawlessness but not levity. He is not repelled by the divorces and the adulteries as he is by the "splits." And he has always been foremost among the fierce modern critics who ask indignantly, "Why do you object to a thing full of sincere philosophy like *The Wild Duck* while you tolerate a mere dirty joke like *The Spring Chicken*?" I do not think he has ever understood what seems to me the very sensible answer of the man in the street, "I laugh at the dirty joke of *The Spring Chicken* because it is a joke. I criticise the philosophy of *The Wild Duck* because it is a philosophy."

Shaw does not do justice to the democratic ease and sanity on this subject; but indeed, whatever else he is, he is not democratic. As an Irishman he is an aristocrat, as a Calvinist he is a soul apart; he drew the breath of his nostrils from a land of fallen principalities and proud gentility, and the breath of his spirit from a creed which made a wall of crystal around the elect. The two forces between them produced this potent and slender figure, swift, scornful, dainty and full of dry magnanimity; and it only needed the last touch of oligarchic mastery to be given by the overwhelming oligarchic atmosphere of our present age. Such was the Puritan Irishman who stepped out into the world. Into what kind of world did he step?

The Progressive

It is now partly possible to justify the Shavian method of putting the explanations before the events. I can now give a fact or two with a partial certainty at least that the reader will give to the affairs of Bernard Shaw something of the same kind of significance which they have for Bernard Shaw himself. Thus, if I had simply said that Shaw was born in Dublin the average reader might exclaim, "Ah yes--a wild Irishman, gay, emotional and untrustworthy." The wrong note would be struck at the start. I have attempted to give some idea of what being born in Ireland meant to the man who was really born there. Now therefore for the first time I may be permitted to confess that Bernard Shaw was, like other men, born. He was born in Dublin on the 26th of July, 1856.

Just as his birth can only be appreciated through some vision of Ireland, so his family can only be appreciated by some realisation of the Puritan. He was the youngest son of one George Carr Shaw, who had been a civil servant and was afterwards a somewhat unsuccessful business man. If I had merely said that his family was Protestant (which in Ireland means Puritan) it might have been passed over as a quite colourless detail. But if the reader will keep in mind what has been said about the degeneration of Calvinism into a few clumsy vetoes, he will see in its full and frightful significance such a sentence as this which comes from Shaw himself: "My father was in theory a vehement teetotaler, but in practice often a furtive drinker." The two things of course rest upon exactly the same philosophy; the philosophy of the taboo. There is a mystical substance, and it can give monstrous pleasures or call down monstrous punishments. The dipsomaniac and the abstainer are not only both mistaken, but they both make the same mistake. They both regard wine as a drug and not as a drink. But if I had mentioned that fragment of family information without any ethical preface, people would have begun at once to talk nonsense about artistic heredity and Celtic weakness, and would have gained the general impression that Bernard Shaw was an Irish wastrel and the child of Irish wastrels. Whereas it is the whole point of the matter that Bernard Shaw comes of a Puritan middle-class family of the most solid respectability; and the only admission of error arises from the fact that one member of that Puritan family took a particularly Puritan view of strong drink. That is, he regarded it generally as a poison and sometimes as a medicine, if only a mental medicine. But a poison and a medicine are very closely akin, as the nearest chemist knows; and they are chiefly akin in this; that no one will drink either of them for fun. Moreover, medicine and a poison are also alike in this; that no one will

by preference drink either of them in public. And this medical or poisonous view of alcohol is not confined to the one Puritan to whose failure I have referred, it is spread all over the whole of our dying Puritan civilisation. For instance, social reformers have fired a hundred shots against the public-house; but never one against its really shameful feature. The sign of decay is not in the public-house, but in the private bar; or rather the row of five or six private bars, into each of which a respectable dipsomaniac can go in solitude, and by indulging his own half-witted sin violate his own half-witted morality. Nearly all these places are equipped with an atrocious apparatus of ground-glass windows which can be so closed that they practically conceal the face of the buyer from the seller. Words cannot express the abysses of human infamy and hateful shame expressed by that elaborate piece of furniture. Whenever I go into a public-house, which happens fairly often, I always carefully open all these apertures and then leave the place, in every way refreshed.

In other ways also it is necessary to insist not only on the fact of an extreme Protestantism, but on that of the Protestantism of a garrison; a world where that religious force both grew and festered all the more for being at once isolated and protected. All the influences surrounding Bernard Shaw in boyhood were not only Puritan, but such that no non-Puritan force could possibly pierce or counteract. He belonged to that Irish group which, according to Catholicism, has hardened its heart, which, according to Protestantism has hardened its head, but which, as I fancy, has chiefly hardened its hide, lost its sensibility to the contact of the things around it. In reading about his youth, one forgets that it was passed in the island which is still one flame before the altar of St. Peter and St. Patrick. The whole thing might be happening in Wimbledon. He went to the Wesleyan Connexional School. He went to hear Moody and Sankey. "I was," he writes, "wholly unmoved by their eloquence; and felt bound to inform the public that I was, on the whole, an atheist. My letter was solemnly printed in Public Opinion, to the extreme horror of my numerous aunts and uncles." That is the philosophical atmosphere; those are the religious postulates. It could never cross the mind of a man of the Garrison that before becoming an atheist he might stroll into one of the churches of his own country, and learn something of the philosophy that had satisfied Dante and Bossuet, Pascal and Descartes.

In the same way I have to appeal to my theoretic preface at this third point of the drama of Shaw's career. On leaving school he stepped into a secure business position which he held steadily for four years and which he flung away almost in one day. He rushed even recklessly to London; where he was quite unsuccessful and practically starved for six years. If I had mentioned

this act on the first page of this book it would have seemed to have either the simplicity of a mere fanatic or else to cover some ugly escapade of youth or some quite criminal looseness of temperament. But Bernard Shaw did not act thus because he was careless, but because he was ferociously careful, careful especially of the one thing needful. What was he thinking about when he threw away his last halfpence and went to a strange place; what was he thinking about when he endured hunger and small-pox in London almost without hope? He was thinking of what he has ever since thought of, the slow but sure surge of the social revolution; you must read into all those bald sentences and empty years what I shall attempt to sketch in the third section. You must read the revolutionary movement of the later nineteenth century, darkened indeed by materialism and made mutable by fear and free thought, but full of awful vistas of an escape from the curse of Adam.

Bernard Shaw happened to be born in an epoch, or rather at the end of an epoch, which was in its way unique in the ages of history. The nineteenth century was not unique in the success or rapidity of its reforms or in their ultimate cessation; but it was unique in the peculiar character of the failure which followed the success. The French Revolution was an enormous act of human realisation; it has altered the terms of every law and the shape of every town in Europe; but it was by no means the only example of a strong and swift period of reform. What was really peculiar about the Republican energy was this, that it left behind it, not an ordinary reaction but a kind of dreary, drawn out and utterly unmeaning hope. The strong and evident idea of reform sank lower and lower until it became the timid and feeble idea of progress. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there appeared its two incredible figures; they were the pure Conservative and the pure Progressive; two figures which would have been overwhelmed with laughter by any other intellectual commonwealth of history. There was hardly a human generation which could not have seen the folly of merely going forward or merely standing still; of mere progressing or mere conserving. In the coarsest Greek Comedy we might have a joke about a man who wanted to keep what he had, whether it was yellow gold or yellow fever. In the dullest mediæval morality we might have a joke about a progressive gentleman who, having passed heaven and come to purgatory, decided to go further and fare worse. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were an age of quite impetuous progress; men made in one rush, roads, trades, synthetic philosophies, parliaments, university settlements, a law that could cover the world and such spires as had never struck the sky. But they would not have said that they wanted progress, but that they wanted the road, the parliaments, and the spires. In the same way the time from Richelieu to the Revolution was upon the whole a time of conservation, often of harsh and hideous conservation; it preserved tortures, legal quibbles, and despotism. But if you

had asked the rulers they would not have said that they wanted conservation; but that they wanted the torture and the despotism. The old reformers and the old despots alike desired definite things, powers, licenses, payments, vetoes, and permissions. Only the modern progressive and the modern conservative have been content with two words.

Other periods of active improvement have died by stiffening at last into some routine. Thus the Gothic gaiety of the thirteenth century stiffening into the mere Gothic ugliness of the fifteenth. Thus the mighty wave of the Renaissance, whose crest was lifted to heaven, was touched by a wintry witchery of classicism and frozen for ever before it fell. Alone of all such movements the democratic movement of the last two centuries has not frozen, but loosened and liquefied. Instead of becoming more pedantic in its old age, it has grown more bewildered. By the analogy of healthy history we ought to have gone on worshipping the republic and calling each other citizen with increasing seriousness until some other part of the truth broke into our republican temple. But in fact we have turned the freedom of democracy into a mere scepticism, destructive of everything, including democracy itself. It is none the less destructive because it is, so to speak, an optimistic scepticism--or, as I have said, a dreary hope. It was none the better because the destroyers were always talking about the new vistas and enlightenments which their new negations opened to us. The republican temple, like any other strong building, rested on certain definite limits and supports. But the modern man inside it went on indefinitely knocking holes in his own house and saying that they were windows. The result is not hard to calculate: the moral world was pretty well all windows and no house by the time that Bernard Shaw arrived on the scene.

Then there entered into full swing that great game of which he soon became the greatest master. A progressive or advanced person was now to mean not a man who wanted democracy, but a man who wanted something newer than democracy. A reformer was to be, not a man who wanted a parliament or a republic, but a man who wanted anything that he hadn't got. The emancipated man must cast a weird and suspicious eye round him at all the institutions of the world, wondering which of them was destined to die in the next few centuries. Each one of them was whispering to himself, "What can I alter?"

This quite vague and varied discontent probably did lead to the revelation of many incidental wrongs and to much humane hard work in certain holes and corners. It also gave birth to a great deal of quite futile and frantic speculation, which seemed destined to take away babies from women, or to give votes to tom-cats. But it had an evil in it much deeper and more

psychologically poisonous than any superficial absurdities. There was in this thirst to be "progressive" a subtle sort of double-mindedness and falsity. A man was so eager to be in advance of his age that he pretended to be in advance of himself. Institutions that his wholesome nature and habit fully accepted he had to sneer at as old-fashioned, out of a servile and snobbish fear of the future. Out of the primal forests, through all the real progress of history, man had picked his way obeying his human instinct, or (in the excellent phrase) following his nose. But now he was trying, by violent athletic exertions, to get in front of his nose.

Into this riot of all imaginary innovations Shaw brought the sharp edge of the Irishman and the concentration of the Puritan, and thoroughly thrashed all competitors in the difficult art of being at once modern and intelligent. In twenty twopenny controversies he took the revolutionary side, I fear in most cases because it was called revolutionary. But the other revolutionists were abruptly startled by the presentation of quite rational and ingenious arguments on their own side. The dreary thing about most new causes is that they are praised in such very old terms. Every new religion bores us with the same stale rhetoric about closer fellowship and the higher life. No one ever approximately equalled Bernard Shaw in the power of finding really fresh and personal arguments for these recent schemes and creeds. No one ever came within a mile of him in the knack of actually producing a new argument for a new philosophy. I give two instances to cover the kind of thing I mean. Bernard Shaw (being honestly eager to put himself on the modern side in everything) put himself on the side of what is called the feminist movement; the proposal to give the two sexes not merely equal social privileges, but identical. To this it is often answered that women cannot be soldiers; and to this again the sensible feminists answer that women run their own kind of physical risk, while the silly feminists answer that war is an outworn barbaric thing which women would abolish. But Bernard Shaw took the line of saying that women had been soldiers, in all occasions of natural and unofficial war, as in the French Revolution. That has the great fighting value of being an unexpected argument; it takes the other pugilist's breath away for one important instant. To take the other case, Mr. Shaw has found himself, led by the same mad imp of modernity, on the side of the people who want to have phonetic spelling. The people who want phonetic spelling generally depress the world with tireless and tasteless explanations of how much easier it would be for children or foreign bagmen if "height" were spelt "hite." Now children would curse spelling whatever it was, and we are not going to permit foreign bagmen to improve Shakespeare. Bernard Shaw charged along quite a different line; he urged that Shakespeare himself believed in phonetic spelling, since he spelt his own name in six different ways. According to Shaw, phonetic spelling is

merely a return to the freedom and flexibility of Elizabethan literature. That, again, is exactly the kind of blow the old speller does not expect. As a matter of fact there is an answer to both the ingenuities I have quoted. When women have fought in revolutions they have generally shown that it was not natural to them, by their hysterical cruelty and insolence; it was the men who fought in the Revolution; it was the women who tortured the prisoners and mutilated the dead. And because Shakespeare could sing better than he could spell, it does not follow that his spelling and ours ought to be abruptly altered by a race that has lost all instinct for singing. But I do not wish to discuss these points; I only quote them as examples of the startling ability which really brought Shaw to the front; the ability to brighten even our modern movements with original and suggestive thoughts.

But while Bernard Shaw pleasantly surprised innumerable cranks and revolutionists by finding quite rational arguments for them, he surprised them unpleasantly also by discovering something else. He discovered a turn of argument or trick of thought which has ever since been the plague of their lives, and given him in all assemblies of their kind, in the Fabian Society or in the whole Socialist movement, a fantastic but most formidable domination. This method may be approximately defined as that of revolutionising the revolutionists by turning their rationalism against their remaining sentimentalism. But definition leaves the matter dark unless we give one or two examples. Thus Bernard Shaw threw himself as thoroughly as any New Woman into the cause of the emancipation of women. But while the New Woman praised woman as a prophetess, the new man took the opportunity to curse her and kick her as a comrade. For the others sex equality meant the emancipation of women, which allowed them to be equal to men. For Shaw it mainly meant the emancipation of men, which allowed them to be rude to women. Indeed, almost every one of Bernard Shaw's earlier plays might be called an argument between a man and a woman, in which the woman is thumped and thrashed and outwitted until she admits that she is the equal of her conqueror. This is the first case of the Shavian trick of turning on the romantic rationalists with their own rationalism. He said in substance, "If we are democrats, let us have votes for women; but if we are democrats, why on earth should we have respect for women?" I take one other example out of many. Bernard Shaw was thrown early into what may be called the cosmopolitan club of revolution. The Socialists of the S.D.F. call it "L'Internationale," but the club covers more than Socialists. It covers many who consider themselves the champions of oppressed nationalities--Poland, Finland, and even Ireland; and thus a strong nationalist tendency exists in the revolutionary movement. Against this nationalist tendency Shaw set himself with sudden violence. If the flag of England was a piece of piratical humbug, was not the flag of Poland a piece

of piratical humbug too? If we hated the jingoism of the existing armies and frontiers, why should we bring into existence new jingo armies and new jingo frontiers? All the other revolutionists fell in instinctively with Home Rule for Ireland. Shaw urged, in effect, that Home Rule was as bad as Home Influences and Home Cooking, and all the other degrading domesticities that began with the word "Home." His ultimate support of the South African war was largely created by his irritation against the other revolutionists for favouring a nationalist resistance. The ordinary Imperialists objected to Pro-Boers because they were anti-patriots. Bernard Shaw objected to Pro-Boers because they were pro-patriots.

But among these surprise attacks of G. B. S., these turnings of scepticism against the sceptics, there was one which has figured largely in his life; the most amusing and perhaps the most salutary of all these reactions. The "progressive" world being in revolt against religion had naturally felt itself allied to science; and against the authority of priests it would perpetually hurl the authority of scientific men. Shaw gazed for a few moments at this new authority, the veiled god of Huxley and Tyndall, and then with the greatest placidity and precision kicked it in the stomach. He declared to the astounded progressives around him that physical science was a mystical fake like sacerdotalism; that scientists, like priests, spoke with authority because they could not speak with proof or reason; that the very wonders of science were mostly lies, like the wonders of religion. "When astronomers tell me," he says somewhere, "that a star is so far off that its light takes a thousand years to reach us, the magnitude of the lie seems to me inartistic." The paralysing impudence of such remarks left everyone quite breathless; and even to this day this particular part of Shaw's satiric war has been far less followed up than it deserves. For there was present in it an element very marked in Shaw's controversies; I mean that his apparent exaggerations are generally much better backed up by knowledge than would appear from their nature. He can lure his enemy on with fantasies and then overwhelm him with facts. Thus the man of science, when he read some wild passage in which Shaw compared Huxley to a tribal soothsayer grubbing in the entrails of animals, supposed the writer to be a mere fantastic whom science could crush with one finger. He would therefore engage in a controversy with Shaw about (let us say) vivisection, and discover to his horror that Shaw really knew a great deal about the subject, and could pelt him with expert witnesses and hospital reports. Among the many singular contradictions in a singular character, there is none more interesting than this combination of exactitude and industry in the detail of opinions with audacity and a certain wildness in their outline.

This great game of catching revolutionists napping, of catching the

unconventional people in conventional poses, of outmarching and outmanoeuvring progressives till they felt like conservatives, of undermining the mines of Nihilists till they felt like the House of Lords, this great game of dishing the anarchists continued for some time to be his most effective business. It would be untrue to say that he was a cynic; he was never a cynic, for that implies a certain corrupt fatigue about human affairs, whereas he was vibrating with virtue and energy. Nor would it be fair to call him even a sceptic, for that implies a dogma of hopelessness and definite belief in unbelief. But it would be strictly just to describe him at this time, at any rate, as a merely destructive person. He was one whose main business was, in his own view, the pricking of illusions, the stripping away of disguises, and even the destruction of ideals. He was a sort of anti-confectioner whose whole business it was to take the gilt off the gingerbread.

Now I have no particular objection to people who take the gilt off the gingerbread; if only for this excellent reason, that I am much fonder of gingerbread than I am of gilt. But there are some objections to this task when it becomes a crusade or an obsession. One of them is this: that people who have really scraped the gilt off gingerbread generally waste the rest of their lives in attempting to scrape the gilt off gigantic lumps of gold. Such has too often been the case of Shaw. He can, if he likes, scrape the romance off the armaments of Europe or the party system of Great Britain. But he cannot scrape the romance off love or military valour, because it is all romance, and three thousand miles thick. It cannot, I think, be denied that much of Bernard Shaw's splendid mental energy has been wasted in this weary business of gnawing at the necessary pillars of all possible society. But it would be grossly unfair to indicate that even in his first and most destructive stage he uttered nothing except these accidental, if arresting, negations. He threw his whole genius heavily into the scale in favour of two positive projects or causes of the period. When we have stated these we have really stated the full intellectual equipment with which he started his literary life.

I have said that Shaw was on the insurgent side in everything; but in the case of these two important convictions he exercised a solid power of choice. When he first went to London he mixed with every kind of revolutionary society, and met every kind of person except the ordinary person. He knew everybody, so to speak, except everybody. He was more than once a momentary apparition among the respectable atheists. He knew Bradlaugh and spoke on the platforms of that Hall of Science in which very simple and sincere masses of men used to hail with shouts of joy the assurance that they were not immortal. He retains to this day something of the noise and narrowness of that room; as, for instance, when he says that it is

contemptible to have a craving for eternal life. This prejudice remains in direct opposition to all his present opinions, which are all to the effect that it is glorious to desire power, consciousness, and vitality even for one's self. But this old secularist tag, that it is selfish to save one's soul, remains with him long after he has practically glorified selfishness. It is a relic of those chaotic early days. And just as he mingled with the atheists he mingled with the anarchists, who were in the eighties a much more formidable body than now, disputing with the Socialists on almost equal terms the claim to be the true heirs of the Revolution. Shaw still talks entertainingly about this group. As far as I can make out, it was almost entirely female. When a book came out called *A Girl among the Anarchists*, G. B. S. was provoked to a sort of explosive reminiscence. "A girl among the anarchists!" he exclaimed to his present biographer; "if they had said 'A man among the anarchists' it would have been more of an adventure." He is ready to tell other tales of this eccentric environment, most of which does not convey an impression of a very bracing atmosphere. That revolutionary society must have contained many high public ideals, but also a fair number of low private desires. And when people blame Bernard Shaw for his pitiless and prosaic coldness, his cutting refusal to reverence or admire, I think they should remember this riff-raff of lawless sentimentalism against which his commonsense had to strive, all the grandiloquent "comrades" and all the gushing "affinities," all the sweetstuff sensuality and senseless sulking against law. If Bernard Shaw became a little too fond of throwing cold water upon prophecies or ideals, remember that he must have passed much of his youth among cosmopolitan idealists who wanted a little cold water in every sense of the word.

Upon two of these modern crusades he concentrated, and, as I have said, he chose them well. The first was broadly what was called the Humanitarian cause. It did not mean the cause of humanity, but rather, if anything, the cause of everything else. At its noblest it meant a sort of mystical identification of our life with the whole life of nature. So a man might wince when a snail was crushed as if his toe were trodden on; so a man might shrink when a moth shrivelled as if his own hair had caught fire. Man might be a network of exquisite nerves running over the whole universe, a subtle spider's web of pity. This was a fine conception; though perhaps a somewhat severe enforcement of the theological conception of the special divinity of man. For the humanitarians certainly asked of humanity what can be asked of no other creature; no man ever required a dog to understand a cat or expected the cow to cry for the sorrows of the nightingale.

Hence this sense has been strongest in saints of a very mystical sort; such as St. Francis who spoke of Sister Sparrow and Brother Wolf. Shaw adopted

this crusade of cosmic pity but adopted it very much in his own style, severe, explanatory, and even unsympathetic. He had no affectionate impulse to say "Brother Wolf"; at the best he would have said "Citizen Wolf," like a sound republican. In fact, he was full of healthy human compassion for the sufferings of animals; but in phraseology he loved to put the matter unemotionally and even harshly. I was once at a debating club at which Bernard Shaw said that he was not a humanitarian at all, but only an economist, that he merely hated to see life wasted by carelessness or cruelty. I felt inclined to get up and address to him the following lucid question: "If when you spare a herring you are only being oikonomikal, for what oikos are you being nomikal?" But in an average debating club I thought this question might not be quite clear; so I abandoned the idea. But certainly it is not plain for whom Bernard Shaw is economising if he rescues a rhinoceros from an early grave. But the truth is that Shaw only took this economic pose from his hatred of appearing sentimental. If Bernard Shaw killed a dragon and rescued a princess of romance, he would try to say "I have saved a princess" with exactly the same intonation as "I have saved a shilling." He tries to turn his own heroism into a sort of superhuman thrift. He would thoroughly sympathise with that passage in his favourite dramatic author in which the Button Moulder tells Peer Gynt that there is a sort of cosmic housekeeping; that God Himself is very economical, "and that is why He is so well to do."

This combination of the widest kindness and consideration with a consistent ungraciousness of tone runs through all Shaw's ethical utterance, and is nowhere more evident than in his attitude towards animals. He would waste himself to a white-haired shadow to save a shark in an aquarium from inconvenience or to add any little comforts to the life of a carrion-crow. He would defy any laws or lose any friends to show mercy to the humblest beast or the most hidden bird. Yet I cannot recall in the whole of his works or in the whole of his conversation a single word of any tenderness or intimacy with any bird or beast. It was under the influence of this high and almost superhuman sense of duty that he became a vegetarian; and I seem to remember that when he was lying sick and near to death at the end of his Saturday Review career he wrote a fine fantastic article, declaring that his hearse ought to be drawn by all the animals that he had not eaten. Whenever that evil day comes there will be no need to fall back on the ranks of the brute creation; there will be no lack of men and women who owe him so much as to be glad to take the place of the animals; and the present writer for one will be glad to express his gratitude as an elephant. There is no doubt about the essential manhood and decency of Bernard Shaw's instincts in such matters. And quite apart from the vegetarian controversy, I do not doubt that the beasts also owe him much. But when we come to

positive things (and passions are the only truly positive things) that obstinate doubt remains which remains after all eulogies of Shaw. That fixed fancy sticks to the mind; that Bernard Shaw is a vegetarian more because he dislikes dead beasts than because he likes live ones.

It was the same with the other great cause to which Shaw more politically though not more publicly committed himself. The actual English people, without representation in Press or Parliament, but faintly expressed in public-houses and music-halls, would connect Shaw (so far as they have heard of him) with two ideas; they would say first that he was a vegetarian, and second that he was a Socialist. Like most of the impressions of the ignorant, these impressions would be on the whole very just. My only purpose here is to urge that Shaw's Socialism exemplifies the same trait of temperament as his vegetarianism. This book is not concerned with Bernard Shaw as a politician or a sociologist, but as a critic and creator of drama. I will therefore end in this chapter all that I have to say about Bernard Shaw as a politician or a political philosopher. I propose here to dismiss this aspect of Shaw: only let it be remembered, once and for all, that I am here dismissing the most important aspect of Shaw. It is as if one dismissed the sculpture of Michael Angelo and went on to his sonnets. Perhaps the highest and purest thing in him is simply that he cares more for politics than for anything else; more than for art or for philosophy. Socialism is the noblest thing for Bernard Shaw; and it is the noblest thing in him. He really desires less to win fame than to bear fruit. He is an absolute follower of that early sage who wished only to make two blades of grass grow instead of one. He is a loyal subject of Henri Quatre, who said that he only wanted every Frenchman to have a chicken in his pot on Sunday; except, of course, that he would call the repast cannibalism. But *cæteris paribus* he thinks more of that chicken than of the eagle of the universal empire; and he is always ready to support the grass against the laurel.

Yet by the nature of this book the account of the most important Shaw, who is the Socialist, must be also the most brief. Socialism (which I am not here concerned either to attack or defend) is, as everyone knows, the proposal that all property should be nationally owned that it may be more decently distributed. It is a proposal resting upon two principles, unimpeachable as far as they go: first, that frightful human calamities call for immediate human aid; second, that such aid must almost always be collectively organised. If a ship is being wrecked, we organise a lifeboat; if a house is on fire, we organise a blanket; if half a nation is starving, we must organise work and food. That is the primary and powerful argument of the Socialist, and everything that he adds to it weakens it. The only possible line of protest is to suggest that it is rather shocking that we have to treat a normal

nation as something exceptional, like a house on fire or a shipwreck. But of such things it may be necessary to speak later. The point here is that Shaw behaved towards Socialism just as he behaved towards vegetarianism; he offered every reason except the emotional reason, which was the real one. When taxed in a Daily News discussion with being a Socialist for the obvious reason that poverty was cruel, he said this was quite wrong; it was only because poverty was wasteful. He practically professed that modern society annoyed him, not so much like an unrighteous kingdom, but rather like an untidy room. Everyone who knew him knew, of course, that he was full of a proper brotherly bitterness about the oppression of the poor. But here again he would not admit that he was anything but an Economist.

In thus setting his face like flint against sentimental methods of argument he undoubtedly did one great service to the causes for which he stood. Every vulgar anti-humanitarian, every snob who wants monkeys vivisected or beggars flogged has always fallen back upon stereotyped phrases like "maudlin" and "sentimental," which indicated the humanitarian as a man in a weak condition of tears. The mere personality of Shaw has shattered those foolish phrases for ever. Shaw the humanitarian was like Voltaire the humanitarian, a man whose satire was like steel, the hardest and coolest of fighters, upon whose piercing point the wretched defenders of a masculine brutality wriggled like worms.

In this quarrel one cannot wish Shaw even an inch less contemptuous, for the people who call compassion "sentimentalism" deserve nothing but contempt. In this one does not even regret his coldness; it is an honourable contrast to the blundering emotionalism of the jingoes and flagellomaniacs. The truth is that the ordinary anti-humanitarian only manages to harden his heart by having already softened his head. It is the reverse of sentimental to insist that a nigger is being burned alive; for sentimentalism must be the clinging to pleasant thoughts. And no one, not even a Higher Evolutionist, can think a nigger burned alive a pleasant thought. The sentimental thing is to warm your hands at the fire while denying the existence of the nigger, and that is the ruling habit in England, as it has been the chief business of Bernard Shaw to show. And in this the brutalitarians hate him not because he is soft, but because he is hard, because he is not to be softened by conventional excuses; because he looks hard at a thing--and hits harder. Some foolish fellow of the Henley-Whibley reaction wrote that if we were to be conquerors we must be less tender and more ruthless. Shaw answered with really avenging irony, "What a light this principle throws on the defeat of the tender Dervish, the compassionate Zulu, and the morbidly humane Boxer at the hands of the hardy savages of England, France, and Germany." In that sentence an idiot is obliterated and

the whole story of Europe told; but it is immensely stiffened by its ironic form. In the same way Shaw washed away for ever the idea that Socialists were weak dreamers, who said that things might be only because they wished them to be. G. B. S. in argument with an individualist showed himself, as a rule, much the better economist and much the worse rhetorician. In this atmosphere arose a celebrated Fabian Society, of which he is still the leading spirit--a society which answered all charges of impracticable idealism by pushing both its theoretic statements and its practical negotiations to the verge of cynicism. Bernard Shaw was the literary expert who wrote most of its pamphlets. In one of them, among such sections as Fabian Temperance Reform, Fabian Education and so on, there was an entry gravely headed "Fabian Natural Science," which stated that in the Socialist cause light was needed more than heat.

Thus the Irish detachment and the Puritan austerity did much good to the country and to the causes for which they were embattled. But there was one thing they did not do; they did nothing for Shaw himself in the matter of his primary mistakes and his real limitation. His great defect was and is the lack of democratic sentiment. And there was nothing democratic either in his humanitarianism or his Socialism. These new and refined faiths tended rather to make the Irishman yet more aristocratic, the Puritan yet more exclusive. To be a Socialist was to look down on all the peasant owners of the earth, especially on the peasant owners of his own island. To be a Vegetarian was to be a man with a strange and mysterious morality, a man who thought the good lord who roasted oxen for his vassals only less bad than the bad lord who roasted the vassals. None of these advanced views could the common people hear gladly; nor indeed was Shaw specially anxious to please the common people. It was his glory that he pitied animals like men; it was his defect that he pitied men only too much like animals. Foulon said of the democracy, "Let them eat grass." Shaw said, "Let them eat greens." He had more benevolence, but almost as much disdain. "I have never had any feelings about the English working classes," he said elsewhere, "except a desire to abolish them and replace them by sensible people." This is the unsympathetic side of the thing; but it had another and much nobler side, which must at least be seriously recognised before we pass on to much lighter things.

Bernard Shaw is not a democrat; but he is a splendid republican. The nuance of difference between those terms precisely depicts him. And there is after all a good deal of dim democracy in England, in the sense that there is much of a blind sense of brotherhood, and nowhere more than among old-fashioned and even reactionary people. But a republican is a rare bird, and a noble one. Shaw is a republican in the literal and Latin sense; he cares

more for the Public Thing than for any private thing. The interest of the State is with him a sincere thirst of the soul, as it was in the little pagan cities. Now this public passion, this clean appetite for order and equity, had fallen to a lower ebb, had more nearly disappeared altogether, during Shaw's earlier epoch than at any other time. Individualism of the worst type was on the top of the wave; I mean artistic individualism, which is so much crueller, so much blinder and so much more irrational even than commercial individualism. The decay of society was praised by artists as the decay of a corpse is praised by worms. The æsthete was all receptiveness, like the flea. His only affair in this world was to feed on its facts and colours, like a parasite upon blood. The ego was the all; and the praise of it was enunciated in madder and madder rhythms by poets whose Helicon was absinthe and whose Pegasus was the nightmare. This diseased pride was not even conscious of a public interest, and would have found all political terms utterly tasteless and insignificant. It was no longer a question of one man one vote, but of one man one universe.

I have in my time had my fling at the Fabian Society, at the pedantry of schemes, the arrogance of experts; nor do I regret it now. But when I remember that other world against which it reared its bourgeois banner of cleanliness and common sense, I will not end this chapter without doing it decent honour. Give me the drain pipes of the Fabians rather than the panpipes of the later poets; the drain pipes have a nicer smell. Give me even that business-like benevolence that herded men like beasts rather than that exquisite art which isolated them like devils; give me even the suppression of "Zæo" rather than the triumph of "Salome." And if I feel such a confession to be due to those Fabians who could hardly have been anything but experts in any society, such as Mr. Sidney Webb or Mr. Edward Pease, it is due yet more strongly to the greatest of the Fabians. Here was a man who could have enjoyed art among the artists, who could have been the wittiest of all the flâneurs; who could have made epigrams like diamonds and drunk music like wine. He has instead laboured in a mill of statistics and crammed his mind with all the most dreary and the most filthy details, so that he can argue on the spur of the moment about sewing-machines or sewage, about typhus fever or twopenny tubes. The usual mean theory of motives will not cover the case; it is not ambition, for he could have been twenty times more prominent as a plausible and popular humorist. It is the real and ancient emotion of the *salus populi*, almost extinct in our oligarchical chaos; nor will I for one, as I pass on to many matters of argument or quarrel, neglect to salute a passion so implacable and so pure.

The Critic

It appears a point of some mystery to the present writer that Bernard Shaw should have been so long unrecognised and almost in beggary. I should have thought his talent was of the ringing and arresting sort; such as even editors and publishers would have sense enough to seize. Yet it is quite certain that he almost starved in London for many years, writing occasional columns for an advertisement or words for a picture. And it is equally certain (it is proved by twenty anecdotes, but no one who knows Shaw needs any anecdotes to prove it) that in those days of desperation he again and again threw up chances and flung back good bargains which did not suit his unique and erratic sense of honour. The fame of having first offered Shaw to the public upon a platform worthy of him belongs, like many other public services, to Mr. William Archer.

I say it seems odd that such a writer should not be appreciated in a flash; but upon this point there is evidently a real difference of opinion, and it constitutes for me the strangest difficulty of the subject. I hear many people complain that Bernard Shaw deliberately mystifies them. I cannot imagine what they mean; it seems to me that he deliberately insults them. His language, especially on moral questions, is generally as straight and solid as that of a bargee and far less ornate and symbolic than that of a hansom-cabman. The prosperous English Philistine complains that Mr. Shaw is making a fool of him. Whereas Mr. Shaw is not in the least making a fool of him; Mr. Shaw is, with laborious lucidity, calling him a fool. G. B. S. calls a landlord a thief; and the landlord, instead of denying or resenting it, says, "Ah, that fellow hides his meaning so cleverly that one can never make out what he means, it is all so fine spun and fantastical." G. B. S. calls a statesman a liar to his face, and the statesman cries in a kind of ecstasy, "Ah, what quaint, intricate and half-tangled trains of thought! Ah, what elusive and many-coloured mysteries of half-meaning!" I think it is always quite plain what Mr. Shaw means, even when he is joking, and it generally means that the people he is talking to ought to howl aloud for their sins. But the average representative of them undoubtedly treats the Shavian meaning as tricky and complex, when it is really direct and offensive. He always accuses Shaw of pulling his leg, at the exact moment when Shaw is pulling his nose.

This prompt and pungent style he learnt in the open, upon political tubs and platforms; and he is very legitimately proud of it. He boasts of being a demagogue; "The cart and the trumpet for me," he says, with admirable good

sense. Everyone will remember the effective appearance of Cyrano de Bergerac in the first act of the fine play of that name; when instead of leaping in by any hackneyed door or window, he suddenly springs upon a chair above the crowd that has so far kept him invisible; "les bras croisés, le feutre en bataille, la moustache hérissée, le nez terrible." I will not go so far as to say that when Bernard Shaw sprang upon a chair or tub in Trafalgar Square he had the hat in battle, or even that he had the nose terrible. But just as we see Cyrano best when he thus leaps above the crowd, I think we may take this moment of Shaw stepping on his little platform to see him clearly as he then was, and even as he has largely not ceased to be. I, at least, have only known him in his middle age; yet I think I can see him, younger yet only a little more alert, with hair more red but with face yet paler, as he first stood up upon some cart or barrow in the tossing glare of the gas.

The first fact that one realises about Shaw (independent of all one has read and often contradicting it) is his voice. Primarily it is the voice of an Irishman, and then something of the voice of a musician. It possibly explains much of his career; a man may be permitted to say so many impudent things with so pleasant an intonation. But the voice is not only Irish and agreeable, it is also frank and as it were inviting conference. This goes with a style and gesture which can only be described as at once very casual and very emphatic. He assumes that bodily supremacy which goes with oratory, but he assumes it with almost ostentatious carelessness; he throws back the head, but loosely and laughingly. He is at once swaggering and yet shrugging his shoulders, as if to drop from them the mantle of the orator which he has confidently assumed. Lastly, no man ever used voice or gesture better for the purpose of expressing certainty; no man can say "I tell Mr. Jones he is totally wrong" with more air of unforced and even casual conviction.

This particular play of feature or pitch of voice, at once didactic and yet not uncomrade-like, must be counted a very important fact, especially in connection with the period when that voice was first heard. It must be remembered that Shaw emerged as a wit in a sort of secondary age of wits; one of those stale interludes of prematurely old young men, which separate the serious epochs of history. Oscar Wilde was its god; but he was somewhat more mystical, not to say monstrous, than the average of its dried and decorous impudence. The two survivals of that time, as far as I know, are Mr. Max Beerbohm and Mr. Graham Robertson; two most charming people; but the air they had to live in was the devil. One of its notes was an artificial reticence of speech, which waited till it could plant the perfect epigram. Its typical products were far too conceited to lay down the law. Now

when people heard that Bernard Shaw was witty, as he most certainly was, when they heard his mots repeated like those of Whistler or Wilde, when they heard things like "the Seven deadly Virtues" or "Who was Hall Caine?" they expected another of these silent sarcastic dandies who went about with one epigram, patient and poisonous, like a bee with his one sting. And when they saw and heard the new humorist they found no fixed sneer, no frock coat, no green carnation, no silent Savoy Restaurant good manners, no fear of looking a fool, no particular notion of looking a gentleman. They found a talkative Irishman with a kind voice and a brown coat; open gestures and an evident desire to make people really agree with him. He had his own kind of affectations no doubt, and his own kind of tricks of debate; but he broke, and, thank God, forever the spell of the little man with the single eye glass who had frozen both faith and fun at so many tea-tables. Shaw's humane voice and hearty manner were so obviously more the things of a great man than the hard, gem-like brilliancy of Wilde or the careful ill-temper of Whistler. He brought in a breezier sort of insolence; the single eye-glass fled before the single eye.

Added to the effect of the amiable dogmatic voice and lean, loose swaggering figure, is that of the face with which so many caricaturists have fantastically delighted themselves, the Mephistophelean face with the fierce tufted eyebrows and forked red beard. Yet those caricaturists in their natural delight in coming upon so striking a face, have somewhat misrepresented it, making it merely Satanic; whereas its actual expression has quite as much benevolence as mockery. By this time his costume has become a part of his personality; one has come to think of the reddish brown Jaeger suit as if it were a sort of reddish brown fur, and were, like the hair and eyebrows, a part of the animal; yet there are those who claim to remember a Bernard Shaw of yet more awful aspect before Jaeger came to his assistance; a Bernard Shaw in a dilapidated frock-coat and some sort of straw hat. I can hardly believe it; the man is so much of a piece, and must always have dressed appropriately. In any case his brown woollen clothes, at once artistic and hygienic, completed the appeal for which he stood; which might be defined as an eccentric healthy-mindedness. But something of the vagueness and equivocation of his first fame is probably due to the different functions which he performed in the contemporary world of art.

He began by writing novels. They are not much read, and indeed not imperatively worth reading, with the one exception of the crude and magnificent Cashel Byron's Profession. Mr. William Archer, in the course of his kindly efforts on behalf of his young Irish friend, sent this book to Samoa, for the opinion of the most elvish and yet efficient of modern critics. Stevenson summed up much of Shaw even from that fragment when he

spoke of a romantic griffin roaring with laughter at the nature of his own quest. He also added the not wholly unjustified postscript: "I say, Archer,-- my God, what women!"

The fiction was largely dropped; but when he began work he felt his way by the avenues of three arts. He was an art critic, a dramatic critic, and a musical critic; and in all three, it need hardly be said, he fought for the newest style and the most revolutionary school. He wrote on all these as he would have written on anything; but it was, I fancy, about the music that he cared most.

It may often be remarked that mathematicians love and understand music more than they love or understand poetry. Bernard Shaw is in much the same condition; indeed, in attempting to do justice to Shakespeare's poetry, he always calls it "word music." It is not difficult to explain this special attachment of the mere logician to music. The logician, like every other man on earth, must have sentiment and romance in his existence; in every man's life, indeed, which can be called a life at all, sentiment is the most solid thing. But if the extreme logician turns for his emotions to poetry, he is exasperated and bewildered by discovering that the words of his own trade are used in an entirely different meaning. He conceives that he understands the word "visible," and then finds Milton applying it to darkness, in which nothing is visible. He supposes that he understands the word "hide," and then finds Shelley talking of a poet hidden in the light. He has reason to believe that he understands the common word "hung"; and then William Shakespeare, Esquire, of Stratford-on-Avon, gravely assures him that the tops of the tall sea waves were hung with deafening clamours on the slippery clouds. That is why the common arithmetician prefers music to poetry. Words are his scientific instruments. It irritates him that they should be anyone else's musical instruments. He is willing to see men juggling, but not men juggling with his own private tools and possessions--his terms. It is then that he turns with an utter relief to music. Here are all the same fascination and inspiration, all the same purity and plunging force as in poetry; but not requiring any verbal confession that light conceals things or that darkness can be seen in the dark. Music is mere beauty; it is beauty in the abstract, beauty in solution. It is a shapeless and liquid element of beauty, in which a man may really float, not indeed affirming the truth, but not denying it. Bernard Shaw, as I have already said, is infinitely far above all such mere mathematicians and pedantic reasoners; still his feeling is partly the same. He adores music because it cannot deal with romantic terms either in their right or their wrong sense. Music can be romantic without reminding him of Shakespeare and Walter Scott, with whom he has had personal quarrels. Music can be Catholic without reminding him

verbally of the Catholic Church, which he has never seen, and is sure he does not like. Bernard Shaw can agree with Wagner, the musician, because he speaks without words; if it had been Wagner the man he would certainly have had words with him. Therefore I would suggest that Shaw's love of music (which is so fundamental that it must be mentioned early, if not first, in his story) may itself be considered in the first case as the imaginative safety-valve of the rationalistic Irishman.

This much may be said conjecturally over the present signature; but more must not be said. Bernard Shaw understands music so much better than I do that it is just possible that he is, in that tongue and atmosphere, all that he is not elsewhere. While he is writing with a pen I know his limitations as much as I admire his genius; and I know it is true to say that he does not appreciate romance. But while he is playing on the piano he may be cocking a feather, drawing a sword or draining a flagon for all I know. While he is speaking I am sure that there are some things he does not understand. But while he is listening (at the Queen's Hall) he may understand everything, including God and me. Upon this part of him I am a reverent agnostic; it is well to have some such dark continent in the character of a man of whom one writes. It preserves two very important things--modesty in the biographer and mystery in the biography.

For the purpose of our present generalisation it is only necessary to say that Shaw, as a musical critic, summed himself up as "The Perfect Wagnerite"; he threw himself into subtle and yet trenchant eulogy of that revolutionary voice in music. It was the same with the other arts. As he was a Perfect Wagnerite in music, so he was a Perfect Whistlerite in painting; so above all he was a Perfect Ibsenite in drama. And with this we enter that part of his career with which this book is more specially concerned. When Mr. William Archer got him established as dramatic critic of the Saturday Review, he became for the first time "a star of the stage"; a shooting star and sometimes a destroying comet.

On the day of that appointment opened one of the very few exhilarating and honest battles that broke the silence of the slow and cynical collapse of the nineteenth century. Bernard Shaw the demagogue had got his cart and his trumpet; and was resolved to make them like the car of destiny and the trumpet of judgment. He had not the servility of the ordinary rebel, who is content to go on rebelling against kings and priests, because such rebellion is as old and as established as any priests or kings. He cast about him for something to attack which was not merely powerful or placid, but was unattacked. After a little quite sincere reflection, he found it. He would not be content to be a common atheist; he wished to blaspheme something in

which even atheists believed. He was not satisfied with being revolutionary; there were so many revolutionists. He wanted to pick out some prominent institution which had been irrationally and instinctively accepted by the most violent and profane; something of which Mr. Foote would speak as respectfully on the front page of the *Freethinker* as Mr. St. Loe Strachey on the front page of the *Spectator*. He found the thing; he found the great unassailed English institution--Shakespeare.

But Shaw's attack on Shakespeare, though exaggerated for the fun of the thing, was not by any means the mere folly or firework paradox that has been supposed. He meant what he said; what was called his levity was merely the laughter of a man who enjoyed saying what he meant--an occupation which is indeed one of the greatest larks in life. Moreover, it can honestly be said that Shaw did good by shaking the mere idolatry of Him of Avon. That idolatry was bad for England; it buttressed our perilous self-complacency by making us think that we alone had, not merely a great poet, but the one poet above criticism. It was bad for literature; it made a minute model out of work that was really a hasty and faulty masterpiece. And it was bad for religion and morals that there should be so huge a terrestrial idol, that we should put such utter and unreasoning trust in any child of man. It is true that it was largely through Shaw's own defects that he beheld the defects of Shakespeare. But it needed someone equally prosaic to resist what was perilous in the charm of such poetry; it may not be altogether a mistake to send a deaf man to destroy the rock of the sirens.

This attitude of Shaw illustrates of course all three of the divisions or aspects to which the reader's attention has been drawn. It was partly the attitude of the Irishman objecting to the Englishman turning his mere artistic taste into a religion; especially when it was a taste merely taught him by his aunts and uncles. In Shaw's opinion (one might say) the English do not really enjoy Shakespeare or even admire Shakespeare; one can only say, in the strong colloquialism, that they swear by Shakespeare. He is a mere god; a thing to be invoked. And Shaw's whole business was to set up the things which were to be sworn by as things to be sworn at. It was partly again the revolutionist in pursuit of pure novelty, hating primarily the oppression of the past, almost hating history itself. For Bernard Shaw the prophets were to be stoned after, and not before, men had built their sepulchres. There was a Yankee smartness in the man which was irritated at the idea of being dominated by a person dead for three hundred years; like Mark Twain, he wanted a fresher corpse.

These two motives there were, but they were small compared with the other. It was the third part of him, the Puritan, that was really at war with

Shakespeare. He denounced that playwright almost exactly as any contemporary Puritan coming out of a conventicle in a steeple-crowned hat and stiff bands might have denounced the playwright coming out of the stage door of the old Globe Theatre. This is not a mere fancy; it is philosophically true. A legend has run round the newspapers that Bernard Shaw offered himself as a better writer than Shakespeare. This is false and quite unjust; Bernard Shaw never said anything of the kind. The writer whom he did say was better than Shakespeare was not himself, but Bunyan. And he justified it by attributing to Bunyan a virile acceptance of life as a high and harsh adventure, while in Shakespeare he saw nothing but profligate pessimism, the vanitas vanitatum of a disappointed voluptuary. According to this view Shakespeare was always saying, "Out, out, brief candle," because his was only a ballroom candle; while Bunyan was seeking to light such a candle as by God's grace should never be put out.

It is odd that Bernard Shaw's chief error or insensibility should have been the instrument of his noblest affirmation. The denunciation of Shakespeare was a mere misunderstanding. But the denunciation of Shakespeare's pessimism was the most splendidly understanding of all his utterances. This is the greatest thing in Shaw, a serious optimism--even a tragic optimism. Life is a thing too glorious to be enjoyed. To be is an exacting and exhausting business; the trumpet though inspiring is terrible. Nothing that he ever wrote is so noble as his simple reference to the sturdy man who stepped up to the Keeper of the Book of Life and said, "Put down my name, Sir." It is true that Shaw called this heroic philosophy by wrong names and buttressed it with false metaphysics; that was the weakness of the age. The temporary decline of theology had involved the neglect of philosophy and all fine thinking; and Bernard Shaw had to find shaky justifications in Schopenhauer for the sons of God shouting for joy. He called it the Will to Live--a phrase invented by Prussian professors who would like to exist, but can't. Afterwards he asked people to worship the Life-Force; as if one could worship a hyphen. But though he covered it with crude new names (which are now fortunately crumbling everywhere like bad mortar) he was on the side of the good old cause; the oldest and the best of all causes, the cause of creation against destruction, the cause of yes against no, the cause of the seed against the stony earth and the star against the abyss.

His misunderstanding of Shakespeare arose largely from the fact that he is a Puritan, while Shakespeare was spiritually a Catholic. The former is always screwing himself up to see truth; the latter is often content that truth is there. The Puritan is only strong enough to stiffen; the Catholic is strong enough to relax. Shaw, I think, has entirely misunderstood the pessimistic

passages of Shakespeare. They are flying moods which a man with a fixed faith can afford to entertain. That all is vanity, that life is dust and love is ashes, these are frivolities, these are jokes that a Catholic can afford to utter. He knows well enough that there is a life that is not dust and a love that is not ashes. But just as he may let himself go more than the Puritan in the matter of enjoyment, so he may let himself go more than the Puritan in the matter of melancholy. The sad exuberances of Hamlet are merely like the glad exuberances of Falstaff. This is not conjecture; it is the text of Shakespeare. In the very act of uttering his pessimism, Hamlet admits that it is a mood and not the truth. Heaven is a heavenly thing, only to him it seems a foul congregation of vapours. Man is the paragon of animals, only to him he seems a quintessence of dust. Hamlet is quite the reverse of a sceptic. He is a man whose strong intellect believes much more than his weak temperament can make vivid to him. But this power of knowing a thing without feeling it, this power of believing a thing without experiencing it, this is an old Catholic complexity, and the Puritan has never understood it. Shakespeare confesses his moods (mostly by the mouths of villains and failures), but he never sets up his moods against his mind. His cry of *vanitas vanitatum* is itself only a harmless vanity. Readers may not agree with my calling him Catholic with a big C; but they will hardly complain of my calling him catholic with a small one. And that is here the principal point. Shakespeare was not in any sense a pessimist; he was, if anything, an optimist so universal as to be able to enjoy even pessimism. And this is exactly where he differs from the Puritan. The true Puritan is not squeamish: the true Puritan is free to say "Damn it!" But the Catholic Elizabethan was free (on passing provocation) to say "Damn it all!"

It need hardly be explained that Bernard Shaw added to his negative case of a dramatist to be depreciated a corresponding affirmative case of a dramatist to be exalted and advanced. He was not content with so remote a comparison as that between Shakespeare and Bunyan. In his vivacious weekly articles in the *Saturday Review*, the real comparison upon which everything turned was the comparison between Shakespeare and Ibsen. He early threw himself with all possible eagerness into the public disputes about the great Scandinavian; and though there was no doubt whatever about which side he supported, there was much that was individual in the line he took. It is not our business here to explore that extinct volcano. You may say that anti-Ibsenism is dead, or you may say that Ibsen is dead; in any case, that controversy is dead, and death, as the Roman poet says, can alone confess of what small atoms we are made. The opponents of Ibsen largely exhibited the permanent qualities of the populace; that is, their instincts were right and their reasons wrong. They made the complete controversial mistake of calling Ibsen a pessimist; whereas, indeed, his chief

weakness is a rather childish confidence in mere nature and freedom, and a blindness (either of experience or of culture) in the matter of original sin. In this sense Ibsen is not so much a pessimist as a highly crude kind of optimist. Nevertheless the man in the street was right in his fundamental instinct, as he always is. Ibsen, in his pale northern style, is an optimist; but for all that he is a depressing person. The optimism of Ibsen is less comforting than the pessimism of Dante; just as a Norwegian sunrise, however splendid, is colder than a southern night.

But on the side of those who fought for Ibsen there was also a disagreement, and perhaps also a mistake. The vague army of "the advanced" (an army which advances in all directions) were united in feeling that they ought to be the friends of Ibsen because he also was advancing somewhere somehow. But they were also seriously impressed by Flaubert, by Oscar Wilde and all the rest who told them that a work of art was in another universe from ethics and social good. Therefore many, I think most, of the Ibsenites praised the Ibsen plays merely as choses vues, æsthetic affirmations of what can be without any reference to what ought to be. Mr. William Archer himself inclined to this view, though his strong sagacity kept him in a haze of healthy doubt on the subject. Mr. Walkley certainly took this view. But this view Mr. George Bernard Shaw abruptly and violently refused to take.

With the full Puritan combination of passion and precision he informed everybody that Ibsen was not artistic, but moral; that his dramas were didactic, that all great art was didactic, that Ibsen was strongly on the side of some of his characters and strongly against others, that there was preaching and public spirit in the work of good dramatists; and that if this were not so, dramatists and all other artists would be mere panders of intellectual debauchery, to be locked up as the Puritans locked up the stage players. No one can understand Bernard Shaw who does not give full value to this early revolt of his on behalf of ethics against the ruling school of l'art pour l'art. It is interesting because it is connected with other ambitions in the man, especially with that which has made him somewhat vainer of being a Parish Councillor than of being one of the most popular dramatists in Europe. But its chief interest is again to be referred to our stratification of the psychology; it is the lover of true things rebelling for once against merely new things; it is the Puritan suddenly refusing to be the mere Progressive.

But this attitude obviously laid on the ethical lover of Ibsen a not inconsiderable obligation. If the new drama had an ethical purpose, what was it? and if Ibsen was a moral teacher, what the deuce was he teaching? Answers to this question, answers of manifold brilliancy and promise, were scattered through all the dramatic criticisms of those years on the Saturday

Review. But even Bernard Shaw grew tired after a time of discussing Ibsen only in connection with the current pantomime or the latest musical comedy. It was felt that so much sincerity and fertility of explanation justified a concentrated attack; and in 1891 appeared the brilliant book called *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, which some have declared to be merely the quintessence of Shaw. However this may be, it was in fact and profession the quintessence of Shaw's theory of the morality or propaganda of Ibsen.

The book itself is much longer than the book that I am writing; and as is only right in so spirited an apologist, every paragraph is provocative. I could write an essay on every sentence which I accept and three essays on every sentence which I deny. Bernard Shaw himself is a master of compression; he can put a conception more compactly than any other man alive. It is therefore rather difficult to compress his compression; one feels as if one were trying to extract a beef essence from Bovril. But the shortest form in which I can state the idea of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* is that it is the idea of distrusting ideals, which are universal, in comparison with facts, which are miscellaneous. The man whom he attacks throughout he calls "The Idealist"; that is the man who permits himself to be mainly moved by a moral generalisation. "Actions," he says, "are to be judged by their effect on happiness, and not by their conformity to any ideal." As we have already seen, there is a certain inconsistency here; for while Shaw had always chucked all ideals overboard the one he had chucked first was the ideal of happiness. Passing this however for the present, we may mark the above as the most satisfying summary. If I tell a lie I am not to blame myself for having violated the ideal of truth, but only for having perhaps got myself into a mess and made things worse than they were before. If I have broken my word I need not feel (as my fathers did) that I have broken something inside of me, as one who breaks a blood vessel. It all depends on whether I have broken up something outside me; as one who breaks up an evening party. If I shoot my father the only question is whether I have made him happy. I must not admit the idealistic conception that the mere shooting of my father might possibly make me unhappy. We are to judge of every individual case as it arises, apparently without any social summary or moral ready-reckoner at all. "The Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule." We must not say that it is right to keep promises, but that it may be right to keep this promise. Essentially it is anarchy; nor is it very easy to see how a state could be very comfortable which was Socialist in all its public morality and Anarchist in all its private. But if it is anarchy, it is anarchy without any of the abandon and exuberance of anarchy. It is a worried and conscientious anarchy; an anarchy of painful delicacy and even caution. For it refuses to trust in traditional experiments or plainly trodden tracks; every

case must be considered anew from the beginning, and yet considered with the most wide-eyed care for human welfare; every man must act as if he were the first man made. Briefly, we must always be worrying about what is best for our children, and we must not take one hint or rule of thumb from our fathers. Some think that this anarchism would make a man tread down mighty cities in his madness. I think it would make a man walk down the street as if he were walking on egg-shells. I do not think this experiment in opportunism would end in frantic license; I think it would end in frozen timidity. If a man was forbidden to solve moral problems by moral science or the help of mankind, his course would be quite easy--he would not solve the problems. The world instead of being a knot so tangled as to need unravelling, would simply become a piece of clockwork too complicated to be touched. I cannot think that this untutored worry was what Ibsen meant; I have my doubts as to whether it was what Shaw meant; but I do not think that it can be substantially doubted that it was what he said.

In any case it can be asserted that the general aim of the work was to exalt the immediate conclusions of practice against the general conclusions of theory. Shaw objected to the solution of every problem in a play being by its nature a general solution, applicable to all other such problems. He disliked the entrance of a universal justice at the end of the last act; treading down all the personal ultimatums and all the varied certainties of men. He disliked the god from the machine--because he was from a machine. But even without the machine he tended to dislike the god; because a god is more general than a man. His enemies have accused Shaw of being anti-domestic, a shaker of the roof-tree. But in this sense Shaw may be called almost madly domestic. He wishes each private problem to be settled in private, without reference to sociological ethics. And the only objection to this kind of gigantic casuistry is that the theatre is really too small to discuss it. It would not be fair to play David and Goliath on a stage too small to admit Goliath. And it is not fair to discuss private morality on a stage too small to admit the enormous presence of public morality; that character which has not appeared in a play since the Middle Ages; whose name is Everyman and whose honour we have all in our keeping.

The Dramatist

No one who was alive at the time and interested in such matters will ever forget the first acting of *Arms and the Man*. It was applauded by that indescribable element in all of us which rejoices to see the genuine thing prevail against the plausible; that element which rejoices that even its enemies are alive. Apart from the problems raised in the play, the very form of it was an attractive and forcible innovation. Classic plays which were wholly heroic, comic plays which were wholly and even heartlessly ironical, were common enough. Commonest of all in this particular time was the play that began playfully, with plenty of comic business, and was gradually sobered by sentiment until it ended on a note of romance or even of pathos. A commonplace little officer, the butt of the mess, becomes by the last act as high and hopeless a lover as Dante. Or a vulgar and violent pork-butcher remembers his own youth before the curtain goes down. The first thing that Bernard Shaw did when he stepped before the footlights was to reverse this process. He resolved to build a play not on pathos, but on bathos. The officer should be heroic first and then everyone should laugh at him; the curtain should go up on a man remembering his youth, and he should only reveal himself as a violent pork-butcher when someone interrupted him with an order for pork. This merely technical originality is indicated in the very title of the play. The *Arma Virumque* of Virgil is a mounting and ascending phrase, the man is more than his weapons. The Latin line suggests a superb procession which should bring on to the stage the brazen and resounding armour, the shield and shattering axe, but end with the hero himself, taller and more terrible because unarmed. The technical effect of Shaw's scheme is like the same scene, in which a crowd should carry even more gigantic shapes of shield and helmet, but when the horns and howls were at their highest, should end with the figure of Little Tich. The name itself is meant to be a bathos; arms--and the man.

It is well to begin with the superficial; and this is the superficial effectiveness of Shaw; the brilliancy of bathos. But of course the vitality and value of his plays does not lie merely in this; any more than the value of Swinburne lies in alliteration or the value of Hood in puns. This is not his message; but it is his method; it is his style. The first taste we had of it was in this play of *Arms and the Man*; but even at the very first it was evident that there was much more in the play than that. Among other things there was one thing not unimportant; there was savage sincerity. Indeed, only a ferociously sincere person can produce such effective flippancies on a matter like war; just as only a strong man could juggle with cannon balls. It is all

very well to use the word "fool" as synonymous with "jester"; but daily experience shows that it is generally the solemn and silent man who is the fool. It is all very well to accuse Mr. Shaw of standing on his head; but if you stand on your head you must have a hard and solid head to stand on. In *Arms and the Man* the bathos of form was strictly the incarnation of a strong satire in the idea. The play opens in an atmosphere of military melodrama; the dashing officer of cavalry going off to death in an attitude, the lovely heroine left in tearful rapture; the brass band, the noise of guns and the red fire. Into all this enters Bluntschli, the little sturdy crop-haired Swiss professional soldier, a man without a country but with a trade. He tells the army-adoring heroine frankly that she is a humbug; and she, after a moment's reflection, appears to agree with him. The play is like nearly all Shaw's plays, the dialogue of a conversion. By the end of it the young lady has lost all her military illusions and admires this mercenary soldier not because he faces guns, but because he faces facts.

This was a fitting entrance for Shaw to his didactic drama; because the commonplace courage which he respects in Bluntschli was the one virtue which he was destined to praise throughout. We can best see how the play symbolises and summarises Bernard Shaw if we compare it with some other attack by modern humanitarians upon war. Shaw has many of the actual opinions of Tolstoy. Like Tolstoy he tells men, with coarse innocence, that romantic war is only butchery and that romantic love is only lust. But Tolstoy objects to these things because they are real; he really wishes to abolish them. Shaw only objects to them in so far as they are ideal; that is in so far as they are idealised. Shaw objects not so much to war as to the attractiveness of war. He does not so much dislike love as the love of love. Before the temple of Mars, Tolstoy stands and thunders, "There shall be no wars"; Bernard Shaw merely murmurs, "Wars if you must; but for God's sake, not war songs." Before the temple of Venus, Tolstoy cries terribly, "Come out of it!"; Shaw is quite content to say, "Do not be taken in by it." Tolstoy seems really to propose that high passion and patriotic valour should be destroyed. Shaw is more moderate; and only asks that they should be desecrated. Upon this note, both about sex and conflict, he was destined to dwell through much of his work with the most wonderful variations of witty adventure and intellectual surprise. It may be doubted perhaps whether this realism in love and war is quite so sensible as it looks. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*; the world is wiser than the moderns. The world has kept sentimentalities simply because they are the most practical things in the world. They alone make men do things. The world does not encourage a quite rational lover, simply because a perfectly rational lover would never get married. The world does not encourage a perfectly rational army, because a perfectly rational army would run away.

The brain of Bernard Shaw was like a wedge in the literal sense. Its sharpest end was always in front; and it split our society from end to end the moment it had entrance at all. As I have said he was long unheard of; but he had not the tragedy of many authors, who were heard of long before they were heard. When you had read any Shaw you read all Shaw. When you had seen one of his plays you waited for more. And when he brought them out in volume form, you did what is repugnant to any literary man--you bought a book.

The dramatic volume with which Shaw dazzled the public was called, *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*. I think the most striking and typical thing about it was that he did not know very clearly which plays were unpleasant and which were pleasant. "Pleasant" is a word which is almost unmeaning to Bernard Shaw. Except, as I suppose, in music (where I cannot follow him), relish and receptivity are things that simply do not appear. He has the best of tongues and the worst of palates. With the possible exception of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (which was at least unpleasant in the sense of being forbidden) I can see no particular reason why any of the seven plays should be held specially to please or displease. First in fame and contemporary importance came the reprint of *Arms and the Man*, of which I have already spoken. Over all the rest towered unquestionably the two figures of *Mrs. Warren* and of *Candida*. They were neither of them pleasant, except as all good art is pleasant. They were neither of them really unpleasant except as all truth is unpleasant. But they did represent the author's normal preference and his principal fear; and those two sculptured giantesses largely upheld his fame.

I fancy that the author rather dislikes *Candida* because it is so generally liked. I give my own feeling for what it is worth (a foolish phrase), but I think that there were only two moments when this powerful writer was truly, in the ancient and popular sense, inspired; that is, breathing from a bigger self and telling more truth than he knew. One is that scene in a later play where after the secrets and revenges of Egypt have rioted and rotted all round him, the colossal sanity of Cæsar is suddenly acclaimed with swords. The other is that great last scene in *Candida* where the wife, stung into final speech, declared her purpose of remaining with the strong man because he is the weak man. The wife is asked to decide between two men, one a strenuous self-confident popular preacher, her husband, the other a wild and weak young poet, logically futile and physically timid, her lover; and she chooses the former because he has more weakness and more need of her. Even among the plain and ringing paradoxes of the Shaw play this is one of the best reversals or turnovers ever effected. A paradoxical writer like Bernard Shaw is perpetually and tiresomely told that he stands on his head. But all

romance and all religion consist in making the whole universe stand on its head. That reversal is the whole idea of virtue; that the last shall be first and the first last. Considered as a pure piece of Shaw therefore, the thing is of the best. But it is also something much better than Shaw. The writer touches certain realities commonly outside his scope; especially the reality of the normal wife's attitude to the normal husband, an attitude which is not romantic but which is yet quite quixotic; which is insanely unselfish and yet quite cynically clear-sighted. It involves human sacrifice without in the least involving idolatry.

The truth is that in this place Bernard Shaw comes within an inch of expressing something that is not properly expressed anywhere else; the idea of marriage. Marriage is not a mere chain upon love as the anarchists say; nor is it a mere crown upon love as the sentimentalists say. Marriage is a fact, an actual human relation like that of motherhood which has certain human habits and loyalties, except in a few monstrous cases where it is turned to torture by special insanity and sin. A marriage is neither an ecstasy nor a slavery; it is a commonwealth; it is a separate working and fighting thing like a nation. Kings and diplomatists talk of "forming alliances" when they make weddings; but indeed every wedding is primarily an alliance. The family is a fact even when it is not an agreeable fact, and a man is part of his wife even when he wishes he wasn't. The twain are one flesh--yes, even when they are not one spirit. Man is duplex. Man is a quadruped.

Of this ancient and essential relation there are certain emotional results, which are subtle, like all the growths of nature. And one of them is the attitude of the wife to the husband, whom she regards at once as the strongest and most helpless of human figures. She regards him in some strange fashion at once as a warrior who must make his way and as an infant who is sure to lose his way. The man has emotions which exactly correspond; sometimes looking down at his wife and sometimes up at her; for marriage is like a splendid game of see-saw. Whatever else it is, it is not comradeship. This living, ancestral bond (not of love or fear, but strictly of marriage) has been twice expressed splendidly in literature. The man's incurable sense of the mother in his lawful wife was uttered by Browning in one of his two or three truly shattering lines of genius, when he makes the execrable Guido fall back finally upon the fact of marriage and the wife whom he has trodden like mire:

"Christ! Maria! God, Pompilia, will you let them murder me?"

And the woman's witness to the same fact has been best expressed by

Bernard Shaw in this great scene where she remains with the great stalwart successful public man because he is really too little to run alone.

There are one or two errors in the play; and they are all due to the primary error of despising the mental attitude of romance, which is the only key to real human conduct. For instance, the love making of the young poet is all wrong. He is supposed to be a romantic and amorous boy; and therefore the dramatist tries to make him talk turgidly, about seeking for "an archangel with purple wings" who shall be worthy of his lady. But a lad in love would never talk in this mock heroic style; there is no period at which the young male is more sensitive and serious and afraid of looking a fool. This is a blunder; but there is another much bigger and blacker. It is completely and disastrously false to the whole nature of falling in love to make the young Eugene complain of the cruelty which makes Candida defile her fair hands with domestic duties. No boy in love with a beautiful woman would ever feel disgusted when she peeled potatoes or trimmed lamps. He would like her to be domestic. He would simply feel that the potatoes had become poetical and the lamps gained an extra light. This may be irrational; but we are not talking of rationality, but of the psychology of first love. It may be very unfair to women that the toil and triviality of potato peeling should be seen through a glamour of romance; but the glamour is quite as certain a fact as the potatoes. It may be a bad thing in sociology that men should deify domesticity in girls as something dainty and magical; but all men do. Personally I do not think it a bad thing at all; but that is another argument. The argument here is that Bernard Shaw, in aiming at mere realism, makes a big mistake in reality. Misled by his great heresy of looking at emotions from the outside, he makes Eugene a cold-blooded prig at the very moment when he is trying, for his own dramatic purposes, to make him a hot-blooded lover. He makes the young lover an idealistic theoriser about the very things about which he really would have been a sort of mystical materialist. Here the romantic Irishman is much more right than the very rational one; and there is far more truth to life as it is in Lover's couplet--

"And envied the chicken That Peggy was pickin'."

than in Eugene's solemn, æsthetic protest against the potato-skins and the lamp-oil. For dramatic purposes, G. B. S., even if he despises romance, ought to comprehend it. But then, if once he comprehended romance, he would not despise it.

The series contained, besides its more substantial work, tragic and comic, a comparative frivolity called *The Man of Destiny*. It is a little comedy about Napoleon, and is chiefly interesting as a foreshadowing of his after sketches

of heroes and strong men; it is a kind of parody of Cæsar and Cleopatra before it was written. In this connection the mere title of this Napoleonic play is of interest. All Shaw's generation and school of thought remembered Napoleon only by his late and corrupt title of "The Man of Destiny," a title only given to him when he was already fat and tired and destined to exile. They forgot that through all the really thrilling and creative part of his career he was not the man of destiny, but the man who defied destiny. Shaw's sketch is extraordinarily clever; but it is tinged with this unmilitary notion of an inevitable conquest; and this we must remember when we come to those larger canvases on which he painted his more serious heroes. As for the play, it is packed with good things, of which the last is perhaps the best. The long duologue between Bonaparte and the Irish lady ends with the General declaring that he will only be beaten when he meets an English army under an Irish general. It has always been one of Shaw's paradoxes that the English mind has the force to fulfil orders, while the Irish mind has the intelligence to give them, and it is among those of his paradoxes which contain a certain truth.

A far more important play is *The Philanderer*, an ironic comedy which is full of fine strokes and real satire; it is more especially the vehicle of some of Shaw's best satire upon physical science. Nothing could be cleverer than the picture of the young, strenuous doctor, in the utter innocence of his professional ambition, who has discovered a new disease, and is delighted when he finds people suffering from it and cast down to despair when he finds that it does not exist. The point is worth a pause, because it is a good, short way of stating Shaw's attitude, right or wrong, upon the whole of formal morality. What he dislikes in young Doctor Paramore is that he has interposed a secondary and false conscience between himself and the facts. When his disease is disproved, instead of seeing the escape of a human being who thought he was going to die of it, Paramore sees the downfall of a kind of flag or cause. This is the whole contention of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, put better than the book puts it; it is a really sharp exposition of the dangers of "idealism," the sacrifice of people to principles, and Shaw is even wiser in his suggestion that this excessive idealism exists nowhere so strongly as in the world of physical science. He shows that the scientist tends to be more concerned about the sickness than about the sick man; but it was certainly in his mind to suggest here also that the idealist is more concerned about the sin than about the sinner.

This business of Dr. Paramore's disease while it is the most farcical thing in the play is also the most philosophic and important. The rest of the figures, including the *Philanderer* himself, are in the full sense of those blasting and obliterating words "funny without being vulgar," that is, funny without being

of any importance to the masses of men. It is a play about a dashing and advanced "Ibsen Club," and the squabble between the young Ibsenites and the old people who are not yet up to Ibsen. It would be hard to find a stronger example of Shaw's only essential error, modernity--which means the seeking for truth in terms of time. Only a few years have passed and already almost half the wit of that wonderful play is wasted, because it all turns on the newness of a fashion that is no longer new. Doubtless many people still think the Ibsen drama a great thing, like the French classical drama. But going to "The Philanderer" is like going among periwigs and rapiers and hearing that the young men are now all for Racine. What makes such work sound unreal is not the praise of Ibsen, but the praise of the novelty of Ibsen. Any advantage that Bernard Shaw had over Colonel Craven I have over Bernard Shaw; we who happen to be born last have the meaningless and paltry triumph in that meaningless and paltry war. We are the superiors by that silliest and most snobbish of all superiorities, the mere aristocracy of time. All works must become thus old and insipid which have ever tried to be "modern," which have consented to smell of time rather than of eternity. Only those who have stooped to be in advance of their time will ever find themselves behind it.

But it is irritating to think what diamonds, what dazzling silver of Shavian wit has been sunk in such an out-of-date warship. In *The Philanderer* there are five hundred excellent and about five magnificent things. The rattle of repartees between the doctor and the soldier about the humanity of their two trades is admirable. Or again, when the colonel tells Chartaris that "in his young days" he would have no more behaved like Chartaris than he would have cheated at cards. After a pause Chartaris says, "You're getting old, Craven, and you make a virtue of it as usual." And there is an altitude of aerial tragedy in the words of Grace, who has refused the man she loves, to Julia, who is marrying the man she doesn't, "This is what they call a happy ending--these men."

There is an acrid taste in *The Philanderer*; and certainly he might be considered a super-sensitive person who should find anything acrid in *You Never Can Tell*. This play is the nearest approach to frank and objectless exuberance in the whole of Shaw's work. Punch, with wisdom as well as wit, said that it might well be called not "You Never Can Tell" but "You Never Can be Shaw." And yet if anyone will read this blazing farce and then after it any of the romantic farces, such as *Pickwick* or even *The Wrong Box*, I do not think he will be disposed to erase or even to modify what I said at the beginning about the ingrained grimness and even inhumanity of Shaw's art. To take but one test: love, in an "extravaganza," may be light love or love in idleness, but it should be hearty and happy love if it is to add to the general

hilarity. Such are the ludicrous but lucky love affairs of the sportsman Winkle and the Maestro Jimson. In Gloria's collapse before her bullying lover there is something at once cold and unclean; it calls up all the modern supermen with their cruel and fishy eyes. Such farces should begin in a friendly air, in a tavern. There is something very symbolic of Shaw in the fact that his farce begins in a dentist's.

The only one out of this brilliant batch of plays in which I think that the method adopted really fails, is the one called *Widower's Houses*. The best touch of Shaw is simply in the title. The simple substitution of widowers for widows contains almost the whole bitter and yet boisterous protest of Shaw; all his preference for undignified fact over dignified phrase; all his dislike of those subtle trends of sex or mystery which swing the logician off the straight line. We can imagine him crying, "Why in the name of death and conscience should it be tragic to be a widow but comic to be a widower?" But the rationalistic method is here applied quite wrong as regards the production of a drama. The most dramatic point in the affair is when the open and indecent rack-renter turns on the decent young man of means and proves to him that he is equally guilty, that he also can only grind his corn by grinding the faces of the poor. But even here the point is undramatic because it is indirect; it is indirect because it is merely sociological. It may be the truth that a young man living on an unexamined income which ultimately covers a great deal of house-property is as dangerous as any despot or thief. But it is a truth that you can no more put into a play than into a triolet. You can make a play out of one man robbing another man, but not out of one man robbing a million men; still less out of his robbing them unconsciously.

Of the plays collected in this book I have kept *Mrs. Warren's Profession* to the last, because, fine as it is, it is even finer and more important because of its fate, which was to rouse a long and serious storm and to be vetoed by the Censor of Plays. I say that this drama is most important because of the quarrel that came out of it. If I were speaking of some mere artist this might be an insult. But there are high and heroic things in Bernard Shaw; and one of the highest and most heroic is this, that he certainly cares much more for a quarrel than for a play. And this quarrel about the censorship is one on which he feels so strongly that in a book embodying any sort of sympathy it would be much better to leave out *Mrs. Warren* than to leave out *Mr. Redford*. The veto was the pivot of so very personal a movement by the dramatist, of so very positive an assertion of his own attitude towards things, that it is only just and necessary to state what were the two essential parties to the dispute; the play and the official who prevented the play.

The play of Mrs. Warren's Profession is concerned with a coarse mother and a cold daughter; the mother drives the ordinary and dirty trade of harlotry; the daughter does not know until the end the atrocious origin of all her own comfort and refinement. The daughter, when the discovery is made, freezes up into an iceberg of contempt; which is indeed a very womanly thing to do. The mother explodes into pulverising cynicism and practicality; which is also very womanly. The dialogue is drastic and sweeping; the daughter says the trade is loathsome; the mother answers that she loathes it herself; that every healthy person does loathe the trade by which she lives. And beyond question the general effect of the play is that the trade is loathsome; supposing anyone to be so insensible as to require to be told of the fact. Undoubtedly the upshot is that a brothel is a miserable business, and a brothel-keeper a miserable woman. The whole dramatic art of Shaw is in the literal sense of the word, tragi-comic; I mean that the comic part comes after the tragedy. But just as *You Never Can Tell* represents the nearest approach of Shaw to the purely comic, so *Mrs. Warren's Profession* represents his only complete, or nearly complete, tragedy. There is no twopenny modernism in it, as in *The Philanderer*. Mrs. Warren is as old as the Old Testament; "for she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her; her house is in the gates of hell, going down into the chamber of death." Here is no subtle ethics, as in *Widowers' Houses*; for even those moderns who think it noble that a woman should throw away her honour, surely cannot think it especially noble that she should sell it. Here is no lighting up by laughter, astonishment, and happy coincidence, as in *You Never Can Tell*. The play is a pure tragedy about a permanent and quite plain human problem; the problem is as plain and permanent, the tragedy is as proud and pure, as in *Oedipus* or *Macbeth*. This play was presented in the ordinary way for public performance and was suddenly stopped by the Censor of Plays.

The Censor of Plays is a small and accidental eighteenth-century official. Like nearly all the powers which Englishmen now respect as ancient and rooted, he is very recent. Novels and newspapers still talk of the English aristocracy that came over with William the Conqueror. Little of our effective oligarchy is as old as the Reformation; and none of it came over with William the Conqueror. Some of the older English landlords came over with William of Orange; the rest have come by ordinary alien immigration. In the same way we always talk of the Victorian woman (with her smelling salts and sentiment) as the old-fashioned woman. But she really was a quite new-fashioned woman; she considered herself, and was, an advance in delicacy and civilisation upon the coarse and candid Elizabethan woman to whom we are now returning. We are never oppressed by old things; it is recent things that can really oppress. And in accordance with this principle modern

England has accepted, as if it were a part of perennial morality, a tenth-rate job of Walpole's worst days called the Censorship of the Drama. Just as they have supposed the eighteenth-century parvenus to date from Hastings, just as they have supposed the eighteenth-century ladies to date from Eve, so they have supposed the eighteenth-century Censorship to date from Sinai. The origin of the thing was in truth purely political. Its first and principal achievement was to prevent Fielding from writing plays; not at all because the plays were coarse, but because they criticised the Government. Fielding was a free writer; but they did not resent his sexual freedom; the Censor would not have objected if he had torn away the most intimate curtains of decency or rent the last rag from private life. What the Censor disliked was his rending the curtain from public life. There is still much of that spirit in our country; there are no affairs which men seek so much to cover up as public affairs. But the thing was done somewhat more boldly and baldly in Walpole's day; and the Censorship of plays has its origin, not merely in tyranny, but in a quite trifling and temporary and partisan piece of tyranny; a thing in its nature far more ephemeral, far less essential, than Ship Money. Perhaps its brightest moment was when the office of censor was held by that filthy writer, Colman the younger; and when he gravely refused to license a work by the author of *Our Village*. Few funnier notions can ever have actually been facts than this notion that the restraint and chastity of George Colman saved the English public from the eroticism and obscenity of Miss Mitford.

Such was the play; and such was the power that stopped the play. A private man wrote it; another private man forbade it; nor was there any difference between Mr. Shaw's authority and Mr. Redford's, except that Mr. Shaw did defend his action on public grounds and Mr. Redford did not. The dramatist had simply been suppressed by a despot; and what was worse (because it was modern) by a silent and evasive despot; a despot in hiding. People talk about the pride of tyrants; but we at the present day suffer from the modesty of tyrants; from the shyness and the shrinking secrecy of the strong. Shaw's preface to Mrs. Warren's Profession was far more fit to be called a public document than the slovenly refusal of the individual official; it had more exactness, more universal application, more authority. Shaw on Redford was far more national and responsible than Redford on Shaw.

The dramatist found in the quarrel one of the important occasions of his life, because the crisis called out something in him which is in many ways his highest quality--righteous indignation. As a mere matter of the art of controversy of course he carried the war into the enemy's camp at once. He did not linger over loose excuses for licence; he declared at once that the Censor was licentious, while he, Bernard Shaw, was clean. He did not

discuss whether a Censorship ought to make the drama moral. He declared that it made the drama immoral. With a fine strategic audacity he attacked the Censor quite as much for what he permitted as for what he prevented. He charged him with encouraging all plays that attracted men to vice and only stopping those which discouraged them from it. Nor was this attitude by any means an idle paradox. Many plays appear (as Shaw pointed out) in which the prostitute and the procuress are practically obvious, and in which they are represented as revelling in beautiful surroundings and basking in brilliant popularity. The crime of Shaw was not that he introduced the Gaiety Girl; that had been done, with little enough decorum, in a hundred musical comedies. The crime of Shaw was that he introduced the Gaiety Girl, but did not represent her life as all gaiety. The pleasures of vice were already flaunted before the playgoers. It was the perils of vice that were carefully concealed from them. The gay adventures, the gorgeous dresses, the champagne and oysters, the diamonds and motor-cars, dramatists were allowed to drag all these dazzling temptations before any silly housemaid in the gallery who was grumbling at her wages. But they were not allowed to warn her of the vulgarity and the nausea, the dreary deceptions and the blasting diseases of that life. Mrs. Warren's Profession was not up to a sufficient standard of immorality; it was not spicy enough to pass the Censor. The acceptable and the accepted plays were those which made the fall of a woman fashionable and fascinating; for all the world as if the Censor's profession were the same as Mrs. Warren's profession.

Such was the angle of Shaw's energetic attack; and it is not to be denied that there was exaggeration in it, and what is so much worse, omission. The argument might easily be carried too far; it might end with a scene of screaming torture in the Inquisition as a corrective to the too amiable view of a clergyman in *The Private Secretary*. But the controversy is definitely worth recording, if only as an excellent example of the author's aggressive attitude and his love of turning the tables in debate. Moreover, though this point of view involves a potential overstatement, it also involves an important truth. One of the best points urged in the course of it was this, that though vice is punished in conventional drama, the punishment is not really impressive, because it is not inevitable or even probable. It does not arise out of the evil act. Years afterwards Bernard Shaw urged this argument again in connection with his friend Mr. Granville Barker's play of *Waste*, in which the woman dies from an illegal operation. Bernard Shaw said, truly enough, that if she had died from poison or a pistol shot it would have left everyone unmoved, for pistols do not in their nature follow female unchastity. Illegal operations very often do. The punishment was one which might follow the crime, not only in that case, but in many cases. Here, I think, the whole argument might be sufficiently cleared up by saying that

the objection to such things on the stage is a purely artistic objection. There is nothing wrong in talking about an illegal operation; there are plenty of occasions when it would be very wrong not to talk about it. But it may easily be just a shade too ugly for the shape of any work of art. There is nothing wrong about being sick; but if Bernard Shaw wrote a play in which all the characters expressed their dislike of animal food by vomiting on the stage, I think we should be justified in saying that the thing was outside, not the laws of morality, but the framework of civilised literature. The instinctive movement of repulsion which everyone has when hearing of the operation in *Waste* is not an ethical repulsion at all. But it is an æsthetic repulsion, and a right one.

But I have only dwelt on this particular fighting phase because it leaves us facing the ultimate characteristics which I mentioned first. Bernard Shaw cares nothing for art; in comparison with morals, literally nothing. Bernard Shaw is a Puritan and his work is Puritan work. He has all the essentials of the old, virile and extinct Protestant type. In his work he is as ugly as a Puritan. He is as indecent as a Puritan. He is as full of gross words and sensual facts as a sermon of the seventeenth century. Up to this point of his life indeed hardly anyone would have dreamed of calling him a Puritan; he was called sometimes an anarchist, sometimes a buffoon, sometimes (by the more discerning stupid people) a prig. His attitude towards current problems was felt to be arresting and even indecent; I do not think that anyone thought of connecting it with the old Calvinistic morality. But Shaw, who knew better than the Shavians, was at this moment on the very eve of confessing his moral origin. The next book of plays he produced (including *The Devil's Disciple*, *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, and *Cæsar and Cleopatra*), actually bore the title of *Plays for Puritans*.

The play called *The Devil's Disciple* has great merits, but the merits are incidental. Some of its jokes are serious and important, but its general plan can only be called a joke. Almost alone among Bernard Shaw's plays (except of course such things as *How he Lied to her Husband* and *The Admirable Bashville*) this drama does not turn on any very plain pivot of ethical or philosophical conviction. The artistic idea seems to be the notion of a melodrama in which all the conventional melodramatic situations shall suddenly take unconventional turns. Just where the melodramatic clergyman would show courage he appears to show cowardice; just where the melodramatic sinner would confess his love he confesses his indifference. This is a little too like the Shaw of the newspaper critics rather than the Shaw of reality. There are indeed present in the play two of the writer's principal moral conceptions. The first is the idea of a great heroic action coming in a sense from nowhere; that is, not coming from any

commonplace motive; being born in the soul in naked beauty, coming with its own authority and testifying only to itself. Shaw's agent does not act towards something, but from something. The hero dies, not because he desires heroism, but because he has it. So in this particular play the Devil's Disciple finds that his own nature will not permit him to put the rope around another man's neck; he has no reasons of desire, affection, or even equity; his death is a sort of divine whim. And in connection with this the dramatist introduces another favourite moral; the objection to perpetual playing upon the motive of sex. He deliberately lures the onlooker into the net of Cupid in order to tell him with salutary decision that Cupid is not there at all. Millions of melodramatic dramatists have made a man face death for the woman he loves; Shaw makes him face death for the woman he does not love--merely in order to put woman in her place. He objects to that idolatry of sexualism which makes it the fountain of all forcible enthusiasms; he dislikes the amorous drama which makes the female the only key to the male. He is Feminist in politics, but Anti-feminist in emotion. His key to most problems is, "Ne cherchez pas la femme."

As has been observed, the incidental felicities of the play are frequent and memorable, especially those connected with the character of General Burgoyne, the real full-blooded, free-thinking eighteenth century gentleman, who was much too much of an aristocrat not to be a liberal. One of the best thrusts in all the Shavian fencing matches is that which occurs when Richard Dudgeon, condemned to be hanged, asks rhetorically why he cannot be shot like a soldier. "Now there you speak like a civilian," replies General Burgoyne. "Have you formed any conception of the condition of marksmanship in the British Army?" Excellent, too, is the passage in which his subordinate speaks of crushing the enemy in America, and Burgoyne asks him who will crush their enemies in England, snobbery and jobbery and incurable carelessness and sloth. And in one sentence towards the end, Shaw reaches a wider and more genial comprehension of mankind than he shows anywhere else; "it takes all sorts to make a world, saints as well as soldiers." If Shaw had remembered that sentence on other occasions he would have avoided his mistake about Cæsar and Brutus. It is not only true that it takes all sorts to make a world; but the world cannot succeed without its failures. Perhaps the most doubtful point of all in the play is why it is a play for Puritans; except the hideous picture of a Calvinistic home is meant to destroy Puritanism. And indeed in this connection it is constantly necessary to fall back upon the facts of which I have spoken at the beginning of this brief study; it is necessary especially to remember that Shaw could in all probability speak of Puritanism from the inside. In that domestic circle which took him to hear Moody and Sankey, in that domestic circle which was teetotal even when it was intoxicated, in that atmosphere

and society Shaw might even have met the monstrous mother in *The Devil's Disciple*, the horrible old woman who declares that she has hardened her heart to hate her children, because the heart of man is desperately wicked, the old ghoul who has made one of her children an imbecile and the other an outcast. Such types do occur in small societies drunk with the dismal wine of Puritan determinism. It is possible that there were among Irish Calvinists people who denied that charity was a Christian virtue. It is possible that among Puritans there were people who thought a heart was a kind of heart disease. But it is enough to make one tear one's hair to think that a man of genius received his first impressions in so small a corner of Europe that he could for a long time suppose that this Puritanism was current among Christian men. The question, however, need not detain us, for the batch of plays contained two others about which it is easier to speak.

The third play in order in the series called *Plays for Puritans* is a very charming one; *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. This also turns, as does so much of the *Cæsar* drama, on the idea of vanity of revenge--the idea that it is too slight and silly a thing for a man to allow to occupy and corrupt his consciousness. It is not, of course, the morality that is new here, but the touch of cold laughter in the core of the morality. Many saints and sages have denounced vengeance. But they treated vengeance as something too great for man. "Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord; I will repay." Shaw treats vengeance as something too small for man--a monkey trick he ought to have outlived, a childish storm of tears which he ought to be able to control. In the story in question Captain Brassbound has nourished through his whole erratic existence, racketting about all the unsavoury parts of Africa--a mission of private punishment which appears to him as a mission of holy justice. His mother has died in consequence of a judge's decision, and Brassbound roams and schemes until the judge falls into his hands. Then a pleasant society lady, Lady Cicely Waynefleet tells him in an easy conversational undertone--a rivulet of speech which ripples while she is mending his coat--that he is making a fool of himself, that his wrong is irrelevant, that his vengeance is objectless, that he would be much better if he flung his morbid fancy away for ever; in short, she tells him he is ruining himself for the sake of ruining a total stranger. Here again we have the note of the economist, the hatred of mere loss. Shaw (one might almost say) dislikes murder, not so much because it wastes the life of the corpse as because it wastes the time of the murderer. If he were endeavouring to persuade one of his moon-lighting fellow-countrymen not to shoot his landlord, I can imagine him explaining with benevolent emphasis that it was not so much a question of losing a life as of throwing away a bullet. But indeed the Irish comparison alone suggests a doubt which wriggles in the recesses of my mind about the complete reliability of the philosophy of Lady

Cicely Waynfleet, the complete finality of the moral of Captain Brassbound's Conversion. Of course, it was very natural in an aristocrat like Lady Cicely Waynfleet to wish to let sleeping dogs lie, especially those whom Mr. Blatchford calls under-dogs. Of course it was natural for her to wish everything to be smooth and sweet-tempered. But I have the obstinate question in the corner of my brain, whether if a few Captain Brassbounds did revenge themselves on judges, the quality of our judges might not materially improve.

When this doubt is once off one's conscience one can lose oneself in the bottomless beatitude of Lady Cicely Waynfleet, one of the most living and laughing things that her maker has made. I do not know any stronger way of stating the beauty of the character than by saying that it was written specially for Ellen Terry, and that it is, with Beatrice, one of the very few characters in which the dramatist can claim some part of her triumph.

We may now pass to the more important of the plays. For some time Bernard Shaw would seem to have been brooding upon the soul of Julius Cæsar. There must always be a strong human curiosity about the soul of Julius Cæsar; and, among other things, about whether he had a soul. The conjunction of Shaw and Cæsar has about it something smooth and inevitable; for this decisive reason, that Cæsar is really the only great man of history to whom the Shaw theories apply. Cæsar was a Shaw hero. Cæsar was merciful without being in the least pitiful; his mercy was colder than justice. Cæsar was a conqueror without being in any hearty sense a soldier; his courage was lonelier than fear. Cæsar was a demagogue without being a democrat. In the same way Bernard Shaw is a demagogue without being a democrat. If he had tried to prove his principle from any of the other heroes or sages of mankind he would have found it much more difficult. Napoleon achieved more miraculous conquest; but during his most conquering epoch he was a burning boy suicidally in love with a woman far beyond his age. Joan of Arc achieved far more instant and incredible worldly success; but Joan of Arc achieved worldly success because she believed in another world. Nelson was a figure fully as fascinating and dramatically decisive; but Nelson was "romantic"; Nelson was a devoted patriot and a devoted lover. Alexander was passionate; Cromwell could shed tears; Bismarck had some suburban religion; Frederick was a poet; Charlemagne was fond of children. But Julius Cæsar attracted Shaw not less by his positive than by his negative enormousness. Nobody can say with certainty that Cæsar cared for anything. It is unjust to call Cæsar an egoist; for there is no proof that he cared even for Cæsar. He may not have been either an atheist or a pessimist. But he may have been; that is exactly the rub. He may have been an ordinary decently good man slightly deficient in spiritual expansiveness.

On the other hand, he may have been the incarnation of paganism in the sense that Christ was the incarnation of Christianity. As Christ expressed how great a man can be humble and humane, Cæsar may have expressed how great a man can be frigid and flippant. According to most legends Antichrist was to come soon after Christ. One has only to suppose that Antichrist came shortly before Christ; and Antichrist might very well be Cæsar.

It is, I think, no injustice to Bernard Shaw to say that he does not attempt to make his Cæsar superior except in this naked and negative sense. There is no suggestion, as there is in the Jehovah of the Old Testament, that the very cruelty of the higher being conceals some tremendous and even tortured love. Cæsar is superior to other men not because he loves more, but because he hates less. Cæsar is magnanimous not because he is warm-hearted enough to pardon, but because he is not warm-hearted enough to avenge. There is no suggestion anywhere in the play that he is hiding any great genial purpose or powerful tenderness towards men. In order to put this point beyond a doubt the dramatist has introduced a soliloquy of Cæsar alone with the Sphinx. There if anywhere he would have broken out into ultimate brotherhood or burning pity for the people. But in that scene between the Sphinx and Cæsar, Cæsar is as cold and as lonely and as dead as the Sphinx.

But whether the Shavian Cæsar is a sound ideal or no, there can be little doubt that he is a very fine reality. Shaw has done nothing greater as a piece of artistic creation. If the man is a little like a statue, it is a statue by a great sculptor; a statue of the best period. If his nobility is a little negative in its character, it is the negative darkness of the great dome of night; not as in some "new moralities" the mere mystery of the coal-hole. Indeed, this somewhat austere method of work is very suitable to Shaw when he is serious. There is nothing Gothic about his real genius; he could not build a mediæval cathedral in which laughter and terror are twisted together in stone, molten by mystical passion. He can build, by way of amusement, a Chinese pagoda; but when he is in earnest, only a Roman temple. He has a keen eye for truth; but he is one of those people who like, as the saying goes, to put down the truth in black and white. He is always girding and jeering at romantics and idealists because they will not put down the truth in black and white. But black and white are not the only two colours in the world. The modern man of science who writes down a fact in black and white is not more but less accurate than the mediæval monk who wrote it down in gold and scarlet, sea-green and turquoise. Nevertheless, it is a good thing that the more austere method should exist separately, and that some men should be specially good at it. Bernard Shaw is specially good at it; he is

pre-eminently a black and white artist.

And as a study in black and white nothing could be better than this sketch of Julius Cæsar. He is not so much represented as "bestriding the earth like a Colossus" (which is indeed a rather comic attitude for a hero to stand in), but rather walking the earth with a sort of stern levity, lightly touching the planet and yet spurning it away like a stone. He walks like a winged man who has chosen to fold his wings. There is something creepy even about his kindness; it makes the men in front of him feel as if they were made of glass. The nature of the Cæsarian mercy is massively suggested. Cæsar dislikes a massacre, not because it is a great sin, but because it is a small sin. It is felt that he classes it with a flirtation or a fit of the sulks; a senseless temporary subjugation of man's permanent purpose by his passing and trivial feelings. He will plunge into slaughter for a great purpose, just as he plunges into the sea. But to be stung into such action he deems as undignified as to be tipped off the pier. In a singularly fine passage Cleopatra, having hired assassins to stab an enemy, appeals to her wrongs as justifying her revenge, and says, "If you can find one man in all Africa who says that I did wrong, I will be crucified by my own slaves." "If you can find one man in all the world," replies Cæsar, "who can see that you did wrong, he will either conquer the world as I have done or be crucified by it." That is the high water mark of this heathen sublimity; and we do not feel it inappropriate, or unlike Shaw, when a few minutes afterwards the hero is saluted with a blaze of swords.

As usually happens in the author's works, there is even more about Julius Cæsar in the preface than there is in the play. But in the preface I think the portrait is less imaginative and more fanciful. He attempts to connect his somewhat chilly type of superman with the heroes of the old fairy tales. But Shaw should not talk about the fairy tales; for he does not feel them from the inside. As I have said, on all this side of historic and domestic traditions Bernard Shaw is weak and deficient. He does not approach them as fairy tales, as if he were four, but as "folk-lore" as if he were forty. And he makes a big mistake about them which he would never have made if he had kept his birthday and hung up his stocking, and generally kept alive inside him the firelight of a home. The point is so peculiarly characteristic of Bernard Shaw, and is indeed so much of a summary of his most interesting assertion and his most interesting error, that it deserves a word by itself, though it is a word which must be remembered in connection with nearly all the other plays.

His primary and defiant proposition is the Calvinistic proposition: that the elect do not earn virtue, but possess it. The goodness of a man does not

consist in trying to be good, but in being good. Julius Cæsar prevails over other people by possessing more virtue than they; not by having striven or suffered or bought his virtue; not because he has struggled heroically, but because he is a hero. So far Bernard Shaw is only what I have called him at the beginning; he is simply a seventeenth-century Calvinist. Cæsar is not saved by works, or even by faith; he is saved because he is one of the elect. Unfortunately for himself, however, Bernard Shaw went back further than the seventeenth century; and professing his opinion to be yet more antiquated, invoked the original legends of mankind. He argued that when the fairy tales gave Jack the Giant Killer a coat of darkness or a magic sword it removed all credit from Jack in the "common moral" sense; he won as Cæsar won only because he was superior. I will confess, in passing, to the conviction that Bernard Shaw in the course of his whole simple and strenuous life was never quite so near to hell as at the moment when he wrote down those words. But in this question of fairy tales my immediate point is, not how near he was to hell, but how very far off he was from fairyland. That notion about the hero with a magic sword being the superman with a magic superiority is the caprice of a pedant; no child, boy, or man ever felt it in the story of Jack the Giant Killer. Obviously the moral is all the other way. Jack's fairy sword and invisible coat are clumsy expedients for enabling him to fight at all with something which is by nature stronger. They are a rough, savage substitute for psychological descriptions of special valour or unwearied patience. But no one in his five wits can doubt that the idea of "Jack the Giant Killer" is exactly the opposite to Shaw's idea. If it were not a tale of effort and triumph hardly earned it would not be called "Jack the Giant Killer." If it were a tale of the victory of natural advantages it would be called "Giant the Jack Killer." If the teller of fairy tales had merely wanted to urge that some beings are born stronger than others he would not have fallen back on elaborate tricks of weapon and costume for conquering an ogre. He would simply have let the ogre conquer. I will not speak of my own emotions in connection with this incredibly caddish doctrine that the strength of the strong is admirable, but not the valour of the weak. It is enough to say that I have to summon up the physical presence of Shaw, his frank gestures, kind eyes, and exquisite Irish voice, to cure me of a mere sensation of contempt. But I do not dwell upon the point for any such purpose; but merely to show how we must be always casting back to those concrete foundations with which we began. Bernard Shaw, as I have said, was never national enough to be domestic; he was never a part of his past; hence when he tries to interpret tradition he comes a terrible cropper, as in this case. Bernard Shaw (I strongly suspect) began to disbelieve in Santa Claus at a discreditable early age. And by this time Santa Claus has avenged himself by taking away the key of all the prehistoric scriptures; so that a noble and honourable artist flounders about

like any German professor. Here is a whole fairy literature which is almost exclusively devoted to the unexpected victory of the weak over the strong; and Bernard Shaw manages to make it mean the inevitable victory of the strong over the weak--which, among other things, would not make a story at all. It all comes of that mistake about not keeping his birthday. A man should be always tied to his mother's apron strings; he should always have a hold on his childhood, and be ready at intervals to start anew from a childish standpoint. Theologically the thing is best expressed by saying, "You must be born again." Secularly it is best expressed by saying, "You must keep your birthday." Even if you will not be born again, at least remind yourself occasionally that you were born once.

Some of the incidental wit in the Cæsarian drama is excellent although it is upon the whole less spontaneous and perfect than in the previous plays. One of its jests may be mentioned in passing, not merely to draw attention to its failure (though Shaw is brilliant enough to afford many failures) but because it is the best opportunity for mentioning one of the writer's minor notions to which he obstinately adheres. He describes the Ancient Briton in Cæsar's train as being exactly like a modern respectable Englishman. As a joke for a Christmas pantomime this would be all very well; but one expects the jokes of Bernard Shaw to have some intellectual root, however fantastic the flower. And obviously all historic common sense is against the idea that that dim Druid people, whoever they were, who dwelt in our land before it was lit up by Rome or loaded with varied invasions, were a precise facsimile of the commercial society of Birmingham or Brighton. But it is a part of the Puritan in Bernard Shaw, a part of the taut and high-strung quality of his mind, that he will never admit of any of his jokes that it was only a joke. When he has been most witty he will passionately deny his own wit; he will say something which Voltaire might envy and then declare that he has got it all out of a Blue book. And in connection with this eccentric type of self-denial, we may notice this mere detail about the Ancient Briton. Someone faintly hinted that a blue Briton when first found by Cæsar might not be quite like Mr. Broadbent; at the touch Shaw poured forth a torrent of theory, explaining that climate was the only thing that affected nationality; and that whatever races came into the English or Irish climate would become like the English or Irish. Now the modern theory of race is certainly a piece of stupid materialism; it is an attempt to explain the things we are sure of, France, Scotland, Rome, Japan, by means of the things we are not sure of at all, prehistoric conjectures, Celts, Mongols, and Iberians. Of course there is a reality in race; but there is no reality in the theories of race offered by some ethnological professors. Blood, perhaps, is thicker than water; but brains are sometimes thicker than anything. But if there is one thing yet more thick and obscure and senseless than this theory of the omnipotence of race

it is, I think, that to which Shaw has fled for refuge from it; this doctrine of the omnipotence of climate. Climate again is something; but if climate were everything, Anglo-Indians would grow more and more to look like Hindoos, which is far from being the case. Something in the evil spirit of our time forces people always to pretend to have found some material and mechanical explanation. Bernard Shaw has filled all his last days with affirmations about the divinity of the non-mechanical part of man, the sacred quality in creation and choice. Yet it never seems to have occurred to him that the true key to national differentiations is the key of the will and not of the environment. It never crosses the modern mind to fancy that perhaps a people is chiefly influenced by how that people has chosen to behave. If I have to choose between race and weather I prefer race; I would rather be imprisoned and compelled by ancestors who were once alive than by mud and mists which never were. But I do not propose to be controlled by either; to me my national history is a chain of multitudinous choices. It is neither blood nor rain that has made England, but hope, the thing that all those dead men have desired. France was not France because she was made to be by the skulls of the Celts or by the sun of Gaul. France was France because she chose.

I have stepped on one side from the immediate subject because this is as good an instance as any we are likely to come across of a certain almost extraneous fault which does deface the work of Bernard Shaw. It is a fault only to be mentioned when we have made the solidity of the merits quite clear. To say that Shaw is merely making game of people is demonstrably ridiculous; at least a fairly systematic philosophy can be traced through all his jokes, and one would not insist on such a unity in all the songs of Mr. Dan Leno. I have already pointed out that the genius of Shaw is really too harsh and earnest rather than too merry and irresponsible. I shall have occasion to point out later that Shaw is, in one very serious sense, the very opposite of paradoxical. In any case if any real student of Shaw says that Shaw is only making a fool of him, we can only say that of that student it is very superfluous for anyone to make a fool. But though the dramatist's jests are always serious and generally obvious, he is really affected from time to time by a certain spirit of which that climate theory is a case--a spirit that can only be called one of senseless ingenuity. I suppose it is a sort of nemesis of wit; the skidding of a wheel in the height of its speed. Perhaps it is connected with the nomadic nature of his mind. That lack of roots, this remoteness from ancient instincts and traditions is responsible for a certain bleak and heartless extravagance of statement on certain subjects which makes the author really unconvincing as well as exaggerative; satires that are saugrenu, jokes that are rather silly than wild, statements which even considered as lies have no symbolic relation to truth. They are exaggerations

of something that does not exist. For instance, if a man called Christmas Day a mere hypocritical excuse for drunkenness and gluttony that would be false, but it would have a fact hidden in it somewhere. But when Bernard Shaw says that Christmas Day is only a conspiracy kept up by poulterers and wine merchants from strictly business motives, then he says something which is not so much false as startlingly and arrestingly foolish. He might as well say that the two sexes were invented by jewellers who wanted to sell wedding rings. Or again, take the case of nationality and the unit of patriotism. If a man said that all boundaries between clans, kingdoms, or empires were nonsensical or non-existent, that would be a fallacy, but a consistent and philosophical fallacy. But when Mr. Bernard Shaw says that England matters so little that the British Empire might very well give up these islands to Germany, he has not only got hold of the sow by the wrong ear but the wrong sow by the wrong ear; a mythical sow, a sow that is not there at all. If Britain is unreal, the British Empire must be a thousand times more unreal. It is as if one said, "I do not believe that Michael Scott ever had any existence; but I am convinced, in spite of the absurd legend, that he had a shadow."

As has been said already, there must be some truth in every popular impression. And the impression that Shaw, the most savagely serious man of his time, is a mere music-hall artist must have reference to such rare outbreaks as these. As a rule his speeches are full, not only of substance, but of substances, materials like pork, mahogany, lead, and leather. There is no man whose arguments cover a more Napoleonic map of detail. It is true that he jokes; but wherever he is he has topical jokes, one might almost say family jokes. If he talks to tailors he can allude to the last absurdity about buttons. If he talks to the soldiers he can see the exquisite and exact humour of the last gun-carriage. But when all his powerful practicality is allowed, there does run through him this erratic levity, an explosion of ineptitude. It is a queer quality in literature. It is a sort of cold extravagance; and it has made him all his enemies.

The Philosopher

I should suppose that *Cæsar and Cleopatra* marks about the turning tide of Bernard Shaw's fortune and fame. Up to this time he had known glory, but never success. He had been wondered at as something brilliant and barren, like a meteor; but no one would accept him as a sun, for the test of a sun is that it can make something grow. Practically speaking the two qualities of a modern drama are, that it should play and that it should pay. It had been proved over and over again in weighty dramatic criticisms, in careful readers' reports, that the plays of Shaw could never play or pay; that the public did not want wit and the wars of intellect. And just about the time that this had been finally proved, the plays of Bernard Shaw promised to play like *Charley's Aunt* and to pay like *Colman's Mustard*. It is a fact in which we can all rejoice, not only because it redeems the reputation of Bernard Shaw, but because it redeems the character of the English people. All that is bravest in human nature, open challenge and unexpected wit and angry conviction, are not so very unpopular as the publishers and managers in their motor-cars have been in the habit of telling us. But exactly because we have come to a turning point in the man's career I propose to interrupt the mere catalogue of his plays and to treat his latest series rather as the proclamations of an acknowledged prophet. For the last plays, especially *Man and Superman*, are such that his whole position must be re-stated before attacking them seriously.

For two reasons I have called this concluding series of plays not again by the name of "*The Dramatist*," but by the general name of "*The Philosopher*." The first reason is that given above, that we have come to the time of his triumph and may therefore treat him as having gained complete possession of a pulpit of his own. But there is a second reason: that it was just about this time that he began to create not only a pulpit of his own, but a church and creed of his own. It is a very vast and universal religion; and it is not his fault that he is the only member of it. The plainer way of putting it is this: that here, in the hour of his earthly victory, there dies in him the old mere denier, the mere dynamiter of criticism. In the warmth of popularity he begins to wish to put his faith positively; to offer some solid key to all creation. Perhaps the irony in the situation is this: that all the crowds are acclaiming him as the blasting and hypercritical buffoon, while he himself is seriously rallying his synthetic power, and with a grave face telling himself that it is time he had a faith to preach. His final success as a sort of charlatan coincides with his first grand failures as a theologian.

For this reason I have deliberately called a halt in his dramatic career, in order to consider these two essential points: What did the mass of Englishmen, who had now learnt to admire him, imagine his point of view to be? and second, What did he imagine it to be? or, if the phrase be premature, What did he imagine it was going to be? In his latest work, especially in *Man and Superman*, Shaw has become a complete and colossal mystic. That mysticism does grow quite rationally out of his older arguments; but very few people ever troubled to trace the connection. In order to do so it is necessary to say what was, at the time of his first success, the public impression of Shaw's philosophy.

Now it is an irritating and pathetic thing that the three most popular phrases about Shaw are false. Modern criticism, like all weak things, is overloaded with words. In a healthy condition of language a man finds it very difficult to say the right thing, but at last says it. In this empire of journalese a man finds it so very easy to say the wrong thing that he never thinks of saying anything else. False or meaningless phrases lie so ready to his hand that it is easier to use them than not to use them. These wrong terms picked up through idleness are retained through habit, and so the man has begun to think wrong almost before he has begun to think at all. Such lumbering logomachy is always injurious and oppressive to men of spirit, imagination or intellectual honour, and it has dealt very recklessly and wrongly with Bernard Shaw. He has contrived to get about three newspaper phrases tied to his tail; and those newspaper phrases are all and separately wrong. The three superstitions about him, it will be conceded, are generally these: first that he desires "problem plays," second that he is "paradoxical," and third that in his dramas as elsewhere he is specially "a Socialist." And the interesting thing is that when we come to his philosophy, all these three phrases are quite peculiarly inapplicable.

To take the plays first, there is a general disposition to describe that type of intimate or defiant drama which he approves as "the problem play." Now the serious modern play is, as a rule, the very reverse of a problem play; for there can be no problem unless both points of view are equally and urgently presented. *Hamlet* really is a problem play because at the end of it one is really in doubt as to whether upon the author's showing *Hamlet* is something more than a man or something less. *Henry IV* and *Henry V* are really problem plays; in this sense, that the reader or spectator is really doubtful whether the high but harsh efficiency, valour, and ambition of *Henry V* are an improvement on his old blackguard camaraderie; and whether he was not a better man when he was a thief. This hearty and healthy doubt is very common in Shakespeare; I mean a doubt that exists in the writer as well as in the reader. But Bernard Shaw is far too much of a

Puritan to tolerate such doubts about points which he counts essential. There is no sort of doubt that the young lady in *Arms and the Man* is improved by losing her ideals. There is no sort of doubt that Captain Brassbound is improved by giving up the object of his life. But a better case can be found in something that both dramatists have been concerned with; Shaw wrote *Cæsar and Cleopatra*; Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* and also *Julius Cæsar*. And exactly what annoys Bernard Shaw about Shakespeare's version is this: that Shakespeare has an open mind or, in other words, that Shakespeare has really written a problem play. Shakespeare sees quite as clearly as Shaw that Brutus is unpractical and ineffectual; but he also sees, what is quite as plain and practical a fact, that these ineffectual men do capture the hearts and influence the policies of mankind. Shaw would have nothing said in favour of Brutus; because Brutus is on the wrong side in politics. Of the actual problem of public and private morality, as it was presented to Brutus, he takes actually no notice at all. He can write the most energetic and outspoken of propaganda plays; but he cannot rise to a problem play. He cannot really divide his mind and let the two parts speak independently to each other. He has never, so to speak, actually split his head in two; though I daresay there are many other people who are willing to do it for him.

Sometimes, especially in his later plays, he allows his clear conviction to spoil even his admirable dialogue, making one side entirely weak, as in an Evangelical tract. I do not know whether in *Major Barbara* the young Greek professor was supposed to be a fool. As popular tradition (which I trust more than anything else) declared that he is drawn from a real Professor of my acquaintance, who is anything but a fool, I should imagine not. But in that case I am all the more mystified by the incredibly weak fight which he makes in the play in answer to the elephantine sophistries of *Undershaft*. It is really a disgraceful case, and almost the only case in Shaw of there being no fair fight between the two sides. For instance, the Professor mentions pity. Mr. *Undershaft* says with melodramatic scorn, "Pity! the scavenger of the Universe!" Now if any gentleman had said this to me, I should have replied, "If I permit you to escape from the point by means of metaphors, will you tell me whether you disapprove of scavengers?" Instead of this obvious retort, the miserable Greek professor only says, "Well then, love," to which *Undershaft* replies with unnecessary violence that he won't have the Greek professor's love, to which the obvious answer of course would be, "How the deuce can you prevent my loving you if I choose to do so?" Instead of this, as far as I remember, that abject Hellenist says nothing at all. I only mention this unfair dialogue, because it marks, I think, the recent hardening, for good or evil, of Shaw out of a dramatist into a mere philosopher, and whoever hardens into a philosopher may be hardening into a fanatic.

And just as there is nothing really problematic in Shaw's mind, so there is nothing really paradoxical. The meaning of the word paradoxical may indeed be made the subject of argument. In Greek, of course, it simply means something which is against the received opinion; in that sense a missionary remonstrating with South Sea cannibals is paradoxical. But in the much more important world, where words are used and altered in the using, paradox does not mean merely this: it means at least something of which the antinomy or apparent inconsistency is sufficiently plain in the words used, and most commonly of all it means an idea expressed in a form which is verbally contradictory. Thus, for instance, the great saying, "He that shall lose his life, the same shall save it," is an example of what modern people mean by a paradox. If any learned person should read this book (which seems immeasurably improbable) he can content himself with putting it this way, that the moderns mistakenly say paradox when they should say oxymoron. Ultimately, in any case, it may be agreed that we commonly mean by a paradox some kind of collision between what is seemingly and what is really true.

Now if by paradox we mean truth inherent in a contradiction, as in the saying of Christ that I have quoted, it is a very curious fact that Bernard Shaw is almost entirely without paradox. Moreover, he cannot even understand a paradox. And more than this, paradox is about the only thing in the world that he does not understand. All his splendid vistas and startling suggestions arise from carrying some one clear principle further than it has yet been carried. His madness is all consistency, not inconsistency. As the point can hardly be made clear without examples, let us take one example, the subject of education. Shaw has been all his life preaching to grown-up people the profound truth that liberty and responsibility go together; that the reason why freedom is so often easily withheld, is simply that it is a terrible nuisance. This is true, though not the whole truth, of citizens; and so when Shaw comes to children he can only apply to them the same principle that he has already applied to citizens. He begins to play with the Herbert Spencer idea of teaching children by experience; perhaps the most fatuously silly idea that was ever gravely put down in print. On that there is no need to dwell; one has only to ask how the experimental method is to be applied to a precipice; and the theory no longer exists. But Shaw effected a further development, if possible more fantastic. He said that one should never tell a child anything without letting him hear the opposite opinion. That is to say, when you tell Tommy not to hit his sick sister on the temple, you must make sure of the presence of some Nietzscheite professor, who will explain to him that such a course might possibly serve to eliminate the unfit. When you are in the act of telling

Susan not to drink out of the bottle labelled "poison," you must telegraph for a Christian Scientist, who will be ready to maintain that without her own consent it cannot do her any harm. What would happen to a child brought up on Shaw's principle I cannot conceive; I should think he would commit suicide in his bath. But that is not here the question. The point is that this proposition seems quite sufficiently wild and startling to ensure that its author, if he escapes Hanwell, would reach the front rank of journalists, demagogues, or public entertainers. It is a perfect paradox, if a paradox only means something that makes one jump. But it is not a paradox at all in the sense of a contradiction. It is not a contradiction, but an enormous and outrageous consistency, the one principle of free thought carried to a point to which no other sane man would consent to carry it. Exactly what Shaw does not understand is the paradox; the unavoidable paradox of childhood. Although this child is much better than I, yet I must teach it. Although this being has much purer passions than I, yet I must control it. Although Tommy is quite right to rush towards a precipice, yet he must be stood in the corner for doing it. This contradiction is the only possible condition of having to do with children at all; anyone who talks about a child without feeling this paradox might just as well be talking about a merman. He has never even seen the animal. But this paradox Shaw in his intellectual simplicity cannot see; he cannot see it because it is a paradox. His only intellectual excitement is to carry one idea further and further across the world. It never occurs to him that it might meet another idea, and like the three winds in Martin Chuzzlewit, they might make a night of it. His only paradox is to pull out one thread or cord of truth longer and longer into waste and fantastic places. He does not allow for that deeper sort of paradox by which two opposite cords of truth become entangled in an inextricable knot. Still less can he be made to realise that it is often this knot which ties safely together the whole bundle of human life.

This blindness to paradox everywhere perplexes his outlook. He cannot understand marriage because he will not understand the paradox of marriage; that the woman is all the more the house for not being the head of it. He cannot understand patriotism, because he will not understand the paradox of patriotism; that one is all the more human for not merely loving humanity. He does not understand Christianity because he will not understand the paradox of Christianity; that we can only really understand all myths when we know that one of them is true. I do not under-rate him for this anti-paradoxical temper; I concede that much of his finest and keenest work in the way of intellectual purification would have been difficult or impossible without it. But I say that here lies the limitation of that lucid and compelling mind; he cannot quite understand life, because he will not accept its contradictions.

Nor is it by any means descriptive of Shaw to call him a Socialist; in so far as that word can be extended to cover an ethical attitude. He is the least social of all Socialists; and I pity the Socialist state that tries to manage him. This anarchism of his is not a question of thinking for himself; every decent man thinks for himself; it would be highly immodest to think for anybody else. Nor is it any instinctive licence or egoism; as I have said before, he is a man of peculiarly acute public conscience. The unmanageable part of him, the fact that he cannot be conceived as part of a crowd or as really and invisibly helping a movement, has reference to another thing in him, or rather to another thing not in him.

The great defect of that fine intelligence is a failure to grasp and enjoy the things commonly called convention and tradition; which are foods upon which all human creatures must feed frequently if they are to live. Very few modern people of course have any idea of what they are. "Convention" is very nearly the same word as "democracy." It has again and again in history been used as an alternative word to Parliament. So far from suggesting anything stale or sober, the word convention rather conveys a hubbub; it is the coming together of men; every mob is a convention. In its secondary sense it means the common soul of such a crowd, its instinctive anger at the traitor or its instinctive salutation of the flag. Conventions may be cruel, they may be unsuitable, they may even be grossly superstitious or obscene; but there is one thing that they never are. Conventions are never dead. They are always full of accumulated emotions, the piled-up and passionate experiences of many generations asserting what they could not explain. To be inside any true convention, as the Chinese respect for parents or the European respect for children, is to be surrounded by something which whatever else it is is not leaden, lifeless or automatic, something which is taut and tingling with vitality at a hundred points, which is sensitive almost to madness and which is so much alive that it can kill. Now Bernard Shaw has always made this one immense mistake (arising out of that bad progressive education of his), the mistake of treating convention as a dead thing; treating it as if it were a mere physical environment like the pavement or the rain. Whereas it is a result of will; a rain of blessings and a pavement of good intentions. Let it be remembered that I am not discussing in what degree one should allow for tradition; I am saying that men like Shaw do not allow for it at all. If Shaw had found in early life that he was contradicted by Bradshaw's Railway Guide or even by the Encyclopædia Britannica, he would have felt at least that he might be wrong. But if he had found himself contradicted by his father and mother, he would have thought it all the more probable that he was right. If the issue of the last evening paper contradicted him he might be troubled to investigate or explain. That the

human tradition of two thousand years contradicted him did not trouble him for an instant. That Marx was not with him was important. That Man was not with him was an irrelevant prehistoric joke. People have talked far too much about the paradoxes of Bernard Shaw. Perhaps his only pure paradox is this almost unconscious one; that he has tended to think that because something has satisfied generations of men it must be untrue.

Shaw is wrong about nearly all the things one learns early in life and while one is still simple. Most human beings start with certain facts of psychology to which the rest of life must be somewhat related. For instance, every man falls in love; and no man falls into free love. When he falls into that he calls it lust, and is always ashamed of it even when he boasts of it. That there is some connection between a love and a vow nearly every human being knows before he is eighteen. That there is a solid and instinctive connection between the idea of sexual ecstasy and the idea of some sort of almost suicidal constancy, this I say is simply the first fact in one's own psychology; boys and girls know it almost before they know their own language. How far it can be trusted, how it can best be dealt with, all that is another matter. But lovers lust after constancy more than after happiness; if you are in any sense prepared to give them what they ask, then what they ask, beyond all question, is an oath of final fidelity. Lovers may be lunatics; lovers may be children; lovers may be unfit for citizenship and outside human argument; you can take up that position if you will. But lovers do not only desire love; they desire marriage. The root of legal monogamy does not lie (as Shaw and his friends are for ever drearily asserting) in the fact that the man is a mere tyrant and the woman a mere slave. It lies in the fact that if their love for each other is the noblest and freest love conceivable, it can only find its heroic expression in both becoming slaves. I only mention this matter here as a matter which most of us do not need to be taught; for it was the first lesson of life. In after years we may make up what code or compromise about sex we like; but we all know that constancy, jealousy, and the personal pledge are natural and inevitable in sex; we do not feel any surprise when we see them either in a murder or in a valentine. We may or may not see wisdom in early marriages; but we know quite well that wherever the thing is genuine at all, early loves will mean early marriages. But Shaw had not learnt about this tragedy of the sexes, what the rustic ballads of any country on earth would have taught him. He had not learnt, what universal common sense has put into all the folk-lore of the earth, that love cannot be thought of clearly for an instant except as monogamous. The old English ballads never sing the praises of "lovers." They always sing the praises of "true lovers," and that is the final philosophy of the question.

The same is true of Mr. Shaw's refusal to understand the love of the land

either in the form of patriotism or of private ownership. It is the attitude of an Irishman cut off from the soil of Ireland, retaining the audacity and even cynicism of the national type, but no longer fed from the roots with its pathos or its experience.

This broader and more brotherly rendering of convention must be applied particularly to the conventions of the drama; since that is necessarily the most democratic of all the arts. And it will be found generally that most of the theatrical conventions rest on a real artistic basis. The Greek Unities, for instance, were not proper objects of the meticulous and trivial imitation of Seneca or Gabriel Harvey. But still less were they the right objects for the equally trivial and far more vulgar impatience of men like Macaulay. That a tale should, if possible, be told of one place or one day or a manageable number of characters is an ideal plainly rooted in an æsthetic instinct. But if this be so with the classical drama, it is yet more certainly so with romantic drama, against the somewhat decayed dignity of which Bernard Shaw was largely in rebellion. There was one point in particular upon which the Ibsenites claimed to have reformed the romantic convention which is worthy of special allusion.

Shaw and all the other Ibsenites were fond of insisting that a defect in the romantic drama was its tendency to end with wedding-bells. Against this they set the modern drama of middle-age, the drama which described marriage itself instead of its poetic preliminaries. Now if Bernard Shaw had been more patient with popular tradition, more prone to think that there might be some sense in its survival, he might have seen this particular problem much more clearly. The old playwrights have left us plenty of plays of marriage and middle-age. Othello is as much about what follows the wedding-bells as The Doll's House. Macbeth is about a middle-aged couple as much as Little Eyolf. But if we ask ourselves what is the real difference, we shall, I think, find that it can fairly be stated thus. The old tragedies of marriage, though not love stories, are like love stories in this, that they work up to some act or stroke which is irrevocable as marriage is irrevocable; to the fact of death or of adultery.

Now the reason why our fathers did not make marriage, in the middle-aged and static sense, the subject of their plays was a very simple one; it was that a play is a very bad place for discussing that topic. You cannot easily make a good drama out of the success or failure of a marriage, just as you could not make a good drama out of the growth of an oak tree or the decay of an empire. As Polonius very reasonably observed, it is too long. A happy love-affair will make a drama simply because it is dramatic; it depends on an ultimate yes or no. But a happy marriage is not dramatic; perhaps it would

be less happy if it were. The essence of a romantic heroine is that she asks herself an intense question; but the essence of a sensible wife is that she is much too sensible to ask herself any questions at all. All the things that make monogamy a success are in their nature undramatic things, the silent growth of an instinctive confidence, the common wounds and victories, the accumulation of customs, the rich maturing of old jokes. Sane marriage is an untheatrical thing; it is therefore not surprising that most modern dramatists have devoted themselves to insane marriage.

To summarise; before touching the philosophy which Shaw has ultimately adopted, we must quit the notion that we know it already and that it is hit off in such journalistic terms as these three. Shaw does not wish to multiply problem plays or even problems. He has such scepticism as is the misfortune of his age; but he has this dignified and courageous quality, that he does not come to ask questions but to answer them. He is not a paradox-monger; he is a wild logician, far too simple even to be called a sophist. He understands everything in life except its paradoxes, especially that ultimate paradox that the very things that we cannot comprehend are the things that we have to take for granted. Lastly, he is not especially social or collectivist. On the contrary, he rather dislikes men in the mass, though he can appreciate them individually. He has no respect for collective humanity in its two great forms; either in that momentary form which we call a mob, or in that enduring form which we call a convention.

The general cosmic theory which can so far be traced through the earlier essays and plays of Bernard Shaw may be expressed in the image of Schopenhauer standing on his head. I cheerfully concede that Schopenhauer looks much nicer in that posture than in his original one, but I can hardly suppose that he feels more comfortable. The substance of the change is this. Roughly speaking, Schopenhauer maintained that life is unreasonable. The intellect, if it could be impartial, would tell us to cease; but a blind partiality, an instinct quite distinct from thought, drives us on to take desperate chances in an essentially bankrupt lottery. Shaw seems to accept this dingy estimate of the rational outlook, but adds a somewhat arresting comment. Schopenhauer had said, "Life is unreasonable; so much the worse for all living things." Shaw said, "Life is unreasonable; so much the worse for reason." Life is the higher call, life we must follow. It may be that there is some undetected fallacy in reason itself. Perhaps the whole man cannot get inside his own head any more than he can jump down his own throat. But there is about the need to live, to suffer, and to create that imperative quality which can truly be called supernatural, of whose voice it can indeed be said that it speaks with authority, and not as the scribes.

This is the first and finest item of the original Bernard Shaw creed: that if reason says that life is irrational, life must be content to reply that reason is lifeless; life is the primary thing, and if reason impedes it, then reason must be trodden down into the mire amid the most abject superstitions. In the ordinary sense it would be specially absurd to suggest that Shaw desires man to be a mere animal. For that is always associated with lust or incontinence; and Shaw's ideals are strict, hygienic, and even, one might say, old-maidish. But there is a mystical sense in which one may say literally that Shaw desires man to be an animal. That is, he desires him to cling first and last to life, to the spirit of animation, to the thing which is common to him and the birds and plants. Man should have the blind faith of a beast: he should be as mystically immutable as a cow, and as deaf to sophistries as a fish. Shaw does not wish him to be a philosopher or an artist; he does not even wish him to be a man, so much as he wishes him to be, in this holy sense, an animal. He must follow the flag of life as fiercely from conviction as all other creatures follow it from instinct.

But this Shavian worship of life is by no means lively. It has nothing in common either with the braver or the baser forms of what we commonly call optimism. It has none of the omnivorous exultation of Walt Whitman or the fiery pantheism of Shelley. Bernard Shaw wishes to show himself not so much as an optimist, but rather as a sort of faithful and contented pessimist. This contradiction is the key to nearly all his early and more obvious contradictions and to many which remain to the end. Whitman and many modern idealists have talked of taking even duty as a pleasure; it seems to me that Shaw takes even pleasure as a duty. In a queer way he seems to see existence as an illusion and yet as an obligation. To every man and woman, bird, beast, and flower, life is a love-call to be eagerly followed. To Bernard Shaw it is merely a military bugle to be obeyed. In short, he fails to feel that the command of Nature (if one must use the anthropomorphic fable of Nature instead of the philosophic term God) can be enjoyed as well as obeyed. He paints life at its darkest and then tells the babe unborn to take the leap in the dark. That is heroic; and to my instinct at least Schopenhauer looks like a pigmy beside his pupil. But it is the heroism of a morbid and almost asphyxiated age. It is awful to think that this world which so many poets have praised has even for a time been depicted as a man-trap into which we may just have the manhood to jump. Think of all those ages through which men have talked of having the courage to die. And then remember that we have actually fallen to talking about having the courage to live.

It is exactly this oddity or dilemma which may be said to culminate in the crowning work of his later and more constructive period, the work in which

he certainly attempted, whether with success or not, to state his ultimate and cosmic vision; I mean the play called *Man and Superman*. In approaching this play we must keep well in mind the distinction recently drawn: that Shaw follows the banner of life, but austere, not joyously. For him nature has authority, but hardly charm. But before we approach it it is necessary to deal with three things that lead up to it. First it is necessary to speak of what remained of his old critical and realistic method; and then it is necessary to speak of the two important influences which led up to his last and most important change of outlook.

First, since all our spiritual epochs overlap, and a man is often doing the old work while he is thinking of the new, we may deal first with what may be fairly called his last two plays of pure worldly criticism. These are *Major Barbara* and *John Bull's Other Island*. *Major Barbara* indeed contains a strong religious element; but, when all is said, the whole point of the play is that the religious element is defeated. Moreover, the actual expressions of religion in the play are somewhat unsatisfactory as expressions of religion--or even of reason. I must frankly say that Bernard Shaw always seems to me to use the word God not only without any idea of what it means, but without one moment's thought about what it could possibly mean. He said to some atheist, "Never believe in a God that you cannot improve on." The atheist (being a sound theologian) naturally replied that one should not believe in a God whom one could improve on; as that would show that he was not God. In the same style in *Major Barbara* the heroine ends by suggesting that she will serve God without personal hope, so that she may owe nothing to God and He owe everything to her. It does not seem to strike her that if God owes everything to her He is not God. These things affect me merely as tedious perversions of a phrase. It is as if you said, "I will never have a father unless I have begotten him."

But the real sting and substance of *Major Barbara* is much more practical and to the point. It expresses not the new spirituality but the old materialism of Bernard Shaw. Almost every one of Shaw's plays is an expanded epigram. But the epigram is not expanded (as with most people) into a hundred commonplaces. Rather the epigram is expanded into a hundred other epigrams; the work is at least as brilliant in detail as it is in design. But it is generally possible to discover the original and pivotal epigram which is the centre and purpose of the play. It is generally possible, even amid that blinding jewellery of a million jokes, to discover the grave, solemn and sacred joke for which the play itself was written.

The ultimate epigram of *Major Barbara* can be put thus. People say that poverty is no crime; Shaw says that poverty is a crime; that it is a crime to

endure it, a crime to be content with it, that it is the mother of all crimes of brutality, corruption, and fear. If a man says to Shaw that he is born of poor but honest parents, Shaw tells him that the very word "but" shows that his parents were probably dishonest. In short, he maintains here what he had maintained elsewhere: that what the people at this moment require is not more patriotism or more art or more religion or more morality or more sociology, but simply more money. The evil is not ignorance or decadence or sin or pessimism; the evil is poverty. The point of this particular drama is that even the noblest enthusiasm of the girl who becomes a Salvation Army officer fails under the brute money power of her father who is a modern capitalist. When I have said this it will be clear why this play, fine and full of bitter sincerity as it is, must in a manner be cleared out of the way before we come to talk of Shaw's final and serious faith. For his serious faith is in the sanctity of human will, in the divine capacity for creation and choice rising higher than environment and doom; and so far as that goes, Major Barbara is not only apart from his faith but against his faith. Major Barbara is an account of environment victorious over heroic will. There are a thousand answers to the ethic in Major Barbara which I should be inclined to offer. I might point out that the rich do not so much buy honesty as curtains to cover dishonesty; that they do not so much buy health as cushions to comfort disease. And I might suggest that the doctrine that poverty degrades the poor is much more likely to be used as an argument for keeping them powerless than as an argument for making them rich. But there is no need to find such answers to the materialistic pessimism of Major Barbara. The best answer to it is in Shaw's own best and crowning philosophy, with which we shall shortly be concerned.

John Bull's Other Island represents a realism somewhat more tinged with the later transcendentalism of its author. In one sense, of course, it is a satire on the conventional Englishman, who is never so silly or sentimental as when he sees silliness and sentiment in the Irishman. Broadbent, whose mind is all fog and his morals all gush, is firmly persuaded that he is bringing reason and order among the Irish, whereas in truth they are all smiling at his illusions with the critical detachment of so many devils. There have been many plays depicting the absurd Paddy in a ring of Anglo-Saxons; the first purpose of this play is to depict the absurd Anglo-Saxon in a ring of ironical Paddies. But it has a second and more subtle purpose, which is very finely contrived. It is suggested that when all is said and done there is in this preposterous Englishman a certain creative power which comes from his simplicity and optimism, from his profound resolution rather to live life than to criticise it. I know no finer dialogue of philosophical cross-purposes than that in which Broadbent boasts of his commonsense, and his subtler Irish friend mystifies him by telling him that he, Broadbent, has no

common-sense, but only inspiration. The Irishman admits in Broadbent a certain unconscious spiritual force even in his very stupidity. Lord Rosebery coined the very clever phrase "a practical mystic." Shaw is here maintaining that all practical men are practical mystics. And he is really maintaining also that the most practical of all the practical mystics is the one who is a fool.

There is something unexpected and fascinating about this reversal of the usual argument touching enterprise and the business man; this theory that success is created not by intelligence, but by a certain half-witted and yet magical instinct. For Bernard Shaw, apparently, the forests of factories and the mountains of money are not the creations of human wisdom or even of human cunning; they are rather manifestations of the sacred maxim which declares that God has chosen the foolish things of the earth to confound the wise. It is simplicity and even innocence that has made Manchester. As a philosophical fancy this is interesting or even suggestive; but it must be confessed that as a criticism of the relations of England to Ireland it is open to a strong historical objection. The one weak point in John Bull's Other Island is that it turns on the fact that Broadbent succeeds in Ireland. But as a matter of fact Broadbent has not succeeded in Ireland. If getting what one wants is the test and fruit of this mysterious strength, then the Irish peasants are certainly much stronger than the English merchants; for in spite of all the efforts of the merchants, the land has remained a land of peasants. No glorification of the English practicality as if it were a universal thing can ever get over the fact that we have failed in dealing with the one white people in our power who were markedly unlike ourselves. And the kindness of Broadbent has failed just as much as his common-sense; because he was dealing with a people whose desire and ideal were different from his own. He did not share the Irish passion for small possession in land or for the more pathetic virtues of Christianity. In fact the kindness of Broadbent has failed for the same reason that the gigantic kindness of Shaw has failed. The roots are different; it is like tying the tops of two trees together. Briefly, the philosophy of John Bull's Other Island is quite effective and satisfactory except for this incurable fault: the fact that John Bull's other island is not John Bull's.

This clearing off of his last critical plays we may classify as the first of the three facts which lead up to Man and Superman. The second of the three facts may be found, I think, in Shaw's discovery of Nietzsche. This eloquent sophist has an influence upon Shaw and his school which it would require a separate book adequately to study. By descent Nietzsche was a Pole, and probably a Polish noble; and to say that he was a Polish noble is to say that he was a frail, fastidious, and entirely useless anarchist. He had a wonderful

poetic wit; and is one of the best rhetoricians of the modern world. He had a remarkable power of saying things that master the reason for a moment by their gigantic unreasonableness; as, for instance, "Your life is intolerable without immortality; but why should not your life be intolerable?" His whole work is shot through with the pangs and fevers of his physical life, which was one of extreme bad health; and in early middle age his brilliant brain broke down into impotence and darkness. All that was true in his teaching was this: that if a man looks fine on a horse it is so far irrelevant to tell him that he would be more economical on a donkey or more humane on a tricycle. In other words, the mere achievement of dignity, beauty, or triumph is strictly to be called a good thing. I do not know if Nietzsche ever used the illustration; but it seems to me that all that is creditable or sound in Nietzsche could be stated in the derivation of one word, the word "valour." Valour means valeur; it means a value; courage is itself a solid good; it is an ultimate virtue; valour is in itself valid. In so far as he maintained this Nietzsche was only taking part in that great Protestant game of see-saw which has been the amusement of northern Europe since the sixteenth century. Nietzsche imagined he was rebelling against ancient morality; as a matter of fact he was only rebelling against recent morality, against the half-baked impudence of the utilitarians and the materialists. He thought he was rebelling against Christianity; curiously enough he was rebelling solely against the special enemies of Christianity, against Herbert Spencer and Mr. Edward Clodd. Historic Christianity has always believed in the valour of St. Michael riding in front of the Church Militant; and in an ultimate and absolute pleasure, not indirect or utilitarian, the intoxication of the spirit, the wine of the blood of God.

There are indeed doctrines of Nietzsche that are not Christian, but then, by an entertaining coincidence, they are also not true. His hatred of pity is not Christian, but that was not his doctrine but his disease. Invalids are often hard on invalids. And there is another doctrine of his that is not Christianity, and also (by the same laughable accident) not common-sense; and it is a most pathetic circumstance that this was the one doctrine which caught the eye of Shaw and captured him. He was not influenced at all by the morbid attack on mercy. It would require more than ten thousand mad Polish professors to make Bernard Shaw anything but a generous and compassionate man. But it is certainly a nuisance that the one Nietzsche doctrine which attracted him was not the one Nietzsche doctrine that is human and rectifying. Nietzsche might really have done some good if he had taught Bernard Shaw to draw the sword, to drink wine, or even to dance. But he only succeeded in putting into his head a new superstition, which bids fair to be the chief superstition of the dark ages which are possibly in front of us--I mean the superstition of what is called the Superman.

In one of his least convincing phrases, Nietzsche had said that just as the ape ultimately produced the man, so should we ultimately produce something higher than the man. The immediate answer, of course, is sufficiently obvious: the ape did not worry about the man, so why should we worry about the Superman? If the Superman will come by natural selection, may we leave it to natural selection? If the Superman will come by human selection, what sort of Superman are we to select? If he is simply to be more just, more brave, or more merciful, then Zarathustra sinks into a Sunday-school teacher; the only way we can work for it is to be more just, more brave, and more merciful; sensible advice, but hardly startling. If he is to be anything else than this, why should we desire him, or what else are we to desire? These questions have been many times asked of the Nietzscheites, and none of the Nietzscheites have even attempted to answer them.

The keen intellect of Bernard Shaw would, I think, certainly have seen through this fallacy and verbiage had it not been that another important event about this time came to the help of Nietzsche and established the Superman on his pedestal. It is the third of the things which I have called stepping-stones to Man and Superman, and it is very important. It is nothing less than the breakdown of one of the three intellectual supports upon which Bernard Shaw had reposed through all his confident career. At the beginning of this book I have described the three ultimate supports of Shaw as the Irishman, the Puritan, and the Progressive. They are the three legs of the tripod upon which the prophet sat to give the oracle; and one of them broke. Just about this time suddenly, by a mere shaft of illumination, Bernard Shaw ceased to believe in progress altogether.

It is generally implied that it was reading Plato that did it. That philosopher was very well qualified to convey the first shock of the ancient civilisation to Shaw, who had always thought instinctively of civilisation as modern. This is not due merely to the daring splendour of the speculations and the vivid picture of Athenian life, it is due also to something analogous in the personalities of that particular ancient Greek and this particular modern Irishman. Bernard Shaw has much affinity to Plato--in his instinctive elevation of temper, his courageous pursuit of ideas as far as they will go, his civic idealism; and also, it must be confessed, in his dislike of poets and a touch of delicate inhumanity. But whatever influence produced the change, the change had all the dramatic suddenness and completeness which belongs to the conversions of great men. It had been perpetually implied through all the earlier works not only that mankind is constantly improving, but that almost everything must be considered in the light of this fact. More than once he seemed to argue, in comparing the dramatists of the

sixteenth with those of the nineteenth century, that the latter had a definite advantage merely because they were of the nineteenth century and not of the sixteenth. When accused of impertinence towards the greatest of the Elizabethans, Bernard Shaw had said, "Shakespeare is a much taller man than I, but I stand on his shoulders"--an epigram which sums up this doctrine with characteristic neatness. But Shaw fell off Shakespeare's shoulders with a crash. This chronological theory that Shaw stood on Shakespeare's shoulders logically involved the supposition that Shakespeare stood on Plato's shoulders. And Bernard Shaw found Plato from his point of view so much more advanced than Shakespeare that he decided in desperation that all three were equal.

Such failure as has partially attended the idea of human equality is very largely due to the fact that no party in the modern state has heartily believed in it. Tories and Radicals have both assumed that one set of men were in essentials superior to mankind. The only difference was that the Tory superiority was a superiority of place; while the Radical superiority is a superiority of time. The great objection to Shaw being on Shakespeare's shoulders is a consideration for the sensations and personal dignity of Shakespeare. It is a democratic objection to anyone being on anyone else's shoulders. Eternal human nature refuses to submit to a man who rules merely by right of birth. To rule by right of century is to rule by right of birth. Shaw found his nearest kinsman in remote Athens, his remotest enemies in the closest historical proximity; and he began to see the enormous average and the vast level of mankind. If progress swung constantly between such extremes it could not be progress at all. The paradox was sharp but undeniable; if life had such continual ups and downs, it was upon the whole flat. With characteristic sincerity and love of sensation he had no sooner seen this than he hastened to declare it. In the teeth of all his previous pronouncements he emphasised and re-emphasised in print that man had not progressed at all; that ninety-nine hundredths of a man in a cave were the same as ninety-nine hundredths of a man in a suburban villa.

It is characteristic of him to say that he rushed into print with a frank confession of the failure of his old theory. But it is also characteristic of him that he rushed into print also with a new alternative theory, quite as definite, quite as confident, and, if one may put it so, quite as infallible as the old one. Progress had never happened hitherto, because it had been sought solely through education. Education was rubbish. "Fancy," said he, "trying to produce a greyhound or a racehorse by education!" The man of the future must not be taught; he must be bred. This notion of producing superior human beings by the methods of the stud-farm had often been

urged, though its difficulties had never been cleared up. I mean its practical difficulties; its moral difficulties, or rather impossibilities, for any animal fit to be called a man need scarcely be discussed. But even as a scheme it had never been made clear. The first and most obvious objection to it of course is this: that if you are to breed men as pigs, you require some overseer who is as much more subtle than a man as a man is more subtle than a pig. Such an individual is not easy to find.

It was, however, in the heat of these three things, the decline of his merely destructive realism, the discovery of Nietzsche, and the abandonment of the idea of a progressive education of mankind, that he attempted what is not necessarily his best, but certainly his most important work. The two things are by no means necessarily the same. The most important work of Milton is *Paradise Lost*; his best work is *Lycidas*. There are other places in which Shaw's argument is more fascinating or his wit more startling than in *Man and Superman*; there are other plays that he has made more brilliant. But I am sure that there is no other play that he wished to make more brilliant. I will not say that he is in this case more serious than elsewhere; for the word serious is a double-meaning and double-dealing word, a traitor in the dictionary. It sometimes means solemn, and it sometimes means sincere. A very short experience of private and public life will be enough to prove that the most solemn people are generally the most insincere. A somewhat more delicate and detailed consideration will show also that the most sincere men are generally not solemn; and of these is Bernard Shaw. But if we use the word serious in the old and Latin sense of the word "grave," which means weighty or valid, full of substance, then we may say without any hesitation that this is the most serious play of the most serious man alive.

The outline of the play is, I suppose, by this time sufficiently well known. It has two main philosophic motives. The first is that what he calls the life-force (the old infidels called it Nature, which seems a neater word, and nobody knows the meaning of either of them) desires above all things to make suitable marriages, to produce a purer and prouder race, or eventually to produce a Superman. The second is that in this effecting of racial marriages the woman is a more conscious agent than the man. In short, that woman disposes a long time before man proposes. In this play, therefore, woman is made the pursuer and man the pursued. It cannot be denied, I think, that in this matter Shaw is handicapped by his habitual hardness of touch, by his lack of sympathy with the romance of which he writes, and to a certain extent even by his own integrity and right conscience. Whether the man hunts the woman or the woman the man, at least it should be a splendid pagan hunt; but Shaw is not a sporting man. Nor is he a pagan, but a Puritan. He cannot recover the impartiality of

paganism which allowed Diana to propose to Endymion without thinking any the worse of her. The result is that while he makes Anne, the woman who marries his hero, a really powerful and convincing woman, he can only do it by making her a highly objectionable woman. She is a liar and a bully, not from sudden fear or excruciating dilemma; she is a liar and a bully in grain; she has no truth or magnanimity in her. The more we know that she is real, the more we know that she is vile. In short, Bernard Shaw is still haunted with his old impotence of the unromantic writer; he cannot imagine the main motives of human life from the inside. We are convinced successfully that Anne wishes to marry Tanner, but in the very process we lose all power of conceiving why Tanner should ever consent to marry Anne. A writer with a more romantic strain in him might have imagined a woman choosing her lover without shamelessness and magnetising him without fraud. Even if the first movement were feminine, it need hardly be a movement like this. In truth, of course, the two sexes have their two methods of attraction, and in some of the happiest cases they are almost simultaneous. But even on the most cynical showing they need not be mixed up. It is one thing to say that the mousetrap is not there by accident. It is another to say (in the face of ocular experience) that the mousetrap runs after the mouse.

But whenever Shaw shows the Puritan hardness or even the Puritan cheapness, he shows something also of the Puritan nobility, of the idea that sacrifice is really a frivolity in the face of a great purpose. The reasonableness of Calvin and his followers will by the mercy of heaven be at last washed away; but their unreasonableness will remain an eternal splendour. Long after we have let drop the fancy that Protestantism was rational it will be its glory that it was fanatical. So it is with Shaw. To make Anne a real woman, even a dangerous woman, he would need to be something stranger and softer than Bernard Shaw. But though I always argue with him whenever he argues, I confess that he always conquers me in the one or two moments when he is emotional.

There is one really noble moment when Anne offers for all her cynical husband-hunting the only defence that is really great enough to cover it. "It will not be all happiness for me. Perhaps death." And the man rises also at that real crisis, saying, "Oh, that clutch holds and hurts. What have you grasped in me? Is there a father's heart as well as a mother's?" That seems to me actually great; I do not like either of the characters an atom more than formerly; but I can see shining and shaking through them at that instant the splendour of the God that made them and of the image of God who wrote their story.

A logician is like a liar in many respects, but chiefly in the fact that he should have a good memory. That cutting and inquisitive style which Bernard Shaw has always adopted carries with it an inevitable criticism. And it cannot be denied that this new theory of the supreme importance of sound sexual union, wrought by any means, is hard logically to reconcile with Shaw's old diatribes against sentimentalism and operatic romance. If Nature wishes primarily to entrap us into sexual union, then all the means of sexual attraction, even the most maudlin or theatrical, are justified at one stroke. The guitar of the troubadour is as practical as the ploughshare of the husbandman. The waltz in the ballroom is as serious as the debate in the parish council. The justification of Anne, as the potential mother of Superman, is really the justification of all the humbugs and sentimentalists whom Shaw had been denouncing as a dramatic critic and as a dramatist since the beginning of his career. It was to no purpose that the earlier Bernard Shaw said that romance was all moonshine. The moonshine that ripens love is now as practical as the sunshine that ripens corn. It was vain to say that sexual chivalry was all rot; it might be as rotten as manure--and also as fertile. It is vain to call first love a fiction; it may be as fictitious as the ink of the cuttle or the doubling of the hare; as fictitious, as efficient, and as indispensable. It is vain to call it a self-deception; Schopenhauer said that all existence was a self-deception; and Shaw's only further comment seems to be that it is right to be deceived. To Man and Superman, as to all his plays, the author attaches a most fascinating preface at the beginning. But I really think that he ought also to attach a hearty apology at the end; an apology to all the minor dramatists or preposterous actors whom he had cursed for romanticism in his youth. Whenever he objected to an actress for ogling she might reasonably reply, "But this is how I support my friend Anne in her sublime evolutionary effort." Whenever he laughed at an old-fashioned actor for ranting, the actor might answer, "My exaggeration is not more absurd than the tail of a peacock or the swagger of a cock; it is the way I preach the great fruitful lie of the life-force that I am a very fine fellow." We have remarked the end of Shaw's campaign in favour of progress. This ought really to have been the end of his campaign against romance. All the tricks of love that he called artificial become natural; because they become Nature. All the lies of love become truths; indeed they become the Truth.

The minor things of the play contain some thunderbolts of good thinking. Throughout this brief study I have deliberately not dwelt upon mere wit, because in anything of Shaw's that may be taken for granted. It is enough to say that this play which is full of his most serious quality is as full as any of his minor sort of success. In a more solid sense two important facts stand out: the first is the character of the young American; the other is the character of Straker, the chauffeur. In these Shaw has realised and made

vivid two most important facts. First, that America is not intellectually a go-ahead country, but both for good and evil an old-fashioned one. It is full of stale culture and ancestral simplicity, just as Shaw's young millionaire quotes Macaulay and piously worships his wife. Second, he has pointed out in the character of Straker that there has arisen in our midst a new class that has education without breeding. Straker is the man who has ousted the hansom-cabman, having neither his coarseness nor his kindliness. Great sociological credit is due to the man who has first clearly observed that Straker has appeared. How anybody can profess for a moment to be glad that he has appeared, I do not attempt to conjecture.

Appended to the play is an entertaining though somewhat mysterious document called "The Revolutionist's Handbook." It contains many very sound remarks; this, for example, which I cannot too much applaud: "If you hit your child, be sure that you hit him in anger." If that principle had been properly understood, we should have had less of Shaw's sociological friends and their meddling with the habits and instincts of the poor. But among the fragments of advice also occurs the following suggestive and even alluring remark: "Every man over forty is a scoundrel." On the first personal opportunity I asked the author of this remarkable axiom what it meant. I gathered that what it really meant was something like this: that every man over forty had been all the essential use that he was likely to be, and was therefore in a manner a parasite. It is gratifying to reflect that Bernard Shaw has sufficiently answered his own epigram by continuing to pour out treasures both of truth and folly long after this allotted time. But if the epigram might be interpreted in a rather looser style as meaning that past a certain point a man's work takes on its final character and does not greatly change the nature of its merits, it may certainly be said that with *Man and Superman*, Shaw reaches that stage. The two plays that have followed it, though of very great interest in themselves, do not require any revaluation of, or indeed any addition to, our summary of his genius and success. They are both in a sense casts back to his primary energies; the first in a controversial and the second in a technical sense. Neither need prevent our saying that the moment when John Tanner and Anne agree that it is doom for him and death for her and life only for the thing unborn, is the peak of his utterance as a prophet.

The two important plays that he has since given us are *The Doctor's Dilemma* and *Getting Married*. The first is as regards its most amusing and effective elements a throw-back to his old game of guying the men of science. It was a very good game, and he was an admirable player. The actual story of the *Doctor's Dilemma* itself seems to me less poignant and important than the things with which Shaw had lately been dealing. First of

all, as has been said, Shaw has neither the kind of justice nor the kind of weakness that goes to make a true problem. We cannot feel the Doctor's Dilemma, because we cannot really fancy Bernard Shaw being in a dilemma. His mind is both fond of abruptness and fond of finality; he always makes up his mind when he knows the facts and sometimes before. Moreover, this particular problem (though Shaw is certainly, as we shall see, nearer to pure doubt about it than about anything else) does not strike the critic as being such an exasperating problem after all. An artist of vast power and promise, who is also a scamp of vast profligacy and treachery, has a chance of life if specially treated for a special disease. The modern doctors (and even the modern dramatist) are in doubt whether he should be specially favoured because he is æsthetically important or specially disregarded because he is ethically anti-social. They see-saw between the two despicable modern doctrines, one that geniuses should be worshipped like idols and the other that criminals should be merely wiped out like germs. That both clever men and bad men ought to be treated like men does not seem to occur to them. As a matter of fact, in these affairs of life and death one never does think of such distinctions. Nobody does shout out at sea, "Bad citizen overboard!" I should recommend the doctor in his dilemma to do exactly what I am sure any decent doctor would do without any dilemma at all: to treat the man simply as a man, and give him no more and no less favour than he would to anybody else. In short, I am sure a practical physician would drop all these visionary, unworkable modern dreams about type and criminology and go back to the plain business-like facts of the French Revolution and the Rights of Man.

The other play, *Getting Married*, is a point in Shaw's career, but only as a play, not, as usual, as a heresy. It is nothing but a conversation about marriage; and one cannot agree or disagree with the view of marriage, because all views are given which are held by anybody, and some (I should think) which are held by nobody. But its technical quality is of some importance in the life of its author. It is worth consideration as a play, because it is not a play at all. It marks the culmination and completeness of that victory of Bernard Shaw over the British public, or rather over their official representatives, of which I have spoken. Shaw had fought a long fight with business men, those incredible people, who assured him that it was useless to have wit without murders, and that a good joke, which is the most popular thing everywhere else, was quite unsalable in the theatrical world. In spite of this he had conquered by his wit and his good dialogue; and by the time of which we now speak he was victorious and secure. All his plays were being produced as a matter of course in England and as a matter of the fiercest fashion and enthusiasm in America and Germany. No one who knows the nature of the man will doubt that under such circumstances

his first act would be to produce his wit naked and unashamed. He had been told that he could not support a slight play by mere dialogue. He therefore promptly produced mere dialogue without the slightest play for it to support. *Getting Married* is no more a play than Cicero's dialogue *De Amicitia*, and not half so much a play as Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. But though it is not a play, it was played, and played successfully. Everyone who went into the theatre felt that he was only eavesdropping at an accidental conversation. But the conversation was so sparkling and sensible that he went on eavesdropping. This, I think, as it is the final play of Shaw, is also, and fitly, his final triumph. He is a good dramatist and sometimes even a great dramatist. But the occasions when we get glimpses of him as really a great man are on these occasions when he is utterly undramatic.

From first to last Bernard Shaw has been nothing but a conversationalist. It is not a slur to say so; Socrates was one, and even Christ Himself. He differs from that divine and that human prototype in the fact that, like most modern people, he does to some extent talk in order to find out what he thinks; whereas they knew it beforehand. But he has the virtues that go with the talkative man; one of which is humility. You will hardly ever find a really proud man talkative; he is afraid of talking too much. Bernard Shaw offered himself to the world with only one great qualification, that he could talk honestly and well. He did not speak; he talked to a crowd. He did not write; he talked to a typewriter. He did not really construct a play; he talked through ten mouths or masks instead of through one. His literary power and progress began in casual conversations--and it seems to me supremely right that it should end in one great and casual conversation. His last play is nothing but garrulous talking, that great thing called gossip. And I am happy to say that the play has been as efficient and successful as talk and gossip have always been among the children of men.

Of his life in these later years I have made no pretence of telling even the little that there is to tell. Those who regard him as a mere self-advertising egotist may be surprised to hear that there is perhaps no man of whose private life less could be positively said by an outsider. Even those who know him can make little but a conjecture of what has lain behind this splendid stretch of intellectual self-expression; I only make my conjecture like the rest. I think that the first great turning-point in Shaw's life (after the early things of which I have spoken, the taint of drink in the teetotal home, or the first fight with poverty) was the deadly illness which fell upon him, at the end of his first flashing career as a *Saturday Reviewer*. I know it would goad Shaw to madness to suggest that sickness could have softened him. That is why I suggest it. But I say for his comfort that I think it hardened him also; if that can be called hardening which is only the strengthening of

our souls to meet some dreadful reality. At least it is certain that the larger spiritual ambitions, the desire to find a faith and found a church, come after that time. I also mention it because there is hardly anything else to mention; his life is singularly free from landmarks, while his literature is so oddly full of surprises. His marriage to Miss Payne-Townsend, which occurred not long after his illness, was one of those quite successful things which are utterly silent. The placidity of his married life may be sufficiently indicated by saying that (as far as I can make out) the most important events in it were rows about the Executive of the Fabian Society. If such ripples do not express a still and lake-like life, I do not know what would. Honestly, the only thing in his later career that can be called an event is the stand made by Shaw at the Fabians against the sudden assault of Mr. H. G. Wells, which, after scenes of splendid exasperations, ended in Wells' resignation. There was another slight ruffling of the calm when Bernard Shaw said some quite sensible things about Sir Henry Irving. But on the whole we confront the composure of one who has come into his own.

The method of his life has remained mostly unchanged. And there is a great deal of method in his life; I can hear some people murmuring something about method in his madness. He is not only neat and business-like; but, unlike some literary men I know, does not conceal the fact. Having all the talents proper to an author, he delights to prove that he has also all the talents proper to a publisher; or even to a publisher's clerk. Though many looking at his light brown clothes would call him a Bohemian, he really hates and despises Bohemianism; in the sense that he hates and despises disorder and uncleanness and irresponsibility. All that part of him is peculiarly normal and efficient. He gives good advice; he always answers letters, and answers them in a decisive and very legible hand. He has said himself that the only educational art that he thinks important is that of being able to jump off tram-cars at the proper moment. Though a rigid vegetarian, he is quite regular and rational in his meals; and though he detests sport, he takes quite sufficient exercise. While he has always made a mock of science in theory, he is by nature prone to meddle with it in practice. He is fond of photographing, and even more fond of being photographed. He maintained (in one of his moments of mad modernity) that photography was a finer thing than portrait-painting, more exquisite and more imaginative; he urged the characteristic argument that none of his own photographs were like each other or like him. But he would certainly wash the chemicals off his hands the instant after an experiment; just as he would wash the blood off his hands the instant after a Socialist massacre. He cannot endure stains or accretions; he is of that temperament which feels tradition itself to be a coat of dust; whose temptation it is to feel nothing but a sort of foul accumulation or living disease even in the creeper

upon the cottage or the moss upon the grave. So thoroughly are his tastes those of the civilised modern man that if it had not been for the fire in him of justice and anger he might have been the most trim and modern among the millions whom he shocks: and his bicycle and brown hat have been no menace in Brixton. But God sent among those suburbans one who was a prophet as well as a sanitary inspector. He had every qualification for living in a villa--except the necessary indifference to his brethren living in pigstyes. But for the small fact that he hates with a sickening hatred the hypocrisy and class cruelty, he would really accept and admire the bathroom and the bicycle and asbestos-stove, having no memory of rivers or of roaring fires. In these things, like Mr. Straker, he is the New Man. But for his great soul he might have accepted modern civilisation; it was a wonderful escape. This man whom men so foolishly call crazy and anarchic has really a dangerous affinity to the fourth-rate perfections of our provincial and Protestant civilisation. He might even have been respectable if he had had less self-respect.

His fulfilled fame and this tone of repose and reason in his life, together with the large circle of his private kindness and the regard of his fellow-artists, should permit us to end the record in a tone of almost patriarchal quiet. If I wished to complete such a picture I could add many touches: that he has consented to wear evening dress; that he has supported the Times Book Club; and that his beard has turned grey; the last to his regret, as he wanted it to remain red till they had completed colour-photography. He can mix with the most conservative statesmen; his tone grows continuously more gentle in the matter of religion. It would be easy to end with the lion lying down with the lamb, the wild Irishman tamed or taming everybody, Shaw reconciled to the British public as the British public is certainly largely reconciled to Shaw.

But as I put these last papers together, having finished this rude study, I hear a piece of news. His latest play, *The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*, has been forbidden by the Censor. As far as I can discover, it has been forbidden because one of the characters professes a belief in God and states his conviction that God has got him. This is wholesome; this is like one crack of thunder in a clear sky. Not so easily does the prince of this world forgive. Shaw's religious training and instinct is not mine, but in all honest religion there is something that is hateful to the prosperous compromise of our time. You are free in our time to say that God does not exist; you are free to say that He exists and is evil; you are free to say (like poor old Renan) that He would like to exist if He could. You may talk of God as a metaphor or a mystification; you may water Him down with gallons of long words, or boil Him to the rags of metaphysics; and it is not merely that nobody punishes,

but nobody protests. But if you speak of God as a fact, as a thing like a tiger, as a reason for changing one's conduct, then the modern world will stop you somehow if it can. We are long past talking about whether an unbeliever should be punished for being irreverent. It is now thought irreverent to be a believer. I end where I began: it is the old Puritan in Shaw that jars the modern world like an electric shock. That vision with which I meant to end, that vision of culture and common-sense, of red brick and brown flannel, of the modern clerk broadened enough to embrace Shaw and Shaw softened enough to embrace the clerk, all that vision of a new London begins to fade and alter. The red brick begins to burn red-hot; and the smoke from all the chimneys has a strange smell. I find myself back in the fumes in which I started.... Perhaps I have been misled by small modernities. Perhaps what I have called fastidiousness is a divine fear. Perhaps what I have called coldness is a predestinate and ancient endurance. The vision of the Fabian villas grows fainter and fainter, until I see only a void place across which runs Bunyan's Pilgrim with his fingers in his ears.

Bernard Shaw has occupied much of his life in trying to elude his followers. The fox has enthusiastic followers, and Shaw seems to regard his in much the same way. This man whom men accuse of bidding for applause seems to me to shrink even from assent. If you agree with Shaw he is very likely to contradict you; I have contradicted Shaw throughout, that is why I come at last almost to agree with him. His critics have accused him of vulgar self-advertisement; in his relation to his followers he seems to me rather marked with a sort of mad modesty. He seems to wish to fly from agreement, to have as few followers as possible. All this reaches back, I think, to the three roots from which this meditation grew. It is partly the mere impatience and irony of the Irishman. It is partly the thought of the Calvinist that the host of God should be thinned rather than thronged; that Gideon must reject soldiers rather than recruit them. And it is partly, alas, the unhappy Progressive trying to be in front of his own religion, trying to destroy his own idol and even to desecrate his own tomb. But from whatever causes, this furious escape from popularity has involved Shaw in some perversities and refinements which are almost mere insincerities, and which make it necessary to disentangle the good he has done from the evil in this dazzling course. I will attempt some summary by stating the three things in which his influence seems to me thoroughly good and the three in which it seems bad. But for the pleasure of ending on the finer note I will speak first of those that seem bad.

The primary respect in which Shaw has been a bad influence is that he has encouraged fastidiousness. He has made men dainty about their moral

meals. This is indeed the root of his whole objection to romance. Many people have objected to romance for being too airy and exquisite. Shaw objects to romance for being too rank and coarse. Many have despised romance because it is unreal; Shaw really hates it because it is a great deal too real. Shaw dislikes romance as he dislikes beef and beer, raw brandy or raw beefsteaks. Romance is too masculine for his taste. You will find throughout his criticisms, amid all their truth, their wild justice or pungent impartiality, a curious undercurrent of prejudice upon one point: the preference for the refined rather than the rude or ugly. Thus he will dislike a joke because it is coarse without asking if it is really immoral. He objects to a man sitting down on his hat, whereas the austere moralist should only object to his sitting down on someone else's hat. This sensibility is barren because it is universal. It is useless to object to man being made ridiculous. Man is born ridiculous, as can easily be seen if you look at him soon after he is born. It is grotesque to drink beer, but it is equally grotesque to drink soda-water; the grotesqueness lies in the act of filling yourself like a bottle through a hole. It is undignified to walk with a drunken stagger; but it is fairly undignified to walk at all, for all walking is a sort of balancing, and there is always in the human being something of a quadruped on its hind legs. I do not say he would be more dignified if he went on all fours; I do not know that he ever is dignified except when he is dead. We shall not be refined till we are refined into dust. Of course it is only because he is not wholly an animal that man sees he is a rum animal; and if man on his hind legs is in an artificial attitude, it is only because, like a dog, he is begging or saying thank you.

Everything important is in that sense absurd from the grave baby to the grinning skull; everything practical is a practical joke. But throughout Shaw's comedies, curiously enough, there is a certain kicking against this great doom of laughter. For instance, it is the first duty of a man who is in love to make a fool of himself; but Shaw's heroes always seem to flinch from this, and attempt, in airy, philosophic revenge, to make a fool of the woman first. The attempts of Valentine and Charteris to divide their perceptions from their desires, and tell the woman she is worthless even while trying to win her, are sometimes almost torturing to watch; it is like seeing a man trying to play a different tune with each hand. I fancy this agony is not only in the spectator, but in the dramatist as well. It is Bernard Shaw struggling with his reluctance to do anything so ridiculous as make a proposal. For there are two types of great humorist: those who love to see a man absurd and those who hate to see him absurd. Of the first kind are Rabelais and Dickens; of the second kind are Swift and Bernard Shaw.

So far as Shaw has spread or helped a certain modern reluctance or

mauvaise honte in these grand and grotesque functions of man I think he has definitely done harm. He has much influence among the young men; but it is not an influence in the direction of keeping them young. One cannot imagine him inspiring any of his followers to write a war-song or a drinking-song or a love-song, the three forms of human utterance which come next in nobility to a prayer. It may seem odd to say that the net effect of a man so apparently impudent will be to make men shy. But it is certainly the truth. Shyness is always the sign of a divided soul; a man is shy because he somehow thinks his position at once despicable and important. If he were without humility he would not care; and if he were without pride he would not care. Now the main purpose of Shaw's theoretic teaching is to declare that we ought to fulfil these great functions of life, that we ought to eat and drink and love. But the main tendency of his habitual criticism is to suggest that all the sentiments, professions, and postures of these things are not only comic but even contemptibly comic, follies and almost frauds. The result would seem to be that a race of young men may arise who do all these things, but do them awkwardly. That which was of old a free and hilarious function becomes an important and embarrassing necessity. Let us endure all the pagan pleasures with a Christian patience. Let us eat, drink, and be serious.

The second of the two points on which I think Shaw has done definite harm is this: that he has (not always or even as a rule intentionally) increased that anarchy of thought which is always the destruction of thought. Much of his early writing has encouraged among the modern youth that most pestilent of all popular tricks and fallacies; what is called the argument of progress. I mean this kind of thing. Previous ages were often, alas, aristocratic in politics or clericalist in religion; but they were always democratic in philosophy; they appealed to man, not to particular men. And if most men were against an idea, that was so far against it. But nowadays that most men are against a thing is thought to be in its favour; it is vaguely supposed to show that some day most men will be for it. If a man says that cows are reptiles, or that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, he can always quote the contempt of his contemporaries as in some mysterious way proving the complete conversion of posterity. The objections to this theory scarcely need any elaborate indication. The final objection to it is that it amounts to this: say anything, however idiotic, and you are in advance of your age. This kind of stuff must be stopped. The sort of democrat who appeals to the babe unborn must be classed with the sort of aristocrat who appeals to his deceased great-grandfather. Both should be sharply reminded that they are appealing to individuals whom they well know to be at a disadvantage in the matter of prompt and witty reply. Now although Bernard Shaw has survived this simple confusion, he has in his time greatly contributed to it. If there is,

for instance, one thing that is really rare in Shaw it is hesitation. He makes up his mind quicker than a calculating boy or a county magistrate. Yet on this subject of the next change in ethics he has felt hesitation, and being a strictly honest man has expressed it.

"I know no harder practical question than how much selfishness one ought to stand from a gifted person for the sake of his gifts or on the chance of his being right in the long run. The Superman will certainly come like a thief in the night, and be shot at accordingly; but we cannot leave our property wholly undefended on that account. On the other hand, we cannot ask the Superman simply to add a higher set of virtues to current respectable morals; for he is undoubtedly going to empty a good deal of respectable morality out like so much dirty water, and replace it by new and strange customs, shedding old obligations and accepting new and heavier ones. Every step of his progress must horrify conventional people; and if it were possible for even the most superior man to march ahead all the time, every pioneer of the march towards the Superman would be crucified."

When the most emphatic man alive, a man unmatched in violent precision of statement, speaks with such avowed vagueness and doubt as this, it is no wonder if all his more weak-minded followers are in a mere whirlpool of uncritical and unmeaning innovation. If the superior person will be apparently criminal, the most probable result is simply that the criminal person will think himself superior. A very slight knowledge of human nature is required in the matter. If the Superman may possibly be a thief, you may bet your boots that the next thief will be a Superman. But indeed the Supermen (of whom I have met many) have generally been more weak in the head than in the moral conduct; they have simply offered the first fancy which occupied their minds as the new morality. I fear that Shaw had a way of encouraging these follies. It is obvious from the passage I have quoted that he has no way of restraining them.

The truth is that all feeble spirits naturally live in the future, because it is featureless; it is a soft job; you can make it what you like. The next age is blank, and I can paint it freely with my favourite colour. It requires real courage to face the past, because the past is full of facts which cannot be got over; of men certainly wiser than we and of things done which we could not do. I know I cannot write a poem as good as *Lycidas*. But it is always easy to say that the particular sort of poetry I can write will be the poetry of the future.

This I call the second evil influence of Shaw: that he has encouraged many to throw themselves for justification upon the shapeless and the unknown.

In this, though courageous himself, he has encouraged cowards, and though sincere himself, has helped a mean escape. The third evil in his influence can, I think, be much more shortly dealt with. He has to a very slight extent, but still perceptibly, encouraged a kind of charlatanism of utterance among those who possess his Irish impudence without his Irish virtue. For instance, his amusing trick of self-praise is perfectly hearty and humorous in him; nay, it is even humble; for to confess vanity is itself humble. All that is the matter with the proud is that they will not admit that they are vain. Therefore when Shaw says that he alone is able to write such and such admirable work, or that he has just utterly wiped out some celebrated opponent, I for one never feel anything offensive in the tone, but, indeed, only the unmistakable intonation of a friend's voice. But I have noticed among younger, harder, and much shallower men a certain disposition to ape this insolent ease and certitude, and that without any fundamental frankness or mirth. So far the influence is bad. Egoism can be learnt as a lesson like any other "ism." It is not so easy to learn an Irish accent or a good temper. In its lower forms the thing becomes a most unmilitary trick of announcing the victory before one has gained it.

When one has said those three things, one has said, I think, all that can be said by way of blaming Bernard Shaw. It is significant that he was never blamed for any of these things by the Censor. Such censures as the attitude of that official involves may be dismissed with a very light sort of disdain. To represent Shaw as profane or provocatively indecent is not a matter for discussion at all; it is a disgusting criminal libel upon a particularly respectable gentleman of the middle classes, of refined tastes and somewhat Puritanical views. But while the negative defence of Shaw is easy, the just praise of him is almost as complex as it is necessary; and I shall devote the last few pages of this book to a triad corresponding to the last one--to the three important elements in which the work of Shaw has been good as well as great.

In the first place, and quite apart from all particular theories, the world owes thanks to Bernard Shaw for having combined being intelligent with being intelligible. He has popularised philosophy, or rather he has repopularised it, for philosophy is always popular, except in peculiarly corrupt and oligarchic ages like our own. We have passed the age of the demagogue, the man who has little to say and says it loud. We have come to the age of the mystagogue or don, the man who has nothing to say, but says it softly and impressively in an indistinct whisper. After all, short words must mean something, even if they mean filth or lies; but long words may sometimes mean literally nothing, especially if they are used (as they mostly are in modern books and magazine articles) to balance and modify each other. A

plain figure 4, scrawled in chalk anywhere, must always mean something; it must always mean $2 + 2$. But the most enormous and mysterious algebraic equation, full of letters, brackets, and fractions, may all cancel out at last and be equal to nothing. When a demagogue says to a mob, "There is the Bank of England, why shouldn't you have some of that money?" he says something which is at least as honest and intelligible as the figure 4. When a writer in the Times remarks, "We must raise the economic efficiency of the masses without diverting anything from those classes which represent the national prosperity and refinement," then his equation cancels out; in a literal and logical sense his remark amounts to nothing.

There are two kinds of charlatans or people called quacks to-day. The power of the first is that he advertises--and cures. The power of the second is that though he is not learned enough to cure he is much too learned to advertise. The former give away their dignity with a pound of tea; the latter are paid a pound of tea merely for being dignified. I think them the worse quacks of the two. Shaw is certainly of the other sort. Dickens, another man who was great enough to be a demagogue (and greater than Shaw because more heartily a demagogue), puts for ever the true difference between the demagogue and the mystagogue in Dr. Marigold: "Except that we're cheap-jacks and they're dear-jacks, I don't see any difference between us." Bernard Shaw is a great cheap-jack, with plenty of patter and I dare say plenty of nonsense, but with this also (which is not wholly unimportant), with goods to sell. People accuse such a man of self-advertisement. But at least the cheap-jack does advertise his wares, whereas the don or dear-jack advertises nothing except himself. His very silence, nay his very sterility, are supposed to be marks of the richness of his erudition. He is too learned to teach, and sometimes too wise even to talk. St. Thomas Aquinas said: "In auctore auctoritas." But there is more than one man at Oxford or Cambridge who is considered an authority because he has never been an author.

Against all this mystification both of silence and verbosity Shaw has been a splendid and smashing protest. He has stood up for the fact that philosophy is not the concern of those who pass through Divinity and Greats, but of those who pass through birth and death. Nearly all the most awful and abstruse statements can be put in words of one syllable, from "A child is born" to "A soul is damned." If the ordinary man may not discuss existence, why should he be asked to conduct it? About concrete matters indeed one naturally appeals to an oligarchy or select class. For information about Lapland I go to an aristocracy of Laplanders; for the ways of rabbits to an aristocracy of naturalists or, preferably, an aristocracy of poachers. But only mankind itself can bear witness to the abstract first principles of mankind, and in matters of theory I would always consult the mob. Only the mass of

men, for instance, have authority to say whether life is good. Whether life is good is an especially mystical and delicate question, and, like all such questions, is asked in words of one syllable. It is also answered in words of one syllable, and Bernard Shaw (as also mankind) answers "yes."

This plain, pugnacious style of Shaw has greatly clarified all controversies. He has slain the polysyllable, that huge and slimy centipede which has sprawled over all the valleys of England like the "loathly worm" who was slain by the ancient knight. He does not think that difficult questions will be made simpler by using difficult words about them. He has achieved the admirable work, never to be mentioned without gratitude, of discussing Evolution without mentioning it. The good work is of course more evident in the case of philosophy than any other region; because the case of philosophy was a crying one. It was really preposterous that the things most carefully reserved for the study of two or three men should actually be the things common to all men. It was absurd that certain men should be experts on the special subject of everything. But he stood for much the same spirit and style in other matters; in economics, for example. There never has been a better popular economist; one more lucid, entertaining, consistent, and essentially exact. The very comicality of his examples makes them and their argument stick in the mind; as in the case I remember in which he said that the big shops had now to please everybody, and were not entirely dependent on the lady who sails in "to order four governesses and five grand pianos." He is always preaching collectivism; yet he does not very often name it. He does not talk about collectivism, but about cash; of which the populace feel a much more definite need. He talks about cheese, boots, perambulators, and how people are really to live. For him economics really means housekeeping, as it does in Greek. His difference from the orthodox economists, like most of his differences, is very different from the attacks made by the main body of Socialists. The old Manchester economists are generally attacked for being too gross and material. Shaw really attacks them for not being gross or material enough. He thinks that they hide themselves behind long words, remote hypotheses or unreal generalisations. When the orthodox economist begins with his correct and primary formula, "Suppose there is a Man on an Island----" Shaw is apt to interrupt him sharply, saying, "There is a Man in the Street."

The second phase of the man's really fruitful efficacy is in a sense the converse of this. He has improved philosophic discussions by making them more popular. But he has also improved popular amusements by making them more philosophic. And by more philosophic I do not mean duller, but funnier; that is more varied. All real fun is in cosmic contrasts, which involve a view of the cosmos. But I know that this second strength in Shaw

is really difficult to state and must be approached by explanations and even by eliminations. Let me say at once that I think nothing of Shaw or anybody else merely for playing the daring sceptic. I do not think he has done any good or even achieved any effect simply by asking startling questions. It is possible that there have been ages so sluggish or automatic that anything that woke them up at all was a good thing. It is sufficient to be certain that ours is not such an age. We do not need waking up; rather we suffer from insomnia, with all its results of fear and exaggeration and frightful waking dreams. The modern mind is not a donkey which wants kicking to make it go on. The modern mind is more like a motor-car on a lonely road which two amateur motorists have been just clever enough to take to pieces, but are not quite clever enough to put together again. Under these circumstances kicking the car has never been found by the best experts to be effective. No one, therefore, does any good to our age merely by asking questions--unless he can answer the questions. Asking questions is already the fashionable and aristocratic sport which has brought most of us into the bankruptcy court. The note of our age is a note of interrogation. And the final point is so plain; no sceptical philosopher can ask any questions that may not equally be asked by a tired child on a hot afternoon. "Am I a boy?--Why am I a boy?--Why aren't I a chair?--What is a chair?" A child will sometimes ask questions of this sort for two hours. And the philosophers of Protestant Europe have asked them for two hundred years.

If that were all that I meant by Shaw making men more philosophic, I should put it not among his good influences but his bad. He did do that to some extent; and so far he is bad. But there is a much bigger and better sense in which he has been a philosopher. He has brought back into English drama all the streams of fact or tendency which are commonly called undramatic. They were there in Shakespeare's time; but they have scarcely been there since until Shaw. I mean that Shakespeare, being interested in everything, put everything into a play. If he had lately been thinking about the irony and even contradiction confronting us in self-preservation and suicide, he put it all into Hamlet. If he was annoyed by some passing boom in theatrical babies he put that into Hamlet too. He would put anything into Hamlet which he really thought was true, from his favourite nursery ballads to his personal (and perhaps unfashionable) conviction of the Catholic purgatory. There is no fact that strikes one, I think, about Shakespeare, except the fact of how dramatic he could be, so much as the fact of how undramatic he could be.

In this great sense Shaw has brought philosophy back into drama--philosophy in the sense of a certain freedom of the mind. This is not a freedom to think what one likes (which is absurd, for one can only think

what one thinks); it is a freedom to think about what one likes, which is quite a different thing and the spring of all thought. Shakespeare (in a weak moment, I think) said that all the world is a stage. But Shakespeare acted on the much finer principle that a stage is all the world. So there are in all Bernard Shaw's plays patches of what people would call essentially undramatic stuff, which the dramatist puts in because he is honest and would rather prove his case than succeed with his play. Shaw has brought back into English drama that Shakespearian universality which, if you like, you can call Shakespearian irrelevance. Perhaps a better definition than either is a habit of thinking the truth worth telling even when you meet it by accident. In Shaw's plays one meets an incredible number of truths by accident.

To be up to date is a paltry ambition except in an almanac, and Shaw has sometimes talked this almanac philosophy. Nevertheless there is a real sense in which the phrase may be wisely used, and that is in cases where some stereotyped version of what is happening hides what is really happening from our eyes. Thus, for instance, newspapers are never up to date. The men who write leading articles are always behind the times, because they are in a hurry. They are forced to fall back on their old-fashioned view of things; they have no time to fashion a new one. Everything that is done in a hurry is certain to be antiquated; that is why modern industrial civilisation bears so curious a resemblance to barbarism. Thus when newspapers say that the Times is a solemn old Tory paper, they are out of date; their talk is behind the talk in Fleet Street. Thus when newspapers say that Christian dogmas are crumbling, they are out of date; their talk is behind the talk in public-houses. Now in this sense Shaw has kept in a really stirring sense up to date. He has introduced into the theatre the things that no one else had introduced into a theatre--the things in the street outside. The theatre is a sort of thing which proudly sends a hansom-cab across the stage as Realism, while everybody outside is whistling for motor-cabs.

Consider in this respect how many and fine have been Shaw's intrusions into the theatre with the things that were really going on. Daily papers and daily matinées were still gravely explaining how much modern war depended on gunpowder. Arms and the Man explained how much modern war depends on chocolate. Every play and paper described the Vicar who was a mild Conservative. Candida caught hold of the modern Vicar who is an advanced Socialist. Numberless magazine articles and society comedies describe the emancipated woman as new and wild. Only You Never Can Tell was young enough to see that the emancipated woman is already old and respectable. Every comic paper has caricatured the uneducated upstart.

Only the author of *Man and Superman* knew enough about the modern world to caricature the educated upstart--the man Straker who can quote Beaumarchais, though he cannot pronounce him. This is the second real and great work of Shaw--the letting in of the world on to the stage, as the rivers were let in upon the Augean Stable. He has let a little of the Haymarket into the Haymarket Theatre. He has permitted some whispers of the Strand to enter the Strand Theatre. A variety of solutions in philosophy is as silly as it is in arithmetic, but one may be justly proud of a variety of materials for a solution. After Shaw, one may say, there is nothing that cannot be introduced into a play if one can make it decent, amusing, and relevant. The state of a man's health, the religion of his childhood, his ear for music, or his ignorance of cookery can all be made vivid if they have anything to do with the subject. A soldier may mention the commissariat as well as the cavalry; and, better still, a priest may mention theology as well as religion. That is being a philosopher; that is bringing the universe on the stage.

Lastly, he has obliterated the mere cynic. He has been so much more cynical than anyone else for the public good that no one has dared since to be really cynical for anything smaller. The Chinese crackers of the frivolous cynics fail to excite us after the dynamite of the serious and aspiring cynic. Bernard Shaw and I (who are growing grey together) can remember an epoch which many of his followers do not know: an epoch of real pessimism. The years from 1885 to 1898 were like the hours of afternoon in a rich house with large rooms; the hours before tea-time. They believed in nothing except good manners; and the essence of good manners is to conceal a yawn. A yawn may be defined as a silent yell. The power which the young pessimist of that time showed in this direction would have astonished anyone but him. He yawned so wide as to swallow the world. He swallowed the world like an unpleasant pill before retiring to an eternal rest. Now the last and best glory of Shaw is that in the circles where this creature was found, he is not. He has not been killed (I don't know exactly why), but he has actually turned into a Shaw idealist. This is no exaggeration. I meet men who, when I knew them in 1898, were just a little too lazy to destroy the universe. They are now conscious of not being quite worthy to abolish some prison regulations. This destruction and conversion seem to me the mark of something actually great. It is always great to destroy a type without destroying a man. The followers of Shaw are optimists; some of them are so simple as even to use the word. They are sometimes rather pallid optimists, frequently very worried optimists, occasionally, to tell the truth, rather cross optimists: but they not pessimists; they can exult though they cannot laugh. He has at least withered up among them the mere pose of impossibility. Like every great teacher, he has cursed the barren fig-tree. For nothing except that

impossibility is really impossible.

I know it is all very strange. From the height of eight hundred years ago, or of eight hundred years hence, our age must look incredibly odd. We call the twelfth century ascetic. We call our own time hedonist and full of praise and pleasure. But in the ascetic age the love of life was evident and enormous, so that it had to be restrained. In an hedonist age pleasure has always sunk low, so that it has to be encouraged. How high the sea of human happiness rose in the Middle Ages, we now only know by the colossal walls that they built to keep it in bounds. How low human happiness sank in the twentieth century our children will only know by these extraordinary modern books, which tell people that it is a duty to be cheerful and that life is not so bad after all. Humanity never produces optimists till it has ceased to produce happy men. It is strange to be obliged to impose a holiday like a fast, and to drive men to a banquet with spears. But this shall be written of our time: that when the spirit who denies besieged the last citadel, blaspheming life itself, there were some, there was one especially, whose voice was heard and whose spear was never broken.

THE END

MAJOR BARBARA

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MAJOR BARBARA

BERNARD SHAW

ACT I

It is after dinner on a January night, in the library in Lady Britomart Undershaft's house in Wilton Crescent. A large and comfortable settee is in the middle of the room, upholstered in dark leather. A person sitting on it [it is vacant at present] would have, on his right, Lady Britomart's writing table, with the lady herself busy at it; a smaller writing table behind him on his left; the door behind him on Lady Britomart's side; and a window with a window seat directly on his left. Near the window is an armchair.

Lady Britomart is a woman of fifty or thereabouts, well dressed and yet careless of her dress, well bred and quite reckless of her breeding, well mannered and yet appallingly outspoken and indifferent to the opinion of her interlocutory, amiable and yet peremptory, arbitrary, and high-tempered to the last bearable degree, and withal a very typical managing matron of the upper class, treated as a naughty child until she grew into a scolding mother, and finally settling down with plenty of practical ability and worldly experience, limited in the oddest way with domestic and class limitations, conceiving the universe exactly as if it were a large house in Wilton Crescent, though handling her corner of it very effectively on that assumption, and being quite enlightened and liberal as to the books in the library, the pictures on the walls, the music in the portfolios, and the articles in the papers.

Her son, Stephen, comes in. He is a gravely correct young man under 25, taking himself very seriously, but still in some awe of his mother, from childish habit and bachelor shyness rather than from any weakness of character.

STEPHEN. What's the matter?

LADY BRITOMART. Presently, Stephen.

Stephen submissively walks to the settee and sits down. He takes up The Speaker.

LADY BRITOMART. Don't begin to read, Stephen. I shall require all your attention.

STEPHEN. It was only while I was waiting--

LADY BRITOMART. Don't make excuses, Stephen. [He puts down The Speaker]. Now! [She finishes her writing; rises; and comes to the settee]. I have not kept you waiting very long, I think.

STEPHEN. Not at all, mother.

LADY BRITOMART. Bring me my cushion. [He takes the cushion from the chair at the desk and arranges it for her as she sits down on the settee]. Sit down. [He sits down and fingers his tie nervously]. Don't fiddle with your tie, Stephen: there is nothing the matter with it.

STEPHEN. I beg your pardon. [He fiddles with his watch chain instead].

LADY BRITOMART. Now are you attending to me, Stephen?

STEPHEN. Of course, mother.

LADY BRITOMART. No: it's not of course. I want something much more than your everyday matter-of-course attention. I am going to speak to you very seriously, Stephen. I wish you would let that chain alone.

STEPHEN [hastily relinquishing the chain] Have I done anything to annoy you, mother? If so, it was quite unintentional.

LADY BRITOMART [astonished] Nonsense! [With some remorse] My poor boy, did you think I was angry with you?

STEPHEN. What is it, then, mother? You are making me very uneasy.

LADY BRITOMART [squaring herself at him rather aggressively] Stephen: may I ask how soon you intend to realize that you are a grown-up man, and that I am only a woman?

STEPHEN [amazed] Only a--

LADY BRITOMART. Don't repeat my words, please: It is a most aggravating habit. You must learn to face life seriously, Stephen. I really cannot bear the whole burden of our family affairs any longer. You must advise me: you must assume the responsibility.

STEPHEN. I!

LADY BRITOMART. Yes, you, of course. You were 24 last June. You've been at Harrow and Cambridge. You've been to India and Japan. You must know a lot of things now; unless you have wasted your time most scandalously. Well, advise me.

STEPHEN [much perplexed] You know I have never interfered in the household--

LADY BRITOMART. No: I should think not. I don't want you to order

the dinner.

STEPHEN. I mean in our family affairs.

LADY BRITOMART. Well, you must interfere now; for they are getting quite beyond me.

STEPHEN [troubled] I have thought sometimes that perhaps I ought; but really, mother, I know so little about them; and what I do know is so painful--it is so impossible to mention some things to you--[he stops, ashamed].

LADY BRITOMART. I suppose you mean your father.

STEPHEN [almost inaudibly] Yes.

LADY BRITOMART. My dear: we can't go on all our lives not mentioning him. Of course you were quite right not to open the subject until I asked you to; but you are old enough now to be taken into my confidence, and to help me to deal with him about the girls.

STEPHEN. But the girls are all right. They are engaged.

LADY BRITOMART [complacently] Yes: I have made a very good match for Sarah. Charles Lomax will be a millionaire at 35. But that is ten years ahead; and in the meantime his trustees cannot under the terms of his father's will allow him more than 800 pounds a year.

STEPHEN. But the will says also that if he increases his income by his own exertions, they may double the increase.

LADY BRITOMART. Charles Lomax's exertions are much more likely to decrease his income than to increase it. Sarah will have to find at least another 800 pounds a year for the next ten years; and even then they will be as poor as church mice. And what about Barbara? I thought Barbara was going to make the most brilliant career of all of you. And what does she do? Joins the Salvation Army; discharges her maid; lives on a pound a week; and walks in one evening with a professor of Greek whom she has picked up in the street, and who pretends to be a Salvationist, and actually plays the big drum for her in public because he has fallen head over ears in love with her.

STEPHEN. I was certainly rather taken aback when I heard they were engaged. Cusins is a very nice fellow, certainly: nobody would ever guess that he was born in Australia; but--

LADY BRITOMART. Oh, Adolphus Cusins will make a very good husband. After all, nobody can say a word against Greek: it stamps a man at once as an educated gentleman. And my family, thank Heaven, is not a pig-headed Tory one. We are Whigs, and believe in liberty. Let snobbish people say what they please: Barbara shall marry, not the man they like, but the man I like.

STEPHEN. Of course I was thinking only of his income. However, he is not likely to be extravagant.

LADY BRITOMART. Don't be too sure of that, Stephen. I know your quiet, simple, refined, poetic people like Adolphus--quite content with the best of everything! They cost more than your extravagant people, who are always as mean as they are second rate. No: Barbara will need at least 2000 pounds a year. You see it means two additional households. Besides, my dear, you must marry soon. I don't approve of the present fashion of philandering bachelors and late marriages; and I am trying to arrange something for you.

STEPHEN. It's very good of you, mother; but perhaps I had better arrange that for myself.

LADY BRITOMART. Nonsense! you are much too young to begin matchmaking: you would be taken in by some pretty little nobody. Of course I don't mean that you are not to be consulted: you know that as well as I do. [Stephen closes his lips and is silent]. Now don't sulk, Stephen.

STEPHEN. I am not sulking, mother. What has all this got to do with--with--with my father?

LADY BRITOMART. My dear Stephen: where is the money to come from? It is easy enough for you and the other children to live on my income as long as we are in the same house; but I can't keep four families in four separate houses. You know how poor my father is: he has barely seven thousand a year now; and really, if he were not the Earl of Stevenage, he would have to give up society. He can do nothing for us: he says, naturally enough, that it is absurd that he should be asked to provide for the children of a man who is rolling in money. You see, Stephen, your father must be fabulously wealthy, because there is always a war going on somewhere.

STEPHEN. You need not remind me of that, mother. I have hardly ever opened a newspaper in my life without seeing our name in it. The Undershaft torpedo! The Undershaft quick firers! The Undershaft ten inch! the Undershaft disappearing rampart gun! the Undershaft submarine! and now the Undershaft aerial battleship! At Harrow they called me the Woolwich Infant. At Cambridge it was the same. A little brute at King's who was always trying to get up revivals, spoilt my Bible--your first birthday present to me--by writing under my name, "Son and heir to Undershaft and Lazarus, Death and Destruction Dealers: address, Christendom and Judea." But that was not so bad as the way I was kowtowed to everywhere because my father was making millions by selling cannons.

LADY BRITOMART. It is not only the cannons, but the war loans that Lazarus arranges under cover of giving credit for the cannons. You know, Stephen, it's perfectly scandalous. Those two men, Andrew Undershaft and Lazarus, positively have Europe under their thumbs. That is why your father is able to behave as he

does. He is above the law. Do you think Bismarck or Gladstone or Disraeli could have openly defied every social and moral obligation all their lives as your father has? They simply wouldn't have dared. I asked Gladstone to take it up. I asked The Times to take it up. I asked the Lord Chamberlain to take it up. But it was just like asking them to declare war on the Sultan. They WOULDN'T. They said they couldn't touch him. I believe they were afraid.

STEPHEN. What could they do? He does not actually break the law.

LADY BRITOMART. Not break the law! He is always breaking the law. He broke the law when he was born: his parents were not married.

STEPHEN. Mother! Is that true?

LADY BRITOMART. Of course it's true: that was why we separated.

STEPHEN. He married without letting you know this!

LADY BRITOMART [rather taken aback by this inference] Oh no. To do Andrew justice, that was not the sort of thing he did. Besides, you know the Undershaft motto: Unashamed. Everybody knew.

STEPHEN. But you said that was why you separated.

LADY BRITOMART. Yes, because he was not content with being a foundling himself: he wanted to disinherit you for another foundling. That was what I couldn't stand.

STEPHEN [ashamed] Do you mean for--for--for--

LADY BRITOMART. Don't stammer, Stephen. Speak distinctly.

STEPHEN. But this is so frightful to me, mother. To have to speak to you about such things!

LADY BRITOMART. It's not pleasant for me, either, especially if you are still so childish that you must make it worse by a display of embarrassment. It is only in the middle classes, Stephen, that people get into a state of dumb helpless horror when they find that there are wicked people in the world. In our class, we have to decide what is to be done with wicked people; and nothing should disturb our self possession. Now ask your question properly.

STEPHEN. Mother: you have no consideration for me. For Heaven's sake either treat me as a child, as you always do, and tell me nothing at all; or tell me everything and let me take it as best I can.

LADY BRITOMART. Treat you as a child! What do you mean? It is most unkind and ungrateful of you to say such a thing. You know I have never treated any of you as children. I have always made you my companions and friends, and allowed you perfect freedom to do

and say whatever you liked, so long as you liked what I could approve of.

STEPHEN [desperately] I daresay we have been the very imperfect children of a very perfect mother; but I do beg you to let me alone for once, and tell me about this horrible business of my father wanting to set me aside for another son.

LADY BRITOMART [amazed] Another son! I never said anything of the kind. I never dreamt of such a thing. This is what comes of interrupting me.

STEPHEN. But you said--

LADY BRITOMART [cutting him short] Now be a good boy, Stephen, and listen to me patiently. The Undershafts are descended from a foundling in the parish of St. Andrew Undershaft in the city. That was long ago, in the reign of James the First. Well, this foundling was adopted by an armorer and gun-maker. In the course of time the foundling succeeded to the business; and from some notion of gratitude, or some vow or something, he adopted another foundling, and left the business to him. And that foundling did the same. Ever since that, the cannon business has always been left to an adopted foundling named Andrew Undershaft.

STEPHEN. But did they never marry? Were there no legitimate sons?

LADY BRITOMART. Oh yes: they married just as your father did; and they were rich enough to buy land for their own children and leave them well provided for. But they always adopted and trained some foundling to succeed them in the business; and of course they always quarrelled with their wives furiously over it. Your father was adopted in that way; and he pretends to consider himself bound to keep up the tradition and adopt somebody to leave the business to. Of course I was not going to stand that. There may have been some reason for it when the Undershafts could only marry women in their own class, whose sons were not fit to govern great estates. But there could be no excuse for passing over my son.

STEPHEN [dubiously] I am afraid I should make a poor hand of managing a cannon foundry.

LADY BRITOMART. Nonsense! you could easily get a manager and pay him a salary.

STEPHEN. My father evidently had no great opinion of my capacity.

LADY BRITOMART. Stuff, child! you were only a baby: it had nothing to do with your capacity. Andrew did it on principle, just as he did every perverse and wicked thing on principle. When my father remonstrated, Andrew actually told him to his face that history tells us of only two successful institutions: one the Undershaft firm, and the other the Roman Empire under the Antonines. That was because the Antonine emperors all adopted their successors. Such rubbish! The Stevenages are as good as the

Antonines, I hope; and you are a Stevenage. But that was Andrew all over. There you have the man! Always clever and unanswerable when he was defending nonsense and wickedness: always awkward and sullen when he had to behave sensibly and decently!

STEPHEN. Then it was on my account that your home life was broken up, mother. I am sorry.

LADY BRITOMART. Well, dear, there were other differences. I really cannot bear an immoral man. I am not a Pharisee, I hope; and I should not have minded his merely doing wrong things: we are none of us perfect. But your father didn't exactly do wrong things: he said them and thought them: that was what was so dreadful. He really had a sort of religion of wrongness just as one doesn't mind men practising immorality so long as they own that they are in the wrong by preaching morality; so I couldn't forgive Andrew for preaching immorality while he practised morality. You would all have grown up without principles, without any knowledge of right and wrong, if he had been in the house. You know, my dear, your father was a very attractive man in some ways. Children did not dislike him; and he took advantage of it to put the wickedest ideas into their heads, and make them quite unmanageable. I did not dislike him myself: very far from it; but nothing can bridge over moral disagreement.

STEPHEN. All this simply bewilders me, mother. People may differ about matters of opinion, or even about religion; but how can they differ about right and wrong? Right is right; and wrong is wrong; and if a man cannot distinguish them properly, he is either a fool or a rascal: that's all.

LADY BRITOMART [touched] That's my own boy [she pats his cheek]! Your father never could answer that: he used to laugh and get out of it under cover of some affectionate nonsense. And now that you understand the situation, what do you advise me to do?

STEPHEN. Well, what can you do?

LADY BRITOMART. I must get the money somehow.

STEPHEN. We cannot take money from him. I had rather go and live in some cheap place like Bedford Square or even Hampstead than take a farthing of his money.

LADY BRITOMART. But after all, Stephen, our present income comes from Andrew.

STEPHEN [shocked] I never knew that.

LADY BRITOMART. Well, you surely didn't suppose your grandfather had anything to give me. The Stevenages could not do everything for you. We gave you social position. Andrew had to contribute something. He had a very good bargain, I think.

STEPHEN [bitterly] We are utterly dependent on him and his cannons, then!

LADY BRITOMART. Certainly not: the money is settled. But he provided it. So you see it is not a question of taking money from him or not: it is simply a question of how much. I don't want any more for myself.

STEPHEN. Nor do I.

LADY BRITOMART. But Sarah does; and Barbara does. That is, Charles Lomax and Adolphus Cusins will cost them more. So I must put my pride in my pocket and ask for it, I suppose. That is your advice, Stephen, is it not?

STEPHEN. No.

LADY BRITOMART [sharply] Stephen!

STEPHEN. Of course if you are determined--

LADY BRITOMART. I am not determined: I ask your advice; and I am waiting for it. I will not have all the responsibility thrown on my shoulders.

STEPHEN [obstinately] I would die sooner than ask him for another penny.

LADY BRITOMART [resignedly] You mean that I must ask him. Very well, Stephen: It shall be as you wish. You will be glad to know that your grandfather concurs. But he thinks I ought to ask Andrew to come here and see the girls. After all, he must have some natural affection for them.

STEPHEN. Ask him here!!!

LADY BRITOMART. Do not repeat my words, Stephen. Where else can I ask him?

STEPHEN. I never expected you to ask him at all.

LADY BRITOMART. Now don't tease, Stephen. Come! you see that it is necessary that he should pay us a visit, don't you?

STEPHEN [reluctantly] I suppose so, if the girls cannot do without his money.

LADY BRITOMART. Thank you, Stephen: I knew you would give me the right advice when it was properly explained to you. I have asked your father to come this evening. [Stephen bounds from his seat] Don't jump, Stephen: it fidgets me.

STEPHEN [in utter consternation] Do you mean to say that my father is coming here to-night--that he may be here at any moment?

LADY BRITOMART [looking at her watch] I said nine. [He gasps. She rises]. Ring the bell, please. [Stephen goes to the smaller

writing table; presses a button on it; and sits at it with his elbows on the table and his head in his hands, outwitted and overwhelmed]. It is ten minutes to nine yet; and I have to prepare the girls. I asked Charles Lomax and Adolphus to dinner on purpose that they might be here. Andrew had better see them in case he should cherish any delusions as to their being capable of supporting their wives. [The butler enters: Lady Britomart goes behind the settee to speak to him]. Morrison: go up to the drawingroom and tell everybody to come down here at once. [Morrison withdraws. Lady Britomart turns to Stephen]. Now remember, Stephen, I shall need all your countenance and authority. [He rises and tries to recover some vestige of these attributes]. Give me a chair, dear. [He pushes a chair forward from the wall to where she stands, near the smaller writing table. She sits down; and he goes to the armchair, into which he throws himself]. I don't know how Barbara will take it. Ever since they made her a major in the Salvation Army she has developed a propensity to have her own way and order people about which quite cows me sometimes. It's not ladylike: I'm sure I don't know where she picked it up. Anyhow, Barbara shan't bully me; but still it's just as well that your father should be here before she has time to refuse to meet him or make a fuss. Don't look nervous, Stephen, it will only encourage Barbara to make difficulties. I am nervous enough, goodness knows; but I don't show it.

Sarah and Barbara come in with their respective young men, Charles Lomax and Adolphus Cusins. Sarah is slender, bored, and mundane. Barbara is robust, jollier, much more energetic. Sarah is fashionably dressed: Barbara is in Salvation Army uniform. Lomax, a young man about town, is like many other young men about town. He is affected with a frivolous sense of humor which plunges him at the most inopportune moments into paroxysms of imperfectly suppressed laughter. Cusins is a spectacled student, slight, thin haired, and sweet voiced, with a more complex form of Lomax's complaint. His sense of humor is intellectual and subtle, and is complicated by an appalling temper. The lifelong struggle of a benevolent temperament and a high conscience against impulses of inhuman ridicule and fierce impatience has set up a chronic strain which has visibly wrecked his constitution. He is a most implacable, determined, tenacious, intolerant person who by mere force of character presents himself as--and indeed actually is--considerate, gentle, explanatory, even mild and apologetic, capable possibly of murder, but not of cruelty or coarseness. By the operation of some instinct which is not merciful enough to blind him with the illusions of love, he is obstinately bent on marrying Barbara. Lomax likes Sarah and thinks it will be rather a lark to marry her. Consequently he has not attempted to resist Lady Britomart's arrangements to that end.

All four look as if they had been having a good deal of fun in the drawingroom. The girls enter first, leaving the swains outside. Sarah comes to the settee. Barbara comes in after her and stops at the door.

BARBARA. Are Cholly and Dolly to come in?

LADY BRITOMART [forcibly] Barbara: I will not have Charles called Cholly: the vulgarity of it positively makes me ill.

BARBARA. It's all right, mother. Cholly is quite correct nowadays. Are they to come in?

LADY BRITOMART. Yes, if they will behave themselves.

BARBARA [through the door] Come in, Dolly, and behave yourself.

Barbara comes to her mother's writing table. Cusins enters smiling, and wanders towards Lady Britomart.

SARAH [calling] Come in, Cholly. [Lomax enters, controlling his features very imperfectly, and places himself vaguely between Sarah and Barbara].

LADY BRITOMART [peremptorily] Sit down, all of you. [They sit. Cusins crosses to the window and seats himself there. Lomax takes a chair. Barbara sits at the writing table and Sarah on the settee]. I don't in the least know what you are laughing at, Adolphus. I am surprised at you, though I expected nothing better from Charles Lomax.

CUSINS [in a remarkably gentle voice] Barbara has been trying to teach me the West Ham Salvation March.

LADY BRITOMART. I see nothing to laugh at in that; nor should you if you are really converted.

CUSINS [sweetly] You were not present. It was really funny, I believe.

LOMAX. Ripping.

LADY BRITOMART. Be quiet, Charles. Now listen to me, children. Your father is coming here this evening. [General stupefaction].

LOMAX [remonstrating] Oh I say!

LADY BRITOMART. You are not called on to say anything, Charles.

SARAH. Are you serious, mother?

LADY BRITOMART. Of course I am serious. It is on your account, Sarah, and also on Charles's. [Silence. Charles looks painfully unworthy]. I hope you are not going to object, Barbara.

BARBARA. I! why should I? My father has a soul to be saved like anybody else. He's quite welcome as far as I am concerned.

LOMAX [still remonstrant] But really, don't you know! Oh I say!

LADY BRITOMART [frigidly] What do you wish to convey, Charles?

LOMAX. Well, you must admit that this is a bit thick.

LADY BRITOMART [turning with ominous suavity to Cusins] Adolphus: you are a professor of Greek. Can you translate Charles Lomax's remarks into reputable English for us?

CUSINS [cautiously] If I may say so, Lady Brit, I think Charles has rather happily expressed what we all feel. Homer, speaking of Autolycus, uses the same phrase.

LOMAX [handsomely] Not that I mind, you know, if Sarah don't.

LADY BRITOMART [crushingly] Thank you. Have I your permission, Adolphus, to invite my own husband to my own house?

CUSINS [gallantly] You have my unhesitating support in everything you do.

LADY BRITOMART. Sarah: have you nothing to say?

SARAH. Do you mean that he is coming regularly to live here?

LADY BRITOMART. Certainly not. The spare room is ready for him if he likes to stay for a day or two and see a little more of you; but there are limits.

SARAH. Well, he can't eat us, I suppose. I don't mind.

LOMAX [chuckling] I wonder how the old man will take it.

LADY BRITOMART. Much as the old woman will, no doubt, Charles.

LOMAX [abashed] I didn't mean--at least--

LADY BRITOMART. You didn't think, Charles. You never do; and the result is, you never mean anything. And now please attend to me, children. Your father will be quite a stranger to us.

LOMAX. I suppose he hasn't seen Sarah since she was a little kid.

LADY BRITOMART. Not since she was a little kid, Charles, as you express it with that elegance of diction and refinement of thought that seem never to desert you. Accordingly--er-- [impatiently] Now I have forgotten what I was going to say. That comes of your provoking me to be sarcastic, Charles. Adolphus: will you kindly tell me where I was.

CUSINS [sweetly] You were saying that as Mr Undershaft has not seen his children since they were babies, he will form his opinion of the way you have brought them up from their behavior to-night, and that therefore you wish us all to be particularly careful to conduct ourselves well, especially Charles.

LOMAX. Look here: Lady Brit didn't say that.

LADY BRITOMART [vehemently] I did, Charles. Adolphus's recollection is perfectly correct. It is most important that you should be good; and I do beg you for once not to pair off into opposite corners and giggle and whisper while I am speaking to your father.

BARBARA. All right, mother. We'll do you credit.

LADY BRITOMART. Remember, Charles, that Sarah will want to feel proud of you instead of ashamed of you.

LOMAX. Oh I say! There's nothing to be exactly proud of, don't you know.

LADY BRITOMART. Well, try and look as if there was.

Morrison, pale and dismayed, breaks into the room in unconcealed disorder.

MORRISON. Might I speak a word to you, my lady?

LADY BRITOMART. Nonsense! Show him up.

MORRISON. Yes, my lady. [He goes].

LOMAX. Does Morrison know who he is?

LADY BRITOMART. Of course. Morrison has always been with us.

LOMAX. It must be a regular corker for him, don't you know.

LADY BRITOMART. Is this a moment to get on my nerves, Charles, with your outrageous expressions?

LOMAX. But this is something out of the ordinary, really--

MORRISON [at the door] The--er--Mr Undershaft. [He retreats in confusion].

Andrew Undershaft comes in. All rise. Lady Britomart meets him in the middle of the room behind the settee.

Andrew is, on the surface, a stoutish, easygoing elderly man, with kindly patient manners, and an engaging simplicity of character. But he has a watchful, deliberate, waiting, listening face, and formidable reserves of power, both bodily and mental, in his capacious chest and long head. His gentleness is partly that of a strong man who has learnt by experience that his natural grip hurts ordinary people unless he handles them very carefully, and partly the mellowness of age and success. He is also a little shy in his present very delicate situation.

LADY BRITOMART. Good evening, Andrew.

UNDERSHAFT. How d'ye do, my dear.

LADY BRITOMART. You look a good deal older.

UNDERSHAFT [apologetically] I AM somewhat older. [With a touch of courtship] Time has stood still with you.

LADY BRITOMART [promptly] Rubbish! This is your family.

UNDERSHAFT [surprised] Is it so large? I am sorry to say my memory is failing very badly in some things. [He offers his hand with paternal kindness to Lomax].

LOMAX [jerkily shaking his hand] Ahdedoo.

UNDERSHAFT. I can see you are my eldest. I am very glad to meet you again, my boy.

LOMAX [remonstrating] No but look here don't you know--[Overcome] Oh I say!

LADY BRITOMART [recovering from momentary speechlessness] Andrew: do you mean to say that you don't remember how many children you have?

UNDERSHAFT. Well, I am afraid I--. They have grown so much--er. Am I making any ridiculous mistake? I may as well confess: I recollect only one son. But so many things have happened since, of course--er--

LADY BRITOMART [decisively] Andrew: you are talking nonsense. Of course you have only one son.

UNDERSHAFT. Perhaps you will be good enough to introduce me, my dear.

LADY BRITOMART. That is Charles Lomax, who is engaged to Sarah.

UNDERSHAFT. My dear sir, I beg your pardon.

LOMAX. Notatall. Delighted, I assure you.

LADY BRITOMART. This is Stephen.

UNDERSHAFT [bowing] Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr Stephen. Then [going to Cusins] you must be my son. [Taking Cusins' hands in his] How are you, my young friend? [To Lady Britomart] He is very like you, my love.

CUSINS. You flatter me, Mr Undershaft. My name is Cusins: engaged to Barbara. [Very explicitly] That is Major Barbara Undershaft, of the Salvation Army. That is Sarah, your second daughter. This is Stephen Undershaft, your son.

UNDERSHAFT. My dear Stephen, I beg your pardon.

STEPHEN. Not at all.

UNDERSHAFT. Mr Cusins: I am much indebted to you for explaining so precisely. [Turning to Sarah] Barbara, my dear--

SARAH [prompting him] Sarah.

UNDERSHAFT. Sarah, of course. [They shake hands. He goes over to Barbara] Barbara--I am right this time, I hope.

BARBARA. Quite right. [They shake hands].

LADY BRITOMART [resuming command] Sit down, all of you. Sit down, Andrew. [She comes forward and sits on the settle. Cusins also brings his chair forward on her left. Barbara and Stephen resume their seats. Lomax gives his chair to Sarah and goes for another].

UNDERSHAFT. Thank you, my love.

LOMAX [conversationally, as he brings a chair forward between the writing table and the settee, and offers it to Undershaft] Takes you some time to find out exactly where you are, don't it?

UNDERSHAFT [accepting the chair] That is not what embarrasses me, Mr Lomax. My difficulty is that if I play the part of a father, I shall produce the effect of an intrusive stranger; and if I play the part of a discreet stranger, I may appear a callous father.

LADY BRITOMART. There is no need for you to play any part at all, Andrew. You had much better be sincere and natural.

UNDERSHAFT [submissively] Yes, my dear: I daresay that will be best. [Making himself comfortable] Well, here I am. Now what can I do for you all?

LADY BRITOMART. You need not do anything, Andrew. You are one of the family. You can sit with us and enjoy yourself.

Lomax's too long suppressed mirth explodes in agonized neighings.

LADY BRITOMART [outraged] Charles Lomax: if you can behave yourself, behave yourself. If not, leave the room.

LOMAX. I'm awfully sorry, Lady Brit; but really, you know, upon my soul! [He sits on the settee between Lady Britomart and Undershaft, quite overcome].

BARBARA. Why don't you laugh if you want to, Cholly? It's good for your inside.

LADY BRITOMART. Barbara: you have had the education of a lady. Please let your father see that; and don't talk like a street girl.

UNDERSHAFT. Never mind me, my dear. As you know, I am not a gentleman; and I was never educated.

LOMAX [encouragingly] Nobody'd know it, I assure you. You look all right, you know.

CUSINS. Let me advise you to study Greek, Mr Undershaft. Greek scholars are privileged men. Few of them know Greek; and none of them know anything else; but their position is unchallengeable. Other languages are the qualifications of waiters and commercial travellers: Greek is to a man of position what the hallmark is to silver.

BARBARA. Dolly: don't be insincere. Cholly: fetch your concertina and play something for us.

LOMAX [doubtfully to Undershaft] Perhaps that sort of thing isn't in your line, eh?

UNDERSHAFT. I am particularly fond of music.

LOMAX [delighted] Are you? Then I'll get it. [He goes upstairs for the instrument].

UNDERSHAFT. Do you play, Barbara?

BARBARA. Only the tambourine. But Cholly's teaching me the concertina.

UNDERSHAFT. Is Cholly also a member of the Salvation Army?

BARBARA. No: he says it's bad form to be a dissenter. But I don't despair of Cholly. I made him come yesterday to a meeting at the dock gates, and take the collection in his hat.

LADY BRITOMART. It is not my doing, Andrew. Barbara is old enough to take her own way. She has no father to advise her.

BARBARA. Oh yes she has. There are no orphans in the Salvation Army.

UNDERSHAFT. Your father there has a great many children and plenty of experience, eh?

BARBARA [looking at him with quick interest and nodding] Just so. How did you come to understand that? [Lomax is heard at the door trying the concertina].

LADY BRITOMART. Come in, Charles. Play us something at once.

LOMAX. Righto! [He sits down in his former place, and preludes].

UNDERSHAFT. One moment, Mr Lomax. I am rather interested in the Salvation Army. Its motto might be my own: Blood and Fire.

LOMAX [shocked] But not your sort of blood and fire, you know.

UNDERSHAFT. My sort of blood cleanses: my sort of fire purifies.

BARBARA. So do ours. Come down to-morrow to my shelter--the West Ham shelter--and see what we're doing. We're going to march to a great meeting in the Assembly Hall at Mile End. Come and see the shelter and then march with us: it will do you a lot of good. Can you play anything?

UNDERSHAFT. In my youth I earned pennies, and even shillings occasionally, in the streets and in public house parlors by my natural talent for stepdancing. Later on, I became a member of the Undershaft orchestral society, and performed passably on the tenor trombone.

LOMAX [scandalized] Oh I say!

BARBARA. Many a sinner has played himself into heaven on the trombone, thanks to the Army.

LOMAX [to Barbara, still rather shocked] Yes; but what about the cannon business, don't you know? [To Undershaft] Getting into heaven is not exactly in your line, is it?

LADY BRITOMART. Charles!!!

LOMAX. Well; but it stands to reason, don't it? The cannon business may be necessary and all that: we can't get on without cannons; but it isn't right, you know. On the other hand, there may be a certain amount of tosh about the Salvation Army--I belong to the Established Church myself--but still you can't deny that it's religion; and you can't go against religion, can you? At least unless you're downright immoral, don't you know.

UNDERSHAFT. You hardly appreciate my position, Mr Lomax--

LOMAX [hastily] I'm not saying anything against you personally, you know.

UNDERSHAFT. Quite so, quite so. But consider for a moment. Here I am, a manufacturer of mutilation and murder. I find myself in a specially amiable humor just now because, this morning, down at the foundry, we blew twenty-seven dummy soldiers into fragments with a gun which formerly destroyed only thirteen.

LOMAX [leniently] Well, the more destructive war becomes, the sooner it will be abolished, eh?

UNDERSHAFT. Not at all. The more destructive war becomes the more fascinating we find it. No, Mr Lomax, I am obliged to you for making the usual excuse for my trade; but I am not ashamed of it. I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in watertight compartments. All the spare money my trade rivals spend on hospitals, cathedrals and other receptacles for conscience money, I devote to experiments and researches in improved methods of destroying life and property. I have always done so; and I always shall. Therefore your Christmas card moralities of peace on earth and goodwill among men are of no use to me. Your Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil,

and to turn the other cheek, would make me a bankrupt. My morality--my religion--must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it.

STEPHEN [coldly--almost sullenly] You speak as if there were half a dozen moralities and religions to choose from, instead of one true morality and one true religion.

UNDERSHAFT. For me there is only one true morality; but it might not fit you, as you do not manufacture aerial battleships. There is only one true morality for every man; but every man has not the same true morality.

LOMAX [overtaxed] Would you mind saying that again? I didn't quite follow it.

CUSINS. It's quite simple. As Euripides says, one man's meat is another man's poison morally as well as physically.

UNDERSHAFT. Precisely.

LOMAX. Oh, that. Yes, yes, yes. True. True.

STEPHEN. In other words, some men are honest and some are scoundrels.

BARBARA. Bosh. There are no scoundrels.

UNDERSHAFT. Indeed? Are there any good men?

BARBARA. No. Not one. There are neither good men nor scoundrels: there are just children of one Father; and the sooner they stop calling one another names the better. You needn't talk to me: I know them. I've had scores of them through my hands: scoundrels, criminals, infidels, philanthropists, missionaries, county councillors, all sorts. They're all just the same sort of sinner; and there's the same salvation ready for them all.

UNDERSHAFT. May I ask have you ever saved a maker of cannons?

BARBARA. No. Will you let me try?

UNDERSHAFT. Well, I will make a bargain with you. If I go to see you to-morrow in your Salvation Shelter, will you come the day after to see me in my cannon works?

BARBARA. Take care. It may end in your giving up the cannons for the sake of the Salvation Army.

UNDERSHAFT. Are you sure it will not end in your giving up the Salvation Army for the sake of the cannons?

BARBARA. I will take my chance of that.

UNDERSHAFT. And I will take my chance of the other. [They shake hands on it]. Where is your shelter?

BARBARA. In West Ham. At the sign of the cross. Ask anybody in Canning Town. Where are your works?

UNDERSHAFT. In Perivale St Andrews. At the sign of the sword. Ask anybody in Europe.

LOMAX. Hadn't I better play something?

BARBARA. Yes. Give us Onward, Christian Soldiers.

LOMAX. Well, that's rather a strong order to begin with, don't you know. Suppose I sing Thou'rt passing hence, my brother. It's much the same tune.

BARBARA. It's too melancholy. You get saved, Cholly; and you'll pass hence, my brother, without making such a fuss about it.

LADY BRITOMART. Really, Barbara, you go on as if religion were a pleasant subject. Do have some sense of propriety.

UNDERSHAFT. I do not find it an unpleasant subject, my dear. It is the only one that capable people really care for.

LADY BRITOMART [looking at her watch] Well, if you are determined to have it, I insist on having it in a proper and respectable way. Charles: ring for prayers. [General amazement. Stephen rises in dismay].

LOMAX [rising] Oh I say!

UNDERSHAFT [rising] I am afraid I must be going.

LADY BRITOMART. You cannot go now, Andrew: it would be most improper. Sit down. What will the servants think?

UNDERSHAFT. My dear: I have conscientious scruples. May I suggest a compromise? If Barbara will conduct a little service in the drawingroom, with Mr Lomax as organist, I will attend it willingly. I will even take part, if a trombone can be procured.

LADY BRITOMART. Don't mock, Andrew.

UNDERSHAFT [shocked--to Barbara] You don't think I am mocking, my love, I hope.

BARBARA. No, of course not; and it wouldn't matter if you were: half the Army came to their first meeting for a lark. [Rising] Come along. Come, Dolly. Come, Cholly. [She goes out with Undershaft, who opens the door for her. Cusins rises].

LADY BRITOMART. I will not be disobeyed by everybody. Adolphus: sit down. Charles: you may go. You are not fit for prayers: you cannot keep your countenance.

LOMAX. Oh I say! [He goes out].

LADY BRITOMART [continuing] But you, Adolphus, can behave yourself if you choose to. I insist on your staying.

CUSINS. My dear Lady Brit: there are things in the family prayer book that I couldn't bear to hear you say.

LADY BRITOMART. What things, pray?

CUSINS. Well, you would have to say before all the servants that we have done things we ought not to have done, and left undone things we ought to have done, and that there is no health in us. I cannot bear to hear you doing yourself such an injustice, and Barbara such an injustice. As for myself, I flatly deny it: I have done my best. I shouldn't dare to marry Barbara--I couldn't look you in the face--if it were true. So I must go to the drawingroom.

LADY BRITOMART [offended] Well, go. [He starts for the door]. And remember this, Adolphus [he turns to listen]: I have a very strong suspicion that you went to the Salvation Army to worship Barbara and nothing else. And I quite appreciate the very clever way in which you systematically humbug me. I have found you out. Take care Barbara doesn't. That's all.

CUSINS [with unruffled sweetness] Don't tell on me. [He goes out].

LADY BRITOMART. Sarah: if you want to go, go. Anything's better than to sit there as if you wished you were a thousand miles away.

SARAH [languidly] Very well, mamma. [She goes].

Lady Britomart, with a sudden flounce, gives way to a little gust of tears.

STEPHEN [going to her] Mother: what's the matter?

LADY BRITOMART [swishing away her tears with her handkerchief] Nothing. Foolishness. You can go with him, too, if you like, and leave me with the servants.

STEPHEN. Oh, you mustn't think that, mother. I--I don't like him.

LADY BRITOMART. The others do. That is the injustice of a woman's lot. A woman has to bring up her children; and that means to restrain them, to deny them things they want, to set them tasks, to punish them when they do wrong, to do all the unpleasant things. And then the father, who has nothing to do but pet them and spoil them, comes in when all her work is done and steals their affection from her.

STEPHEN. He has not stolen our affection from you. It is only curiosity.

LADY BRITOMART [violently] I won't be consoled, Stephen. There is nothing the matter with me. [She rises and goes towards the door].

STEPHEN. Where are you going, mother?

LADY BRITOMART. To the drawingroom, of course. [She goes out. Onward, Christian Soldiers, on the concertina, with tambourine accompaniment, is heard when the door opens]. Are you coming, Stephen?

STEPHEN. No. Certainly not. [She goes. He sits down on the settee, with compressed lips and an expression of strong dislike].

ACT II

The yard of the West Ham shelter of the Salvation Army is a cold place on a January morning. The building itself, an old warehouse, is newly whitewashed. Its gabled end projects into the yard in the middle, with a door on the ground floor, and another in the loft above it without any balcony or ladder, but with a pulley rigged over it for hoisting sacks. Those who come from this central gable end into the yard have the gateway leading to the street on their left, with a stone horse-trough just beyond it, and, on the right, a penthouse shielding a table from the weather. There are forms at the table; and on them are seated a man and a woman, both much down on their luck, finishing a meal of bread [one thick slice each, with margarine and golden syrup] and diluted milk.

The man, a workman out of employment, is young, agile, a talker, a poser, sharp enough to be capable of anything in reason except honesty or altruistic considerations of any kind. The woman is a commonplace old bundle of poverty and hard-worn humanity. She looks sixty and probably is forty-five. If they were rich people, gloved and muffed and well wrapped up in furs and overcoats, they would be numbed and miserable; for it is a grindingly cold, raw, January day; and a glance at the background of grimy warehouses and leaden sky visible over the whitewashed walls of the yard would drive any idle rich person straight to the Mediterranean. But these two, being no more troubled with visions of the Mediterranean than of the moon, and being compelled to keep more of their clothes in the pawnshop, and less on their persons, in winter than in summer, are not depressed by the cold: rather are they stung into vivacity, to which their meal has just now given an almost jolly turn. The man takes a pull at his mug, and then gets up and moves about the yard with his hands deep in his pockets, occasionally breaking into a stepdance.

THE WOMAN. Feel better after your meal, sir?

THE MAN. No. Call that a meal! Good enough for you, props; but wot is it to me, an intelligent workin man.

THE WOMAN. Workin man! Wot are you?

THE MAN. Painter.

THE WOMAN [sceptically] Yus, I dessay.

THE MAN. Yus, you dessay! I know. Every loafer that can't do nothink calls issself a painter. Well, I'm a real painter: grainer, finisher, thirty-eight bob a week when I can get it.

THE WOMAN. Then why don't you go and get it?

THE MAN. I'll tell you why. Fust: I'm intelligent--fffff! it's rotten cold here [he dances a step or two]--yes: intelligent beyond the station o life into which it has pleased the capitalists to call me; and they don't like a man that sees through em. Second, an intelligent bein needs a doo share of appiness; so I drink somethink cruel when I get the chawnce. Third, I stand by my class and do as little as I can so's to leave arf the job for me fellow workers. Fourth, I'm fly enough to know wots inside the law and wots outside it; and inside it I do as the capitalists do: pinch wot I can lay me ands on. In a proper state of society I am sober, industrious and honest: in Rome, so to speak, I do as the Romans do. Wots the consequence? When trade is bad--and it's rotten bad just now--and the employers az to sack arf their men, they generally start on me.

THE WOMAN. What's your name?

THE MAN. Price. Bronterre O'Brien Price. Usually called Snobby Price, for short.

THE WOMAN. Snobby's a carpenter, ain't it? You said you was a painter.

PRICE. Not that kind of snob, but the genteel sort. I'm too uppish, owing to my intelligence, and my father being a Chartist and a reading, thinking man: a stationer, too. I'm none of your common hewers of wood and drawers of water; and don't you forget it. [He returns to his seat at the table, and takes up his mug]. Wots YOUR name?

THE WOMAN. Rummy Mitchens, sir.

PRICE [quaaffing the remains of his milk to her] Your elth, Miss Mitchens.

RUMMY [correcting him] Missis Mitchens.

PRICE. Wot! Oh Rummy, Rummy! Respectable married woman, Rummy, gittin rescued by the Salvation Army by pretendin to be a bad un. Same old game!

RUMMY. What am I to do? I can't starve. Them Salvation lasses is dear good girls; but the better you are, the worse they likes to think you were before they rescued you. Why shouldn't they av a

bit o credit, poor loves? They're worn to rags by their work. And where would they get the money to rescue us if we was to let on we're no worse than other people? You know what ladies and gentlemen are.

PRICE. Thievin swine! Wish I ad their job, Rummy, all the same. Wot does Rummy stand for? Pet name props?

RUMMY. Short for Romola.

PRICE. For wot!?

RUMMY. Romola. It was out of a new book. Somebody me mother wanted me to grow up like.

PRICE. We're companions in misfortune, Rummy. Both on us got names that nobody cawnt pronounce. Consequently I'm Snobby and you're Rummy because Bill and Sally wasn't good enough for our parents. Such is life!

RUMMY. Who saved you, Mr. Price? Was it Major Barbara?

PRICE. No: I come here on my own. I'm goin to be Bronterre O'Brien Price, the converted painter. I know wot they like. I'll tell em how I blasphemed and gambled and wopped my poor old mother--

RUMMY [shocked] Used you to beat your mother?

PRICE. Not likely. She used to beat me. No matter: you come and listen to the converted painter, and you'll hear how she was a pious woman that taught me me prayers at er knee, an how I used to come home drunk and drag her out o bed be er snow white airs, an lam into er with the poker.

RUMMY. That's what's so unfair to us women. Your confessions is just as big lies as ours: you don't tell what you really done no more than us; but you men can tell your lies right out at the meetins and be made much of for it; while the sort o confessions we az to make az to be wispered to one lady at a time. It ain't right, spite of all their piety.

PRICE. Right! Do you spose the Army'd be allowed if it went and did right? Not much. It combs our air and makes us good little blokes to be robbed and put upon. But I'll play the game as good as any of em. I'll see somebody struck by lightnin, or hear a voice sayin "Snobby Price: where will you spend eternity?" I'll ave a time of it, I tell you.

RUMMY. You won't be let drink, though.

PRICE. I'll take it out in gorspellin, then. I don't want to drink if I can get fun enough any other way.

Jenny Hill, a pale, overwrought, pretty Salvation lass of 18, comes in through the yard gate, leading Peter Shirley, a half

hardened, half worn-out elderly man, weak with hunger.

JENNY [supporting him] Come! pluck up. I'll get you something to eat. You'll be all right then.

PRICE [rising and hurrying officiously to take the old man off Jenny's hands] Poor old man! Cheer up, brother: you'll find rest and peace and appiness ere. Hurry up with the food, miss: e's fair done. [Jenny hurries into the shelter]. Ere, buck up, daddy! She's fetchin y'a thick slice o breadn treacle, an a mug o skyblue. [He seats him at the corner of the table].

RUMMY [gaily] Keep up your old art! Never say die!

SHIRLEY. I'm not an old man. I'm ony 46. I'm as good as ever I was. The grey patch come in my hair before I was thirty. All it wants is three pennorth o hair dye: am I to be turned on the streets to starve for it? Holy God! I've worked ten to twelve hours a day since I was thirteen, and paid my way all through; and now am I to be thrown into the gutter and my job given to a young man that can do it no better than me because I've black hair that goes white at the first change?

PRICE [cheerfully] No good jawrin about it. You're ony a jumped-up, jerked-off, orspittle-turned-out incurable of an ole workin man: who cares about you? Eh? Make the thievin swine give you a meal: they've stole many a one from you. Get a bit o your own back. [Jenny returns with the usual meal]. There you are, brother. Awsk a blessin an tuck that into you.

SHIRLEY [looking at it ravenously but not touching it, and crying like a child] I never took anything before.

JENNY [petting him] Come, come! the Lord sends it to you: he wasn't above taking bread from his friends; and why should you be? Besides, when we find you a job you can pay us for it if you like.

SHIRLEY [eagerly] Yes, yes: that's true. I can pay you back: it's only a loan. [Shivering] Oh Lord! oh Lord! [He turns to the table and attacks the meal ravenously].

JENNY. Well, Rummy, are you more comfortable now?

RUMMY. God bless you, lovey! You've fed my body and saved my soul, haven't you? [Jenny, touched, kisses her] Sit down and rest a bit: you must be ready to drop.

JENNY. I've been going hard since morning. But there's more work than we can do. I mustn't stop.

RUMMY. Try a prayer for just two minutes. You'll work all the better after.

JENNY [her eyes lighting up] Oh isn't it wonderful how a few minutes prayer revives you! I was quite lightheaded at twelve

o'clock, I was so tired; but Major Barbara just sent me to pray for five minutes; and I was able to go on as if I had only just begun. [To Price] Did you have a piece of bread?

PAIGE [with unction] Yes, miss; but I've got the piece that I value more; and that's the peace that passeth hall hannerstennin.

RUMMY [fervently] Glory Hallelujah!

Bill Walker, a rough customer of about 25, appears at the yard gate and looks malevolently at Jenny.

JENNY. That makes me so happy. When you say that, I feel wicked for loitering here. I must get to work again.

She is hurrying to the shelter, when the new-comer moves quickly up to the door and intercepts her. His manner is so threatening that she retreats as he comes at her truculently, driving her down the yard.

BILL. I know you. You're the one that took away my girl. You're the one that set er agen me. Well, I'm goin to av er out. Not that I care a curse for her or you: see? But I'll let er know; and I'll let you know. I'm goin to give er a doin that'll teach er to cut away from me. Now in with you and tell er to come out afore I come in and kick er out. Tell er Bill Walker wants er. She'll know what that means; and if she keeps me waitin it'll be worse. You stop to jaw back at me; and I'll start on you: d'ye hear? There's your way. In you go. [He takes her by the arm and slings her towards the door of the shelter. She falls on her hand and knee. Rummy helps her up again].

PRICE [rising, and venturing irresolutely towards Bill]. Easy there, mate. She ain't doin you no arm.

BILL. Who are you callin mate? [Standing over him threateningly]. You're goin to stand up for her, are you? Put up your ands.

RUMMY [running indignantly to him to scold him]. Oh, you great brute-- [He instantly swings his left hand back against her face. She screams and reels back to the trough, where she sits down, covering her bruised face with her hands and rocking and moaning with pain].

JENNY [going to her]. Oh God forgive you! How could you strike an old woman like that?

BILL [seizing her by the hair so violently that she also screams, and tearing her away from the old woman]. You Gawd forgive me again and I'll Gawd forgive you one on the jaw that'll stop you prayin for a week. [Holding her and turning fiercely on Price]. Av you anything to say agen it? Eh?

PRICE [intimidated]. No, matey: she ain't anything to do with me.

BILL. Good job for you! I'd put two meals into you and fight you

with one finger after, you starved cur. [To Jenny] Now are you goin to fetch out Mog Habbijam; or am I to knock your face off you and fetch her myself?

JENNY [writhing in his grasp] Oh please someone go in and tell Major Barbara--[she screams again as he wrenches her head down; and Price and Rummy, flee into the shelter].

BILL. You want to go in and tell your Major of me, do you?

JENNY. Oh please don't drag my hair. Let me go.

BILL. Do you or don't you? [She stifles a scream]. Yes or no.

JENNY. God give me strength--

BILL [striking her with his fist in the face] Go and show her that, and tell her if she wants one like it to come and interfere with me. [Jenny, crying with pain, goes into the shed. He goes to the form and addresses the old man]. Here: finish your mess; and get out o my way.

SHIRLEY [springing up and facing him fiercely, with the mug in his hand] You take a liberty with me, and I'll smash you over the face with the mug and cut your eye out. Ain't you satisfied--young whelps like you--with takin the bread out o the mouths of your elders that have brought you up and slaved for you, but you must come shovin and cheekin and bullyin in here, where the bread o charity is sickenin in our stummicks?

BILL [contemptuously, but backing a little] Wot good are you, you old palsy mug? Wot good are you?

SHIRLEY. As good as you and better. I'll do a day's work agen you or any fat young soaker of your age. Go and take my job at Horrockses, where I worked for ten year. They want young men there: they can't afford to keep men over forty-five. They're very sorry--give you a character and happy to help you to get anything suited to your years--sure a steady man won't be long out of a job. Well, let em try you. They'll find the differ. What do you know? Not as much as how to beeyave yourself--layin your dirty fist across the mouth of a respectable woman!

BILL. Don't provoke me to lay it acrost yours: d'ye hear?

SHIRLEY [with blighting contempt] Yes: you like an old man to hit, don't you, when you've finished with the women. I ain't seen you hit a young one yet.

BILL [stung] You lie, you old soupkitchener, you. There was a young man here. Did I offer to hit him or did I not?

SHIRLEY. Was he starvin or was he not? Was he a man or only a crosseyed thief an a loafer? Would you hit my son-in-law's brother?

BILL. Who's he?

SHIRLEY. Todger Fairmile o Balls Pond. Him that won 20 pounds off the Japanese wrestler at the music hall by standin out 17 minutes 4 seconds agen him.

BILL [sullenly] I'm no music hall wrestler. Can he box?

SHIRLEY. Yes: an you can't.

BILL. Wot! I can't, can't I? Wot's that you say [threatening him]?

SHIRLEY [not budging an inch] Will you box Todger Fairmile if I put him on to you? Say the word.

BILL. [subsiding with a slouch] I'll stand up to any man alive, if he was ten Todger Fairmiles. But I don't set up to be a perffessional.

SHIRLEY [looking down on him with unfathomable disdain] YOU box! Slap an old woman with the back o your hand! You hadn't even the sense to hit her where a magistrate couldn't see the mark of it, you silly young lump of conceit and ignorance. Hit a girl in the jaw and ony make her cry! If Todger Fairmile'd done it, she wouldn't a got up inside o ten minutes, no more than you would if he got on to you. Yah! I'd set about you myself if I had a week's feedin in me instead o two months starvation. [He returns to the table to finish his meal].

BILL [following him and stooping over him to drive the taunt in] You lie! you have the bread and treacle in you that you come here to beg.

SHIRLEY [bursting into tears] Oh God! it's true: I'm only an old pauper on the scrap heap. [Furiously] But you'll come to it yourself; and then you'll know. You'll come to it sooner than a teetotaller like me, fillin yourself with gin at this hour o the mornin!

BILL. I'm no gin drinker, you old liar; but when I want to give my girl a bloomin good idin I like to av a bit o devil in me: see? An here I am, talkin to a rotten old blighter like you sted o givin her wot for. [Working himself into a rage] I'm goin in there to fetch her out. [He makes vengefully for the shelter door].

SHIRLEY. You're goin to the station on a stretcher, more likely; and they'll take the gin and the devil out of you there when they get you inside. You mind what you're about: the major here is the Earl o Stevenage's granddaughter.

BILL [checked] Garn!

SHIRLEY. You'll see.

BILL [his resolution oozing] Well, I ain't done nothin to er.

SHIRLEY. Spose she said you did! who'd believe you?

BILL [very uneasy, skulking back to the corner of the penthouse] Gawd! There's no jastice in this country. To think wot them people can do! I'm as good as er.

SHIRLEY. Tell her so. It's just what a fool like you would do.

Barbara, brisk and businesslike, comes from the shelter with a note book, and addresses herself to Shirley. Bill, cowed, sits down in the corner on a form, and turns his back on them.

BARBARA. Good morning.

SHIRLEY [standing up and taking off his hat] Good morning, miss.

BARBARA. Sit down: make yourself at home. [He hesitates; but she puts a friendly hand on his shoulder and makes him obey]. Now then! since you've made friends with us, we want to know all about you. Names and addresses and trades.

SHIRLEY. Peter Shirley. Fitter. Chucked out two months ago because I was too old.

BARBARA [not at all surprised] You'd pass still. Why didn't you dye your hair?

SHIRLEY. I did. Me age come out at a coroner's inquest on me daughter.

BARBARA. Steady?

SHIRLEY. Teetotaller. Never out of a job before. Good worker. And sent to the knockers like an old horse!

BARBARA. No matter: if you did your part God will do his.

SHIRLEY [suddenly stubborn] My religion's no concern of anybody but myself.

BARBARA [guessing] I know. Secularist?

SHIRLEY [hotly] Did I offer to deny it?

BARBARA. Why should you? My own father's a Secularist, I think. Our Father--yours and mine--fulfils himself in many ways; and I daresay he knew what he was about when he made a Secularist of you. So buck up, Peter! we can always find a job for a steady man like you. [Shirley, disarmed, touches his hat. She turns from him to Bill]. What's your name?

BILL [insolently] Wot's that to you?

BARBARA [calmly making a note] Afraid to give his name. Any

trade?

BILL. Who's afraid to give his name? [Doggedly, with a sense of heroically defying the House of Lords in the person of Lord Stevenage] If you want to bring a charge agen me, bring it. [She waits, unruffled]. My name's Bill Walker.

BARBARA [as if the name were familiar: trying to remember how] Bill Walker? [Recollecting] Oh, I know: you're the man that Jenny Hill was praying for inside just now. [She enters his name in her note book].

BILL. Who's Jenny Hill? And what call has she to pray for me?

BARBARA. I don't know. Perhaps it was you that cut her lip.

BILL [defiantly] Yes, it was me that cut her lip. I ain't afraid o you.

BARBARA. How could you be, since you're not afraid of God? You're a brave man, Mr. Walker. It takes some pluck to do our work here; but none of us dare lift our hand against a girl like that, for fear of her father in heaven.

BILL [sullenly] I want none o your cantin jaw. I suppose you think I come here to beg from you, like this damaged lot here. Not me. I don't want your bread and scrape and catlap. I don't believe in your Gawd, no more than you do yourself.

BARBARA [sunnily apologetic and ladylike, as on a new footing with him] Oh, I beg your pardon for putting your name down, Mr. Walker. I didn't understand. I'll strike it out.

BILL [taking this as a slight, and deeply wounded by it] Eah! you let my name alone. Ain't it good enough to be in your book?

BARBARA [considering] Well, you see, there's no use putting down your name unless I can do something for you, is there? What's your trade?

BILL [still smarting] That's no concern o yours.

BARBARA. Just so. [very businesslike] I'll put you down as [writing] the man who--struck--poor little Jenny Hill--in the mouth.

BILL [rising threateningly] See here. I've ad enough o this.

BARBARA [quite sunny and fearless] What did you come to us for?

BILL. I come for my girl, see? I come to take her out o this and to break er jaws for her.

BARBARA [complacently] You see I was right about your trade. [Bill, on the point of retorting furiously, finds himself, to his great shame and terror, in danger of crying instead. He sits down

again suddenly]. What's her name?

BILL [dogged] Er name's Mog Abbijam: thats wot her name is.

BARBARA. Oh, she's gone to Canning Town, to our barracks there.

BILL [fortified by his resentment of Mog's perfidy] is she?
[Vindictively] Then I'm goin to Kennintahn arter her. [He crosses to the gate; hesitates; finally comes back at Barbara]. Are you lyin to me to get shut o me?

BARBARA. I don't want to get shut of you. I want to keep you here and save your soul. You'd better stay: you're going to have a bad time today, Bill.

BILL. Who's goin to give it to me? You, props.

BARBARA. Someone you don't believe in. But you'll be glad afterwards.

BILL [slinking off] I'll go to Kennintahn to be out o the reach o your tongue. [Suddenly turning on her with intense malice] And if I don't find Mog there, I'll come back and do two years for you, selp me Gawd if I don't!

BARBARA [a shade kindlier, if possible] It's no use, Bill. She's got another bloke.

BILL. Wot!

BARBARA. One of her own converts. He fell in love with her when he saw her with her soul saved, and her face clean, and her hair washed.

BILL [surprised] Wottud she wash it for, the carroty slut? It's red.

BARBARA. It's quite lovely now, because she wears a new look in her eyes with it. It's a pity you're too late. The new bloke has put your nose out of joint, Bill.

BILL. I'll put his nose out o joint for him. Not that I care a curse for her, mind that. But I'll teach her to drop me as if I was dirt. And I'll teach him to meddle with my Judy. Wots iz bleedin name?

BARBARA. Sergeant Todger Fairmile.

SHIRLEY [rising with grim joy] I'll go with him, miss. I want to see them two meet. I'll take him to the infirmary when it's over.

BILL [to Shirley, with undissembled misgiving] Is that im you was speakin on?

SHIRLEY. That's him.

BILL. Im that wrastled in the music all?

SHIRLEY. The competitions at the National Sportin Club was worth nigh a hundred a year to him. He's gev em up now for religion; so he's a bit fresh for want of the exercise he was accustomed to. He'll be glad to see you. Come along.

BILL. Wots is weight?

SHIRLEY. Thirteen four. [Bill's last hope expires].

BARBARA. Go and talk to him, Bill. He'll convert you.

SHIRLEY. He'll convert your head into a mashed potato.

BILL [sullenly] I ain't afraid of him. I ain't afraid of ennybody. But he can lick me. She's done me. [He sits down moodily on the edge of the horse trough].

SHIRLEY. You ain't goin. I thought not. [He resumes his seat].

BARBARA [calling] Jenny!

JENNY [appearing at the shelter door with a plaster on the corner of her mouth] Yes, Major.

BARBARA. Send Rummy Mitchens out to clear away here.

JENNY. I think she's afraid.

BARBARA [her resemblance to her mother flashing out for a moment] Nonsense! she must do as she's told.

JENNY [calling into the shelter] Rummy: the Major says you must come.

Jenny comes to Barbara, purposely keeping on the side next Bill, lest he should suppose that she shrank from him or bore malice.

BARBARA. Poor little Jenny! Are you tired? [Looking at the wounded cheek] Does it hurt?

JENNY. No: it's all right now. It was nothing.

BARBARA [critically] It was as hard as he could hit, I expect. Poor Bill! You don't feel angry with him, do you?

JENNY. Oh no, no, no: indeed I don't, Major, bless his poor heart! [Barbara kisses her; and she runs away merrily into the shelter. Bill writhes with an agonizing return of his new and alarming symptoms, but says nothing. Rummy Mitchens comes from the shelter].

BARBARA [going to meet Rummy] Now Rummy, bustle. Take in those mugs and plates to be washed; and throw the crumbs about for the birds.

Rummy takes the three plates and mugs; but Shirley takes back his mug from her, as there it still come milk left in it.

RUMMY. There ain't any crumbs. This ain't a time to waste good bread on birds.

PRICE [appearing at the shelter door] Gentleman come to see the shelter, Major. Says he's your father.

BARBARA. All right. Coming. [Snobby goes back into the shelter, followed by Barbara].

RUMMY [stealing across to Bill and addressing him in a subdued voice, but with intense conviction] I'd av the lor of you, you flat eared pignosed potwalloper, if she'd let me. You're no gentleman, to hit a lady in the face. [Bill, with greater things moving in him, takes no notice].

SHIRLEY [following her] Here! in with you and don't get yourself into more trouble by talking.

RUMMY [with hauteur] I ain't ad the pleasure o being hintroducted to you, as I can remember. [She goes into the shelter with the plates].

BILL [savagely] Don't you talk to me, d'ye hear. You lea me alone, or I'll do you a mischief. I'm not dirt under your feet, anyway.

SHIRLEY [calmly] Don't you be afeerd. You ain't such prime company that you need expect to be sought after. [He is about to go into the shelter when Barbara comes out, with Undershaft on her right].

BARBARA. Oh there you are, Mr Shirley! [Between them] This is my father: I told you he was a Secularist, didn't I? Perhaps you'll be able to comfort one another.

UNDERSHAFT [startled] A Secularist! Not the least in the world: on the contrary, a confirmed mystic.

BARBARA. Sorry, I'm sure. By the way, papa, what is your religion--in case I have to introduce you again?

UNDERSHAFT. My religion? Well, my dear, I am a Millionaire. That is my religion.

BARBARA. Then I'm afraid you and Mr Shirley wont be able to comfort one another after all. You're not a Millionaire, are you, Peter?

SHIRLEY. No; and proud of it.

UNDERSHAFT [gravely] Poverty, my friend, is not a thing to be proud of.

SHIRLEY [angrily] Who made your millions for you? Me and my like. What's kep us poor? Keepin you rich. I wouldn't have your conscience, not for all your income.

UNDERSHAFT. I wouldn't have your income, not for all your conscience, Mr Shirley. [He goes to the penthouse and sits down on a form].

BARBARA [stopping Shirley adroitly as he is about to retort] You wouldn't think he was my father, would you, Peter? Will you go into the shelter and lend the lasses a hand for a while: we're worked off our feet.

SHIRLEY [bitterly] Yes: I'm in their debt for a meal, ain't I?

BARBARA. Oh, not because you're in their debt; but for love of them, Peter, for love of them. [He cannot understand, and is rather scandalized]. There! Don't stare at me. In with you; and give that conscience of yours a holiday [bustling him into the shelter].

SHIRLEY [as he goes in] Ah! it's a pity you never was trained to use your reason, miss. You'd have been a very taking lecturer on Secularism.

Barbara turns to her father.

UNDERSHAFT. Never mind me, my dear. Go about your work; and let me watch it for a while.

BARBARA. All right.

UNDERSHAFT. For instance, what's the matter with that out-patient over there?

BARBARA [looking at Bill, whose attitude has never changed, and whose expression of brooding wrath has deepened] Oh, we shall cure him in no time. Just watch. [She goes over to Bill and waits. He glances up at her and casts his eyes down again, uneasy, but grimmer than ever]. It would be nice to just stamp on Mog Habbijam's face, wouldn't it, Bill?

BILL [starting up from the trough in consternation] It's a lie: I never said so. [She shakes her head]. Who told you wot was in my mind?

BARBARA. Only your new friend.

BILL. Wot new friend?

BARBARA. The devil, Bill. When he gets round people they get miserable, just like you.

HILL [with a heartbreaking attempt at devil-may-care cheerfulness] I ain't miserable. [He sits down again, and

stretches his legs in an attempt to seem indifferent].

BARBARA. Well, if you're happy, why don't you look happy, as we do?

BILL [his legs curling back in spite of him] I'm appy enough, I tell you. Why don't you lea me alown? Wot av I done to you? I ain't smashed your face, av I?

BARBARA [softly: wooing his soul] It's not me that's getting at you, Bill.

BILL. Who else is it?

BARBARA. Somebody that doesn't intend you to smash women's faces, I suppose. Somebody or something that wants to make a man of you.

BILL [blustering] Make a man o ME! Ain't I a man? eh? ain't I a man? Who sez I'm not a man?

BARBARA. There's a man in you somewhere, I suppose. But why did he let you hit poor little Jenny Hill? That wasn't very manly of him, was it?

BILL [tormented] Av done with it, I tell you. Chock it. I'm sick of your Jenny ill and er silly little face.

BARBARA. Then why do you keep thinking about it? Why does it keep coming up against you in your mind? You're not getting converted, are you?

BILL [with conviction] Not ME. Not likely. Not arf.

BARBARA. That's right, Bill. Hold out against it. Put out your strength. Don't let's get you cheap. Todger Fairmile said he wrestled for three nights against his Salvation harder than he ever wrestled with the Jap at the music hall. He gave in to the Jap when his arm was going to break. But he didn't give in to his salvation until his heart was going to break. Perhaps you'll escape that. You haven't any heart, have you?

BILL. Wot dye mean? Wy ain't I got a art the same as ennybody else?

BARBARA. A man with a heart wouldn't have bashed poor little Jenny's face, would he?

BILL [almost crying] Ow, will you lea me alown? Av I ever offered to meddle with you, that you come noggin and provowkin me lawk this? [He writhes convulsively from his eyes to his toes].

BARBARA [with a steady soothing hand on his arm and a gentle voice that never lets him go] It's your soul that's hurting you, Bill, and not me. We've been through it all ourselves. Come with us, Bill. [He looks wildly round]. To brave manhood on earth and eternal glory in heaven. [He is on the point of breaking down].

Come. [A drum is heard in the shelter; and Bill, with a gasp, escapes from the spell as Barbara turns quickly. Adolphus enters from the shelter with a big drum]. Oh! there you are, Dolly. Let me introduce a new friend of mine, Mr Bill Walker. This is my bloke, Bill: Mr Cusins. [Cusins salutes with his drumstick].

BILL. Goin to marry im?

BARBARA. Yes.

BILL [fervently] Gawd elp im! Gawd elp im!

BARBARA. Why? Do you think he won't be happy with me?

BILL. I've only ad to stand it for a mornin: e'll av to stand it for a lifetime.

CUSINS. That is a frightful reflection, Mr Walker. But I can't tear myself away from her.

BILL. Well, I can. [To Barbara] Eah! do you know where I'm goin to, and wot I'm goin to do?

BARBARA. Yes: you're going to heaven; and you're coming back here before the week's out to tell me so.

BILL. You lie. I'm goin to Kennintahn, to spit in Todger Fairmile's eye. I bashed Jenny Ill's face; and now I'll get me own face bashed and come back and show it to er. E'll it me ardern I it er. That'll make us square. [To Adolphus] Is that fair or is it not? You're a genlmn: you oughter know.

BARBARA. Two black eyes wont make one white one, Bill.

BILL. I didn't ast you. Cawn't you never keep your mahth shut? I ast the genlmn.

CUSINS [reflectively] Yes: I think you're right, Mr Walker. Yes: I should do it. It's curious: it's exactly what an ancient Greek would have done.

BARBARA. But what good will it do?

CUSINS. Well, it will give Mr Fairmile some exercise; and it will satisfy Mr Walker's soul.

BILL. Rot! there ain't no sach a thing as a soul. Ah kin you tell wether I've a soul or not? You never seen it.

BARBARA. I've seen it hurting you when you went against it.

BILL [with compressed aggravation] If you was my girl and took the word out o me mahth lawk thet, I'd give you suthink you'd feel urtin, so I would. [To Adolphus] You take my tip, mate. Stop er jawr; or you'll die afore your time. [With intense expression] Wore aht: thets wot you'll be: wore aht. [He goes away through

the gate].

CUSINS [looking after him] I wonder!

BARBARA. Dolly! [indignant, in her mother's manner].

CUSINS. Yes, my dear, it's very wearing to be in love with you. If it lasts, I quite think I shall die young.

BARBARA. Should you mind?

CUSINS. Not at all. [He is suddenly softened, and kisses her over the drum, evidently not for the first time, as people cannot kiss over a big drum without practice. Undershaft coughs].

BARBARA. It's all right, papa, we've not forgotten you. Dolly: explain the place to papa: I haven't time. [She goes busily into the shelter].

Undershaft and Adolpbus now have the yard to themselves. Undershaft, seated on a form, and still keenly attentive, looks hard at Adolphus. Adolphus looks hard at him.

UNDERSHAFT. I fancy you guess something of what is in my mind, Mr Cusins. [Cusins flourishes his drumsticks as if in the art of beating a lively rataplan, but makes no sound]. Exactly so. But suppose Barbara finds you out!

CUSINS. You know, I do not admit that I am imposing on Barbara. I am quite genuinely interested in the views of the Salvation Army. The fact is, I am a sort of collector of religions; and the curious thing is that I find I can believe them all. By the way, have you any religion?

UNDERSHAFT. Yes.

CUSINS. Anything out of the common?

UNDERSHAFT. Only that there are two things necessary to Salvation.

CUSINS [disappointed, but polite] Ah, the Church Catechism. Charles Lomax also belongs to the Established Church.

UNDERSHAFT. The two things are--

CUSINS. Baptism and--

UNDERSHAFT. No. Money and gunpowder.

CUSINS [surprised, but interested] That is the general opinion of our governing classes. The novelty is in hearing any man confess it.

UNDERSHAFT. Just so.

CUSINS. Excuse me: is there any place in your religion for honor, justice, truth, love, mercy and so forth?

UNDERSHAFT. Yes: they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life.

CUSINS. Suppose one is forced to choose between them and money or gunpowder?

UNDERSHAFT. Choose money and gunpowder; for without enough of both you cannot afford the others.

CUSINS. That is your religion?

UNDERSHAFT. Yes.

The cadence of this reply makes a full close in the conversation. Cusins twists his face dubiously and contemplates Undershaft. Undershaft contemplates him.

CUSINS. Barbara won't stand that. You will have to choose between your religion and Barbara.

UNDERSHAFT. So will you, my friend. She will find out that that drum of yours is hollow.

CUSINS. Father Undershaft: you are mistaken: I am a sincere Salvationist. You do not understand the Salvation Army. It is the army of joy, of love, of courage: it has banished the fear and remorse and despair of the old hellridden evangelical sects: it marches to fight the devil with trumpet and drum, with music and dancing, with banner and palm, as becomes a sally from heaven by its happy garrison. It picks the waster out of the public house and makes a man of him: it finds a worm wriggling in a back kitchen, and lo! a woman! Men and women of rank too, sons and daughters of the Highest. It takes the poor professor of Greek, the most artificial and self-suppressed of human creatures, from his meal of roots, and lets loose the rhapsodist in him; reveals the true worship of Dionysos to him; sends him down the public street drumming dithyrambs [he plays a thundering flourish on the drum].

UNDERSHAFT. You will alarm the shelter.

CUSINS. Oh, they are accustomed to these sudden ecstasies of piety. However, if the drum worries you-- [he pockets the drumsticks; unhooks the drum; and stands it on the ground opposite the gateway].

UNDERSHAFT. Thank you.

CUSINS. You remember what Euripides says about your money and gunpowder?

UNDERSHAFT. No.

CUSINS [declaiming]

One and another
In money and guns may outpass his brother;
And men in their millions float and flow
And seethe with a million hopes as leaven;
And they win their will; or they miss their will;
And their hopes are dead or are pined for still:
But whoe'er can know
As the long days go
That to live is happy, has found his heaven.

My translation: what do you think of it?

UNDERSHAFT. I think, my friend, that if you wish to know, as the long days go, that to live is happy, you must first acquire money enough for a decent life, and power enough to be your own master.

CUSINS. You are damnably discouraging. [He resumes his declamation].

Is it so hard a thing to see
That the spirit of God--whate'er it be--
The Law that abides and changes not, ages long,
The Eternal and Nature-born: these things be strong.
What else is Wisdom? What of Man's endeavor,
Or God's high grace so lovely and so great?
To stand from fear set free? to breathe and wait?
To hold a hand uplifted over Fate?
And shall not Barbara be loved for ever?

UNDERSHAFT. Euripides mentions Barbara, does he?

CUSINS. It is a fair translation. The word means Loveliness.

UNDERSHAFT. May I ask--as Barbara's father--how much a year she is to be loved for ever on?

CUSINS. As Barbara's father, that is more your affair than mine. I can feed her by teaching Greek: that is about all.

UNDERSHAFT. Do you consider it a good match for her?

CUSINS [with polite obstinacy] Mr Undershaft: I am in many ways a weak, timid, ineffectual person; and my health is far from satisfactory. But whenever I feel that I must have anything, I get it, sooner or later. I feel that way about Barbara. I don't like marriage: I feel intensely afraid of it; and I don't know what I shall do with Barbara or what she will do with me. But I feel that I and nobody else must marry her. Please regard that as settled.--Not that I wish to be arbitrary; but why should I waste your time in discussing what is inevitable?

UNDERSHAFT. You mean that you will stick at nothing not even the conversion of the Salvation Army to the worship of Dionysos.

CUSINS. The business of the Salvation Army is to save, not to wrangle about the name of the pathfinder. Dionysos or another: what does it matter?

UNDERSHAFT [rising and approaching him] Professor Cusins you are a young man after my own heart.

CUSINS. Mr Undershaft: you are, as far as I am able to gather, a most infernal old rascal; but you appeal very strongly to my sense of ironic humor.

Undershaft mutely offers his hand. They shake.

UNDERSHAFT [suddenly concentrating himself] And now to business.

CUSINS. Pardon me. We were discussing religion. Why go back to such an uninteresting and unimportant subject as business?

UNDERSHAFT. Religion is our business at present, because it is through religion alone that we can win Barbara.

CUSINS. Have you, too, fallen in love with Barbara?

UNDERSHAFT. Yes, with a father's love.

CUSINS. A father's love for a grown-up daughter is the most dangerous of all infatuations. I apologize for mentioning my own pale, coy, mistrustful fancy in the same breath with it.

UNDERSHAFT. Keep to the point. We have to win her; and we are neither of us Methodists.

CUSINS. That doesn't matter. The power Barbara wields here--the power that wields Barbara herself--is not Calvinism, not Presbyterianism, not Methodism--

UNDERSHAFT. Not Greek Paganism either, eh?

CUSINS. I admit that. Barbara is quite original in her religion.

UNDERSHAFT [triumphantly] Aha! Barbara Undershaft would be. Her inspiration comes from within herself.

CUSINS. How do you suppose it got there?

UNDERSHAFT [in towering excitement] It is the Undershaft inheritance. I shall hand on my torch to my daughter. She shall make my converts and preach my gospel

CUSINS. What! Money and gunpowder!

UNDERSHAFT. Yes, money and gunpowder; freedom and power; command of life and command of death.

CUSINS [urbanely: trying to bring him down to earth] This is

extremely interesting, Mr Undershaft. Of course you know that you are mad.

UNDERSHAFT [with redoubled force] And you?

CUSINS. Oh, mad as a hatter. You are welcome to my secret since I have discovered yours. But I am astonished. Can a madman make cannons?

UNDERSHAFT. Would anyone else than a madman make them? And now [with surging energy] question for question. Can a sane man translate Euripides?

CUSINS. No.

UNDERSHAFT [reining him by the shoulder] Can a sane woman make a man of a waster or a woman of a worm?

CUSINS [reeling before the storm] Father Colossus--Mammoth Millionaire--

UNDERSHAFT [pressing him] Are there two mad people or three in this Salvation shelter to-day?

CUSINS. You mean Barbara is as mad as we are!

UNDERSHAFT [pushing him lightly off and resuming his equanimity suddenly and completely] Pooh, Professor! let us call things by their proper names. I am a millionaire; you are a poet; Barbara is a savior of souls. What have we three to do with the common mob of slaves and idolaters? [He sits down again with a shrug of contempt for the mob].

CUSINS. Take care! Barbara is in love with the common people. So am I. Have you never felt the romance of that love?

UNDERSHAFT [cold and sardonic] Have you ever been in love with Poverty, like St Francis? Have you ever been in love with Dirt, like St Simeon? Have you ever been in love with disease and suffering, like our nurses and philanthropists? Such passions are not virtues, but the most unnatural of all the vices. This love of the common people may please an earl's granddaughter and a university professor; but I have been a common man and a poor man; and it has no romance for me. Leave it to the poor to pretend that poverty is a blessing: leave it to the coward to make a religion of his cowardice by preaching humility: we know better than that. We three must stand together above the common people: how else can we help their children to climb up beside us? Barbara must belong to us, not to the Salvation Army.

CUSINS. Well, I can only say that if you think you will get her away from the Salvation Army by talking to her as you have been talking to me, you don't know Barbara.

UNDERSHAFT. My friend: I never ask for what I can buy.

CUSINS [in a white fury] Do I understand you to imply that you can buy Barbara?

UNDERSHAFT. No; but I can buy the Salvation Army.

CUSINS. Quite impossible.

UNDERSHAFT. You shall see. All religious organizations exist by selling themselves to the rich.

CUSINS. Not the Army. That is the Church of the poor.

UNDERSHAFT. All the more reason for buying it.

CUSINS. I don't think you quite know what the Army does for the poor.

UNDERSHAFT. Oh yes I do. It draws their teeth: that is enough for me--as a man of business--

CUSINS. Nonsense! It makes them sober--

UNDERSHAFT. I prefer sober workmen. The profits are larger.

CUSINS. --honest--

UNDERSHAFT. Honest workmen are the most economical.

CUSINS. --attached to their homes--

UNDERSHAFT. So much the better: they will put up with anything sooner than change their shop.

CUSINS. --happy--

UNDERSHAFT. An invaluable safeguard against revolution.

CUSINS. --unselfish--

UNDERSHAFT. Indifferent to their own interests, which suits me exactly.

CUSINS. --with their thoughts on heavenly things--

UNDERSHAFT [rising] And not on Trade Unionism nor Socialism. Excellent.

CUSINS [revolted] You really are an infernal old rascal.

UNDERSHAFT [indicating Peter Shirley, who has just come from the shelter and strolled dejectedly down the yard between them] And this is an honest man!

SHIRLEY. Yes; and what av I got by it? [he passes on bitterly and sits on the form, in the corner of the penthouse].

Snobby Price, beaming sanctimoniously, and Jenny Hill, with a tambourine full of coppers, come from the shelter and go to the drum, on which Jenny begins to count the money.

UNDERSHAFT [replying to Shirley] Oh, your employers must have got a good deal by it from first to last. [He sits on the table, with one foot on the side form. Cusins, overwhelmed, sits down on the same form nearer the shelter. Barbara comes from the shelter to the middle of the yard. She is excited and a little overwrought].

BARBARA. We've just had a splendid experience meeting at the other gate in Cripps's lane. I've hardly ever seen them so much moved as they were by your confession, Mr Price.

PRICE. I could almost be glad of my past wickedness if I could believe that it would elp to keep hathers stright.

BARBARA. So it will, Snobby. How much, Jenny?

JENNY. Four and tenpence, Major.

BARBARA. Oh Snobby, if you had given your poor mother just one more kick, we should have got the whole five shillings!

PRICE. If she heard you say that, miss, she'd be sorry I didn't. But I'm glad. Oh what a joy it will be to her when she hears I'm saved!

UNDERSHAFT. Shall I contribute the odd twopence, Barbara? The millionaire's mite, eh? [He takes a couple of pennies from his pocket.

BARBARA. How did you make that twopence?

UNDERSHAFT. As usual. By selling cannons, torpedoes, submarines, and my new patent Grand Duke hand grenade.

BARBARA. Put it back in your pocket. You can't buy your Salvation here for twopence: you must work it out.

UNDERSHAFT. Is twopence not enough? I can afford a little more, if you press me.

BARBARA. Two million millions would not be enough. There is bad blood on your hands; and nothing but good blood can cleanse them. Money is no use. Take it away. [She turns to Cusins]. Dolly: you must write another letter for me to the papers. [He makes a wry face]. Yes: I know you don't like it; but it must be done. The starvation this winter is beating us: everybody is unemployed. The General says we must close this shelter if we cant get more money. I force the collections at the meetings until I am ashamed, don't I, Snobby?

PRICE. It's a fair treat to see you work it, miss. The way you got them up from three-and-six to four-and-ten with that hymn, penny by penny and verse by verse, was a caution. Not a Cheap

Jack on Mile End Waste could touch you at it.

BARBARA. Yes; but I wish we could do without it. I am getting at last to think more of the collection than of the people's souls. And what are those hatfuls of pence and halfpence? We want thousands! tens of thousands! hundreds of thousands! I want to convert people, not to be always begging for the Army in a way I'd die sooner than beg for myself.

UNDERSHAFT [in profound irony] Genuine unselfishness is capable of anything, my dear.

BARBARA [unsuspectingly, as she turns away to take the money from the drum and put it in a cash bag she carries] Yes, isn't it? [Undershaft looks sardonically at Cusins].

CUSINS [aside to Undershaft] Mephistopheles! Machiavelli!

BARBARA [tears coming into her eyes as she ties the bag and pockets it] How are we to feed them? I can't talk religion to a man with bodily hunger in his eyes. [Almost breaking down] It's frightful.

JENNY [running to her] Major, dear--

BARBARA [rebounding] No: don't comfort me. It will be all right. We shall get the money.

UNDERSHAFT. How?

JENNY. By praying for it, of course. Mrs Baines says she prayed for it last night; and she has never prayed for it in vain: never once. [She goes to the gate and looks out into the street].

BARBARA [who has dried her eyes and regained her composure] By the way, dad, Mrs Baines has come to march with us to our big meeting this afternoon; and she is very anxious to meet you, for some reason or other. Perhaps she'll convert you.

UNDERSHAFT. I shall be delighted, my dear.

JENNY [at the gate: excitedly] Major! Major! Here's that man back again.

BARBARA. What man?

JENNY. The man that hit me. Oh, I hope he's coming back to join us.

Bill Walker, with frost on his jacket, comes through the gate, his hands deep in his pockets and his chin sunk between his shoulders, like a cleaned-out gambler. He halts between Barbara and the drum.

BARBARA. Hullo, Bill! Back already!

BILL [nagging at her] Bin talkin ever sense, av you?

BARBARA. Pretty nearly. Well, has Todger paid you out for poor Jenny's jaw?

BILL. NO he ain't.

BARBARA. I thought your jacket looked a bit snowy.

BILL. So it is snowy. You want to know where the snow come from, don't you?

BARBARA. Yes.

BILL. Well, it come from off the ground in Parkinses Corner in Kennintahn. It got rubbed off be my shoulders see?

BARBARA. Pity you didn't rub some off with your knees, Bill! That would have done you a lot of good.

BILL [with your mirthless humor] I was saving another man's knees at the time. E was kneelin on my ed, so e was.

JENNY. Who was kneeling on your head?

BILL. Todger was. E was prayin for me: prayin comfortable with me as a carpet. So was Mog. So was the ole bloomin meetin. Mog she sez "O Lord break is stubborn spirit; but don't urt is dear art." That was wot she said. "Don't urt is dear art"! An er bloke--thirteen stun four!--kneelin wiv all is weight on me. Funny, ain't it?

JENNY. Oh no. We're so sorry, Mr Walker.

BARBARA [enjoying it frankly] Nonsense! of course it's funny. Served you right, Bill! You must have done something to him first.

BILL [doggedly] I did wot I said I'd do. I spit in is eye. E looks up at the sky and sez, "O that I should be fahnd worthy to be spit upon for the gospel's sake!" a sez; an Mog sez "Glory Allelloolier!"; an then a called me Brother, an dahned me as if I was a kid and a was me mother washin me a Setterda nawt. I adn't just no show wiv im at all. Arf the street prayed; an the tother arf larfed fit to split theirselves. [To Barbara] There! are you settisfawd nah?

BARBARA [her eyes dancing] Wish I'd been there, Bill.

BILL. Yes: you'd a got in a hextra bit o talk on me, wouldn't you?

JENNY. I'm so sorry, Mr. Walker.

BILL [fiercely] Don't you go bein sorry for me: you've no call. Listen ere. I broke your jawr.

JENNY. No, it didn't hurt me: indeed it didn't, except for a moment. It was only that I was frightened.

BILL. I don't want to be forgive be you, or be ennybody. Wot I did I'll pay for. I tried to get me own jawr broke to settisfaw you--

JENNY [distressed] Oh no--

BILL [impatiently] Tell y'I did: cawn't you listen to wot's bein told you? All I got be it was bein made a sight of in the public street for me pains. Well, if I cawn't settisfaw you one way, I can another. Listen ere! I ad two quid saved agen the frost; an I've a pahnd of it left. A mate n mine last week ad words with the Judy e's goin to marry. E give er wot-for; an e's bin fined fifteen bob. E ad a right to it er because they was goin to be marrid; but I adn't no right to it you; so put anather fawv bob on an call it a pahnd's worth. [He produces a sovereign]. Ere's the money. Take it; and let's av no more o your forgivin an prayin and your Major jawrin me. Let wot I done be done and paid for; and let there be a end of it.

JENNY. Oh, I couldn't take it, Mr. Walker. But if you would give a shilling or two to poor Rummy Mitchens! you really did hurt her; and she's old.

BILL [contemptuously] Not likely. I'd give her anather as soon as look at er. Let her av the lawr o me as she threatened! She ain't forgiven me: not mach. Wot I done to er is not on me mawnd--wot she [indicating Barbara] might call on me conscience--no more than stickin a pig. It's this Christian game o yours that I won't av played agen me: this bloomin forgivin an noggin an jawrin that makes a man that sore that iz lawf's a burdn to im. I won't av it, I tell you; so take your money and stop throwin your silly bashed face hup agen me.

JENNY. Major: may I take a little of it for the Army?

BARBARA. No: the Army is not to be bought. We want your soul, Bill; and we'll take nothing less.

BILL [bitterly] I know. It ain't enough. Me an me few shillins is not good enough for you. You're a earl's grendorter, you are. Nothin less than a underd pahnd for you.

UNDERSHAFT. Come, Barbara! you could do a great deal of good with a hundred pounds. If you will set this gentleman's mind at ease by taking his pound, I will give the other ninety-nine [Bill, astounded by such opulence, instinctively touches his cap].

BARBARA. Oh, you're too extravagant, papa. Bill offers twenty pieces of silver. All you need offer is the other ten. That will make the standard price to buy anybody who's for sale. I'm not; and the Army's not. [To Bill] You'll never have another quiet moment, Bill, until you come round to us. You can't stand out

against your salvation.

BILL [sullenly] I cawn't stend aht agen music all wrastlers and artful tongued women. I've offered to pay. I can do no more. Take it or leave it. There it is. [He throws the sovereign on the drum, and sits down on the horse-trough. The coin fascinates Snobby Price, who takes an early opportunity of dropping his cap on it].

Mrs Baines comes from the shelter. She is dressed as a Salvation Army Commissioner. She is an earnest looking woman of about 40, with a caressing, urgent voice, and an appealing manner.

BARBARA. This is my father, Mrs Baines. [Undershaft comes from the table, taking his hat off with marked civility]. Try what you can do with him. He won't listen to me, because he remembers what a fool I was when I was a baby.

[She leaves them together and chats with Jenny].

MRS BAINES. Have you been shown over the shelter, Mr Undershaft? You know the work we're doing, of course.

UNDERSHAFT [very civilly] The whole nation knows it, Mrs Baines.

MRS BAINES. No, Sir: the whole nation does not know it, or we should not be crippled as we are for want of money to carry our work through the length and breadth of the land. Let me tell you that there would have been rioting this winter in London but for us.

UNDERSHAFT. You really think so?

MRS BAINES. I know it. I remember 1886, when you rich gentlemen hardened your hearts against the cry of the poor. They broke the windows of your clubs in Pall Mall.

UNDERSHAFT [gleaming with approval of their method] And the Mansion House Fund went up next day from thirty thousand pounds to seventy-nine thousand! I remember quite well.

MRS BAINES. Well, won't you help me to get at the people? They won't break windows then. Come here, Price. Let me show you to this gentleman [Price comes to be inspected]. Do you remember the window breaking?

PRICE. My ole father thought it was the revolution, ma'am.

MRS BAINES. Would you break windows now?

PRICE. Oh no ma'm. The windows of eaven av bin opened to me. I know now that the rich man is a sinner like myself.

RUMMY [appearing above at the loft door] Snobby Price!

SNOBBY. Wot is it?

RUMMY. Your mother's askin for you at the other gate in Crippses Lane. She's heard about your confession [Price turns pale].

MRS BAINES. Go, Mr. Price; and pray with her.

JENNY. You can go through the shelter, Snobby.

PRICE [to Mrs Baines] I couldn't face her now; ma'am, with all the weight of my sins fresh on me. Tell her she'll find her son at ome, waitin for her in prayer. [He skulks off through the gate, incidentally stealing the sovereign on his way out by picking up his cap from the drum].

MRS BAINES [with swimming eyes] You see how we take the anger and the bitterness against you out of their hearts, Mr Undershaft.

UNDERSHAFT. It is certainly most convenient and gratifying to all large employers of labor, Mrs Baines.

MRS BAINES. Barbara: Jenny: I have good news: most wonderful news. [Jenny runs to her]. My prayers have been answered. I told you they would, Jenny, didn't I?

JENNY. Yes, yes.

BARBARA [moving nearer to the drum] Have we got money enough to keep the shelter open?

MRS BAINES. I hope we shall have enough to keep all the shelters open. Lord Saxmundham has promised us five thousand pounds--

BARBARA. Hooray!

JENNY. Glory!

MRS BAINES. --if--

BARBARA. "If!" If what?

MRS BAINES. If five other gentlemen will give a thousand each to make it up to ten thousand.

BARBARA. Who is Lord Saxmundham? I never heard of him.

UNDERSHAFT [who has pricked up his ears at the peer's name, and is now watching Barbara curiously] A new creation, my dear. You have heard of Sir Horace Bodger?

BARBARA. Bodger! Do you mean the distiller? Bodger's whisky!

UNDERSHAFT. That is the man. He is one of the greatest of our public benefactors. He restored the cathedral at Hakington. They made him a baronet for that. He gave half a million to the funds of his party: they made him a baron for that.

SHIRLEY. What will they give him for the five thousand?

UNDERSHAFT. There is nothing left to give him. So the five thousand, I should think, is to save his soul.

MRS BAINES. Heaven grant it may! Oh Mr. Undershaft, you have some very rich friends. Can't you help us towards the other five thousand? We are going to hold a great meeting this afternoon at the Assembly Hall in the Mile End Road. If I could only announce that one gentleman had come forward to support Lord Saxmundham, others would follow. Don't you know somebody? Couldn't you? Wouldn't you? [her eyes fill with tears] oh, think of those poor people, Mr Undershaft: think of how much it means to them, and how little to a great man like you.

UNDERSHAFT [sardonically gallant] Mrs Baines: you are irresistible. I can't disappoint you; and I can't deny myself the satisfaction of making Bodger pay up. You shall have your five thousand pounds.

MRS BAINES. Thank God!

UNDERSHAFT. You don't thank me?

MRS BAINES. Oh sir, don't try to be cynical: don't be ashamed of being a good man. The Lord will bless you abundantly; and our prayers will be like a strong fortification round you all the days of your life. [With a touch of caution] You will let me have the cheque to show at the meeting, won't you? Jenny: go in and fetch a pen and ink. [Jenny runs to the shelter door].

UNDERSHAFT. Do not disturb Miss Hill: I have a fountain pen. [Jenny halts. He sits at the table and writes the cheque. Cusins rises to make more room for him. They all watch him silently].

BILL [cynically, aside to Barbara, his voice and accent horribly debased] Wot prawce Selvytion nah?

BARBARA. Stop. [Undershaft stops writing: they all turn to her in surprise]. Mrs Baines: are you really going to take this money?

MRS BAINES [astonished] Why not, dear?

BARBARA. Why not! Do you know what my father is? Have you forgotten that Lord Saxmundham is Bodger the whisky man? Do you remember how we implored the County Council to stop him from writing Bodger's Whisky in letters of fire against the sky; so that the poor drinkruined creatures on the embankment could not wake up from their snatches of sleep without being reminded of their deadly thirst by that wicked sky sign? Do you know that the worst thing I have had to fight here is not the devil, but Bodger, Bodger, Bodger, with his whisky, his distilleries, and his tied houses? Are you going to make our shelter another tied house for him, and ask me to keep it?

BILL. Rotten drunken whisky it is too.

MRS BAINES. Dear Barbara: Lord Saxmundham has a soul to be saved like any of us. If heaven has found the way to make a good use of his money, are we to set ourselves up against the answer to our prayers?

BARBARA. I know he has a soul to be saved. Let him come down here; and I'll do my best to help him to his salvation. But he wants to send his cheque down to buy us, and go on being as wicked as ever.

UNDERSHAFT [with a reasonableness which Cusins alone perceives to be ironical] My dear Barbara: alcohol is a very necessary article. It heals the sick--

BARBARA. It does nothing of the sort.

UNDERSHAFT. Well, it assists the doctor: that is perhaps a less questionable way of putting it. It makes life bearable to millions of people who could not endure their existence if they were quite sober. It enables Parliament to do things at eleven at night that no sane person would do at eleven in the morning. Is it Bodger's fault that this inestimable gift is deplorably abused by less than one per cent of the poor? [He turns again to the table; signs the cheque; and crosses it].

MRS BAINES. Barbara: will there be less drinking or more if all those poor souls we are saving come to-morrow and find the doors of our shelters shut in their faces? Lord Saxmundham gives us the money to stop drinking--to take his own business from him.

CUSINS [impishly] Pure self-sacrifice on Bodger's part, clearly! Bless dear Bodger! [Barbara almost breaks down as Adolpbus, too, fails her].

UNDERSHAFT [tearing out the cheque and pocketing the book as he rises and goes past Cusins to Mrs Baines] I also, Mrs Baines, may claim a little disinterestedness. Think of my business! think of the widows and orphans! the men and lads torn to pieces with shrapnel and poisoned with lyddite [Mrs Baines shrinks; but he goes on remorselessly]! the oceans of blood, not one drop of which is shed in a really just cause! the ravaged crops! the peaceful peasants forced, women and men, to till their fields under the fire of opposing armies on pain of starvation! the bad blood of the fierce little cowards at home who egg on others to fight for the gratification of their national vanity! All this makes money for me: I am never richer, never busier than when the papers are full of it. Well, it is your work to preach peace on earth and goodwill to men. [Mrs Baines's face lights up again]. Every convert you make is a vote against war. [Her lips move in prayer]. Yet I give you this money to help you to hasten my own commercial ruin. [He gives her the cheque].

CUSINS [mounting the form in an ecstasy of mischief] The millennium will be inaugurated by the unselfishness of Undershaft and Bodger. Oh be joyful! [He takes the drumsticks from his

pockets and flourishes them].

MRS BAINES [taking the cheque] The longer I live the more proof I see that there is an Infinite Goodness that turns everything to the work of salvation sooner or later. Who would have thought that any good could have come out of war and drink? And yet their profits are brought today to the feet of salvation to do its blessed work. [She is affected to tears].

JENNY [running to Mrs Baines and throwing her arms round her] Oh dear! how blessed, how glorious it all is!

CUSINS [in a convulsion of irony] Let us seize this unspeakable moment. Let us march to the great meeting at once. Excuse me just an instant. [He rushes into the shelter. Jenny takes her tambourine from the drum head].

MRS BAINES. Mr Undershaft: have you ever seen a thousand people fall on their knees with one impulse and pray? Come with us to the meeting. Barbara shall tell them that the Army is saved, and saved through you.

CUSINS [returning impetuously from the shelter with a flag and a trombone, and coming between Mrs Baines and Undershaft] You shall carry the flag down the first street, Mrs Baines [he gives her the flag]. Mr Undershaft is a gifted trombonist: he shall intone an Olympian diapason to the West Ham Salvation March. [Aside to Undershaft, as he forces the trombone on him] Blow, Machiavelli, blow.

UNDERSHAFT [aside to him, as he takes the trombone] The trumpet in Zion! [Cusins rushes to the drum, which he takes up and puts on. Undershaft continues, aloud] I will do my best. I could vamp a bass if I knew the tune.

CUSINS. It is a wedding chorus from one of Donizetti's operas; but we have converted it. We convert everything to good here, including Bodger. You remember the chorus. "For thee immense rejoicing--immenso giubilo--immenso giubilo." [With drum obbligato] Rum tum ti tumtum, tum tum ti ta--

BARBARA. Dolly: you are breaking my heart.

CUSINS. What is a broken heart more or less here? Dionysos Undershaft has descended. I am possessed.

MRS BAINES. Come, Barbara: I must have my dear Major to carry the flag with me.

JENNY. Yes, yes, Major darling.

CUSINS [snatches the tambourine out of Jenny's hand and mutely offers it to Barbara].

BARBARA [coming forward a little as she puts the offer behind her with a shudder, whilst Cusins recklessly tosses the tambourine

back to Jenny and goes to the gate] I can't come.

JENNY. Not come!

MRS BAINES [with tears in her eyes] Barbara: do you think I am wrong to take the money?

BARBARA [impulsively going to her and kissing her] No, no: God help you, dear, you must: you are saving the Army. Go; and may you have a great meeting!

JENNY. But arn't you coming?

BARBARA. No. [She begins taking off the silver brooch from her collar].

MRS BAINES. Barbara: what are you doing?

JENNY. Why are you taking your badge off? You can't be going to leave us, Major.

BARBARA [quietly] Father: come here.

UNDERSHAFT [coming to her] My dear! [Seeing that she is going to pin the badge on his collar, he retreats to the penthouse in some alarm].

BARBARA [following him] Don't be frightened. [She pins the badge on and steps back towards the table, showing him to the others] There! It's not much for 5000 pounds is it?

MRS BAINES. Barbara: if you won't come and pray with us, promise me you will pray for us.

BARBARA. I can't pray now. Perhaps I shall never pray again.

MRS BAINES. Barbara!

JENNY. Major!

BARBARA [almost delirious] I can't bear any more. Quick march!

CUSINS [calling to the procession in the street outside] Off we go. Play up, there! Immenso giubilo. [He gives the time with his drum; and the band strikes up the march, which rapidly becomes more distant as the procession moves briskly away].

MRS BAINES. I must go, dear. You're overworked: you will be all right tomorrow. We'll never lose you. Now Jenny: step out with the old flag. Blood and Fire! [She marches out through the gate with her flag].

JENNY. Glory Hallelujah! [flourishing her tambourine and marching].

UNDERSHAFT [to Cusins, as he marches out past him easing the

slide of his trombone] "My ducats and my daughter"!

CUSINS [following him out] Money and gunpowder!

BARBARA. Drunkenness and Murder! My God: why hast thou forsaken me?

She sinks on the form with her face buried in her hands. The march passes away into silence. Bill Walker steals across to her.

BILL [taunting] Wot prawce Selvytion nah?

SHIRLEY. Don't you hit her when she's down.

BILL. She it me wen aw wiz dahn. Waw shouldn't I git a bit o me own back?

BARBARA [raising her head] I didn't take your money, Bill. [She crosses the yard to the gate and turns her back on the two men to hide her face from them].

BILL [sneering after her] Naow, it warn't enough for you. [Turning to the drum, he misses the money]. Ellow! If you ain't took it summun else az. Were's it gorn? Blame me if Jenny Ill didn't take it arter all!

RUMMY [screaming at him from the loft] You lie, you dirty blackguard! Snobby Price pinched it off the drum wen e took ap iz cap. I was ap ere all the time an see im do it.

BILL. Wot! Stowl maw money! Waw didn't you call thief on him, you silly old mucker you?

RUMMY. To serve you aht for ittin me acrost the face. It's cost y'pahnd, that az. [Raising a paeon of squalid triumph] I done you. I'm even with you. I've ad it aht o y--. [Bill snatches up Shirley's mug and hurls it at her. She slams the loft door and vanishes. The mug smashes against the door and falls in fragments].

BILL [beginning to chuckle] Tell us, ole man, wot o'clock this morrun was it wen im as they call Snobby Prawce was sived?

BARBARA [turning to him more composedly, and with unspoiled sweetness] About half past twelve, Bill. And he pinched your pound at a quarter to two. I know. Well, you can't afford to lose it. I'll send it to you.

BILL [his voice and accent suddenly improving] Not if I was to starve for it. I ain't to be bought.

SHIRLEY. Ain't you? You'd sell yourself to the devil for a pint o beer; ony there ain't no devil to make the offer.

BILL [unshamed] So I would, mate, and often av, cheerful. But she cawn't buy me. [Approaching Barbara] You wanted my soul, did you?

Well, you ain't got it.

BARBARA. I nearly got it, Bill. But we've sold it back to you for ten thousand pounds.

SHIRLEY. And dear at the money!

BARBARA. No, Peter: it was worth more than money.

BILL [salvationproof] It's no good: you cawn't get rahnd me nah. I don't blieve in it; and I've seen today that I was right. [Going] So long, old soupkitchener! Ta, ta, Major Earl's Grendorter! [Turning at the gate] Wot prawce Selvytion nah? Snobby Prawce! Ha! ha!

BARBARA [offering her hand] Goodbye, Bill.

BILL [taken aback, half plucks his cap off then shoves it on again defiantly] Git aht. [Barbara drops her hand, discouraged. He has a twinge of remorse]. But thet's aw rawt, you knaow. Nathink pasnl. Naow mellice. So long, Judy. [He goes].

BARBARA. No malice. So long, Bill.

SHIRLEY [shaking his head] You make too much of him, miss, in your innocence.

BARBARA [going to him] Peter: I'm like you now. Cleaned out, and lost my job.

SHIRLEY. You've youth an hope. That's two better than me. That's hope for you.

BARBARA. I'll get you a job, Peter, the youth will have to be enough for me. [She counts her money]. I have just enough left for two teas at Lockharts, a Rowton doss for you, and my tram and bus home. [He frowns and rises with offended pride. She takes his arm]. Don't be proud, Peter: it's sharing between friends. And promise me you'll talk to me and not let me cry. [She draws him towards the gate].

SHIRLEY. Well, I'm not accustomed to talk to the like of you--

BARBARA [urgently] Yes, yes: you must talk to me. Tell me about Tom Paine's books and Bradlaugh's lectures. Come along.

SHIRLEY. Ah, if you would only read Tom Paine in the proper spirit, miss! [They go out through the gate together].

ACT III

Next day after lunch Lady Britomart is writing in the library in Wilton Crescent. Sarah is reading in the armchair near the window. Barbara, in ordinary dress, pale and brooding, is on the

settee. Charley Lomax enters. Coming forward between the settee and the writing table, he starts on seeing Barbara fashionably attired and in low spirits.

LOMAX. You've left off your uniform!

Barbara says nothing; but an expression of pain passes over her face.

LADY BRITOMART [warning him in low tones to be careful] Charles!

LOMAX [much concerned, sitting down sympathetically on the settee beside Barbara] I'm awfully sorry, Barbara. You know I helped you all I could with the concertina and so forth. [Momentously] Still, I have never shut my eyes to the fact that there is a certain amount of tosh about the Salvation Army. Now the claims of the Church of England--

LADY BRITOMART. That's enough, Charles. Speak of something suited to your mental capacity.

LOMAX. But surely the Church of England is suited to all our capacities.

BARBARA [pressing his hand] Thank you for your sympathy, Cholly. Now go and spoon with Sarah.

LOMAX [rising and going to Sarah] How is my ownest today?

SARAH. I wish you wouldn't tell Cholly to do things, Barbara. He always comes straight and does them. Cholly: we're going to the works at Perivale St. Andrews this afternoon.

LOMAX. What works?

SARAH. The cannon works.

LOMAX. What! Your governor's shop!

SARAH. Yes.

LOMAX. Oh I say!

Cusins enters in poor condition. He also starts visibly when he sees Barbara without her uniform.

BARBARA. I expected you this morning, Dolly. Didn't you guess that?

CUSINS [sitting down beside her] I'm sorry. I have only just breakfasted.

SARAH. But we've just finished lunch.

BARBARA. Have you had one of your bad nights?

CUSINS. No: I had rather a good night: in fact, one of the most remarkable nights I have ever passed.

BARBARA. The meeting?

CUSINS. No: after the meeting.

LADY BRITOMART. You should have gone to bed after the meeting. What were you doing?

CUSINS. Drinking.

LADY BRITOMART. {Adolphus!
SARAH. {Dolly!
BARBARA. {Dolly!
LOMAX. {Oh I say!

LADY BRITOMART. What were you drinking, may I ask?

CUSINS. A most devilish kind of Spanish burgundy, warranted free from added alcohol: a Temperance burgundy in fact. Its richness in natural alcohol made any addition superfluous.

BARBARA. Are you joking, Dolly?

CUSINS [patiently] No. I have been making a night of it with the nominal head of this household: that is all.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew made you drunk!

CUSINS. No: he only provided the wine. I think it was Dionysos who made me drunk. [To Barbara] I told you I was possessed.

LADY BRITOMART. You're not sober yet. Go home to bed at once.

CUSINS. I have never before ventured to reproach you, Lady Brit; but how could you marry the Prince of Darkness?

LADY BRITOMART. It was much more excusable to marry him than to get drunk with him. That is a new accomplishment of Andrew's, by the way. He usen't to drink.

CUSINS. He doesn't now. He only sat there and completed the wreck of my moral basis, the rout of my convictions, the purchase of my soul. He cares for you, Barbara. That is what makes him so dangerous to me.

BARBARA. That has nothing to do with it, Dolly. There are larger loves and diviner dreams than the fireside ones. You know that, don't you?

CUSINS. Yes: that is our understanding. I know it. I hold to it. Unless he can win me on that holier ground he may amuse me for a while; but he can get no deeper hold, strong as he is.

BARBARA. Keep to that; and the end will be right. Now tell me

what happened at the meeting?

CUSINS. It was an amazing meeting. Mrs Baines almost died of emotion. Jenny Hill went stark mad with hysteria. The Prince of Darkness played his trombone like a madman: its brazen roarings were like the laughter of the damned. 117 conversions took place then and there. They prayed with the most touching sincerity and gratitude for Bodger, and for the anonymous donor of the 5000 pounds. Your father would not let his name be given.

LOMAX. That was rather fine of the old man, you know. Most chaps would have wanted the advertisement.

CUSINS. He said all the charitable institutions would be down on him like kites on a battle field if he gave his name.

LADY BRITOMART. That's Andrew all over. He never does a proper thing without giving an improper reason for it.

CUSINS. He convinced me that I have all my life been doing improper things for proper reasons.

LADY BRITOMART. Adolphus: now that Barbara has left the Salvation Army, you had better leave it too. I will not have you playing that drum in the streets.

CUSINS. Your orders are already obeyed, Lady Brit.

BARBARA. Dolly: were you ever really in earnest about it? Would you have joined if you had never seen me?

CUSINS [disingenuously] Well--er--well, possibly, as a collector of religions--

LOMAX [cunningly] Not as a drummer, though, you know. You are a very clearheaded brainy chap, Cholly; and it must have been apparent to you that there is a certain amount of tosh about--

LADY BRITOMART. Charles: if you must drivell, drivell like a grown-up man and not like a schoolboy.

LOMAX [out of countenance] Well, drivell is drivell, don't you know, whatever a man's age.

LADY BRITOMART. In good society in England, Charles, men drivell at all ages by repeating silly formulas with an air of wisdom. Schoolboys make their own formulas out of slang, like you. When they reach your age, and get political private secretaryships and things of that sort, they drop slang and get their formulas out of The Spectator or The Times. You had better confine yourself to The Times. You will find that there is a certain amount of tosh about The Times; but at least its language is reputable.

LOMAX [overwhelmed] You are so awfully strong-minded, Lady Brit--

LADY BRITOMART. Rubbish! [Morrison comes in]. What is it?

MORRISON. If you please, my lady, Mr Undershaft has just drove up to the door.

LADY BRITOMART. Well, let him in. [Morrison hesitates]. What's the matter with you?

MORRISON. Shall I announce him, my lady; or is he at home here, so to speak, my lady?

LADY BRITOMART. Announce him.

MORRISON. Thank you, my lady. You won't mind my asking, I hope. The occasion is in a manner of speaking new to me.

LADY BRITOMART. Quite right. Go and let him in.

MORRISON. Thank you, my lady. [He withdraws].

LADY BRITOMART. Children: go and get ready. [Sarah and Barbara go upstairs for their out-of-door wrap]]. Charles: go and tell Stephen to come down here in five minutes: you will find him in the drawing room. [Charles goes]. Adolphus: tell them to send round the carriage in about fifteen minutes. [Adolphus goes].

MORRISON [at the door] Mr Undershaft.

Undershaft comes in. Morrison goes out.

UNDERSHAFT. Alone! How fortunate!

LADY BRITOMART [rising] Don't be sentimental, Andrew. Sit down. [She sits on the settee: he sits beside her, on her left. She comes to the point before he has time to breathe]. Sarah must have 800 pounds a year until Charles Lomax comes into his property. Barbara will need more, and need it permanently, because Adolphus hasn't any property.

UNDERSHAFT [resignedly] Yes, my dear: I will see to it. Anything else? for yourself, for instance?

LADY BRITOMART. I want to talk to you about Stephen.

UNDERSHAFT [rather wearily] Don't, my dear. Stephen doesn't interest me.

LADY BRITOMART. He does interest me. He is our son.

UNDERSHAFT. Do you really think so? He has induced us to bring him into the world; but he chose his parents very incongruously, I think. I see nothing of myself in him, and less of you.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew: Stephen is an excellent son, and a most steady, capable, highminded young man. YOU are simply trying to find an excuse for disinheriting him.

UNDERSHAFT. My dear Biddy: the Undershaft tradition disinherits him. It would be dishonest of me to leave the cannon foundry to my son.

LADY BRITOMART. It would be most unnatural and improper of you to leave it to anyone else, Andrew. Do you suppose this wicked and immoral tradition can be kept up for ever? Do you pretend that Stephen could not carry on the foundry just as well as all the other sons of the big business houses?

UNDERSHAFT. Yes: he could learn the office routine without understanding the business, like all the other sons; and the firm would go on by its own momentum until the real Undershaft--probably an Italian or a German--would invent a new method and cut him out.

LADY BRITOMART. There is nothing that any Italian or German could do that Stephen could not do. And Stephen at least has breeding.

UNDERSHAFT. The son of a foundling! nonsense!

LADY BRITOMART. My son, Andrew! And even you may have good blood in your veins for all you know.

UNDERSHAFT. True. Probably I have. That is another argument in favor of a foundling.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew: don't be aggravating. And don't be wicked. At present you are both.

UNDERSHAFT. This conversation is part of the Undershaft tradition, Biddy. Every Undershaft's wife has treated him to it ever since the house was founded. It is mere waste of breath. If the tradition be ever broken it will be for an abler man than Stephen.

LADY BRITOMART [pouting] Then go away.

UNDERSHAFT [deprecatory] Go away!

LADY BRITOMART. Yes: go away. If you will do nothing for Stephen, you are not wanted here. Go to your foundling, whoever he is; and look after him.

UNDERSHAFT. The fact is, Biddy--

LADY BRITOMART. Don't call me Biddy. I don't call you Andy.

UNDERSHAFT. I will not call my wife Britomart: it is not good sense. Seriously, my love, the Undershaft tradition has landed me in a difficulty. I am getting on in years; and my partner Lazarus has at last made a stand and insisted that the succession must be settled one way or the other; and of course he is quite right. You see, I haven't found a fit successor yet.

LADY BRITOMART [obstinately] There is Stephen.

UNDERSHAFT. That's just it: all the foundlings I can find are exactly like Stephen.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew!!

UNDERSHAFT. I want a man with no relations and no schooling: that is, a man who would be out of the running altogether if he were not a strong man. And I can't find him. Every blessed foundling nowadays is snapped up in his infancy by Barnardo homes, or School Board officers, or Boards of Guardians; and if he shows the least ability, he is fastened on by schoolmasters; trained to win scholarships like a racehorse; crammed with secondhand ideas; drilled and disciplined in docility and what they call good taste; and lamed for life so that he is fit for nothing but teaching. If you want to keep the foundry in the family, you had better find an eligible foundling and marry him to Barbara.

LADY BRITOMART. Ah! Barbara! Your pet! You would sacrifice Stephen to Barbara.

UNDERSHAFT. Cheerfully. And you, my dear, would boil Barbara to make soup for Stephen.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew: this is not a question of our likings and dislikings: it is a question of duty. It is your duty to make Stephen your successor.

UNDERSHAFT. Just as much as it is your duty to submit to your husband. Come, Biddy! these tricks of the governing class are of no use with me. I am one of the governing class myself; and it is waste of time giving tracts to a missionary. I have the power in this matter; and I am not to be humbugged into using it for your purposes.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew: you can talk my head off; but you can't change wrong into right. And your tie is all on one side. Put it straight.

UNDERSHAFT [disconcerted] It won't stay unless it's pinned [he fumbles at it with childish grimaces]--

Stephen comes in.

STEPHEN [at the door] I beg your pardon [about to retire].

LADY BRITOMART. No: come in, Stephen. [Stephen comes forward to his mother's writing table.

UNDERSHAFT [not very cordially] Good afternoon.

STEPHEN [coldly] Good afternoon.

UNDERSHAFT [to Lady Britomart] He knows all about the tradition, I suppose?

LADY BRITOMART. Yes. [To Stephen] It is what I told you last night, Stephen.

UNDERSHAFT [sulkily] I understand you want to come into the cannon business.

STEPHEN. _I_ go into trade! Certainly not.

UNDERSHAFT [opening his eyes, greatly eased in mind and manner] Oh! in that case--!

LADY BRITOMART. Cannons are not trade, Stephen. They are enterprise.

STEPHEN. I have no intention of becoming a man of business in any sense. I have no capacity for business and no taste for it. I intend to devote myself to politics.

UNDERSHAFT [rising] My dear boy: this is an immense relief to me. And I trust it may prove an equally good thing for the country. I was afraid you would consider yourself disparaged and slighted. [He moves towards Stephen as if to shake hands with him].

LADY BRITOMART [rising and interposing] Stephen: I cannot allow you to throw away an enormous property like this.

STEPHEN [stiffly] Mother: there must be an end of treating me as a child, if you please. [Lady Britomart recoils, deeply wounded by his tone]. Until last night I did not take your attitude seriously, because I did not think you meant it seriously. But I find now that you left me in the dark as to matters which you should have explained to me years ago. I am extremely hurt and offended. Any further discussion of my intentions had better take place with my father, as between one man and another.

LADY BRITOMART. Stephen! [She sits down again; and her eyes fill with tears].

UNDERSHAFT [with grave compassion] You see, my dear, it is only the big men who can be treated as children.

STEPHEN. I am sorry, mother, that you have forced me--

UNDERSHAFT [stopping him] Yes, yes, yes, yes: that's all right, Stephen. She wont interfere with you any more: your independence is achieved: you have won your latchkey. Don't rub it in; and above all, don't apologize. [He resumes his seat]. Now what about your future, as between one man and another--I beg your pardon, Biddy: as between two men and a woman.

LADY BRITOMART [who has pulled herself together strongly] I quite understand, Stephen. By all means go your own way if you feel strong enough. [Stephen sits down magisterially in the chair at the writing table with an air of affirming his majority].

UNDERSHAFT. It is settled that you do not ask for the succession

to the cannon business.

STEPHEN. I hope it is settled that I repudiate the cannon business.

UNDERSHAFT. Come, come! Don't be so devilishly sulky: it's boyish. Freedom should be generous. Besides, I owe you a fair start in life in exchange for disinheriting you. You can't become prime minister all at once. Haven't you a turn for something? What about literature, art and so forth?

STEPHEN. I have nothing of the artist about me, either in faculty or character, thank Heaven!

UNDERSHAFT. A philosopher, perhaps? Eh?

STEPHEN. I make no such ridiculous pretension.

UNDERSHAFT. Just so. Well, there is the army, the navy, the Church, the Bar. The Bar requires some ability. What about the Bar?

STEPHEN. I have not studied law. And I am afraid I have not the necessary push--I believe that is the name barristers give to their vulgarity--for success in pleading.

UNDERSHAFT. Rather a difficult case, Stephen. Hardly anything left but the stage, is there? [Stephen makes an impatient movement]. Well, come! is there anything you know or care for?

STEPHEN [rising and looking at him steadily] I know the difference between right and wrong.

UNDERSHAFT [hugely tickled] You don't say so! What! no capacity for business, no knowledge of law, no sympathy with art, no pretension to philosophy; only a simple knowledge of the secret that has puzzled all the philosophers, baffled all the lawyers, muddled all the men of business, and ruined most of the artists: the secret of right and wrong. Why, man, you're a genius, master of masters, a god! At twenty-four, too!

STEPHEN [keeping his temper with difficulty] You are pleased to be facetious. I pretend to nothing more than any honorable English gentleman claims as his birthright [he sits down angrily].

UNDERSHAFT. Oh, that's everybody's birthright. Look at poor little Jenny Hill, the Salvation lassie! she would think you were laughing at her if you asked her to stand up in the street and teach grammar or geography or mathematics or even drawingroom dancing; but it never occurs to her to doubt that she can teach morals and religion. You are all alike, you respectable people. You can't tell me the bursting strain of a ten-inch gun, which is a very simple matter; but you all think you can tell me the bursting strain of a man under temptation. You daren't handle high explosives; but you're all ready to handle honesty and

truth and justice and the whole duty of man, and kill one another at that game. What a country! what a world!

LADY BRITOMART [uneasily] What do you think he had better do, Andrew?

UNDERSHAFT. Oh, just what he wants to do. He knows nothing; and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career. Get him a private secretaryship to someone who can get him an Under Secretaryship; and then leave him alone. He will find his natural and proper place in the end on the Treasury bench.

STEPHEN [springing up again] I am sorry, sir, that you force me to forget the respect due to you as my father. I am an Englishman; and I will not hear the Government of my country insulted. [He thrusts his hands in his pockets, and walks angrily across to the window].

UNDERSHAFT [with a touch of brutality] The government of your country! I am the government of your country: I, and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus? No, my friend: you will do what pays US. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesn't. You will find out that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman. Government of your country! Be off with you, my boy, and play with your caucuses and leading articles and historic parties and great leaders and burning questions and the rest of your toys. I am going back to my counting house to pay the piper and call the tune.

STEPHEN [actually smiling, and putting his hand on his father's shoulder with indulgent patronage] Really, my dear father, it is impossible to be angry with you. You don't know how absurd all this sounds to ME. You are very properly proud of having been industrious enough to make money; and it is greatly to your credit that you have made so much of it. But it has kept you in circles where you are valued for your money and deferred to for it, instead of in the doubtless very oldfashioned and behind-the-times public school and university where I formed my habits of mind. It is natural for you to think that money governs England; but you must allow me to think I know better.

UNDERSHAFT. And what does govern England, pray?

STEPHEN. Character, father, character.

UNDERSHAFT. Whose character? Yours or mine?

STEPHEN. Neither yours nor mine, father, but the best elements in the English national character.

UNDERSHAFT. Stephen: I've found your profession for you. You're a born journalist. I'll start you with a hightoned weekly review. There!

Stephen goes to the smaller writing table and busies himself with his letters.

Sarah, Barbara, Lomax, and Cusins come in ready for walking. Barbara crosses the room to the window and looks out. Cusins drifts amiably to the armchair, and Lomax remains near the door, whilst Sarah comes to her mother.

SARAH. Go and get ready, mamma: the carriage is waiting. [Lady Britomart leaves the room.]

UNDERSHAFT [to Sarah] Good day, my dear. Good afternoon, Mr. Lomax.

LOMAX [vaguely] Ahdedoo.

UNDERSHAFT [to Cusins] quite well after last night, Euripides, eh?

CUSINS. As well as can be expected.

UNDERSHAFT. That's right. [To Barbara] So you are coming to see my death and devastation factory, Barbara?

BARBARA [at the window] You came yesterday to see my salvation factory. I promised you a return visit.

LOMAX [coming forward between Sarah and Undershaft] You'll find it awfully interesting. I've been through the Woolwich Arsenal; and it gives you a ripping feeling of security, you know, to think of the lot of beggars we could kill if it came to fighting. [To Undershaft, with sudden solemnity] Still, it must be rather an awful reflection for you, from the religious point of view as it were. You're getting on, you know, and all that.

SARAH. You don't mind Cholly's imbecility, papa, do you?

LOMAX [much taken aback] Oh I say!

UNDERSHAFT. Mr Lomax looks at the matter in a very proper spirit, my dear.

LOMAX. Just so. That's all I meant, I assure you.

SARAH. Are you coming, Stephen?

STEPHEN. Well, I am rather busy--er-- [Magnanimously] Oh well, yes: I'll come. That is, if there is room for me.

UNDERSHAFT. I can take two with me in a little motor I am experimenting with for field use. You won't mind its being rather unfashionable. It's not painted yet; but it's bullet proof.

LOMAX [appalled at the prospect of confronting Wilton Crescent in an unpainted motor] Oh I say!

SARAH. The carriage for me, thank you. Barbara doesn't mind what she's seen in.

LOMAX. I say, Dolly old chap: do you really mind the car being a guy? Because of course if you do I'll go in it. Still--

CUSINS. I prefer it.

LOMAX. Thanks awfully, old man. Come, Sarah. [He hurries out to secure his seat in the carriage. Sarah follows him].

CUSINS. [moodily walking across to Lady Britomart's writing table] Why are we two coming to this Works Department of Hell? that is what I ask myself.

BARBARA. I have always thought of it as a sort of pit where lost creatures with blackened faces stirred up smoky fires and were driven and tormented by my father? Is it like that, dad?

UNDERSHAFT [scandalized] My dear! It is a spotlessly clean and beautiful hillside town.

CUSINS. With a Methodist chapel? Oh do say there's a Methodist chapel.

UNDERSHAFT. There are two: a primitive one and a sophisticated one. There is even an Ethical Society; but it is not much patronized, as my men are all strongly religious. In the High Explosives Sheds they object to the presence of Agnostics as unsafe.

CUSINS. And yet they don't object to you!

BARBARA. Do they obey all your orders?

UNDERSHAFT. I never give them any orders. When I speak to one of them it is "Well, Jones, is the baby doing well? and has Mrs Jones made a good recovery?" "Nicely, thank you, sir." And that's all.

CUSINS. But Jones has to be kept in order. How do you maintain discipline among your men?

UNDERSHAFT. I don't. They do. You see, the one thing Jones won't stand is any rebellion from the man under him, or any assertion of social equality between the wife of the man with 4 shillings a week less than himself and Mrs Jones! Of course they all rebel against me, theoretically. Practically, every man of them keeps the man just below him in his place. I never meddle with them. I

never bully them. I don't even bully Lazarus. I say that certain things are to be done; but I don't order anybody to do them. I don't say, mind you, that there is no ordering about and snubbing and even bullying. The men snub the boys and order them about; the carmen snub the sweepers; the artisans snub the unskilled laborers; the foremen drive and bully both the laborers and artisans; the assistant engineers find fault with the foremen; the chief engineers drop on the assistants; the departmental managers worry the chiefs; and the clerks have tall hats and hymnbooks and keep up the social tone by refusing to associate on equal terms with anybody. The result is a colossal profit, which comes to me.

CUSINS [revolted] You really are a--well, what I was saying yesterday.

BARBARA. What was he saying yesterday?

UNDERSHAFT. Never mind, my dear. He thinks I have made you unhappy. Have I?

BARBARA. Do you think I can be happy in this vulgar silly dress? I! who have worn the uniform. Do you understand what you have done to me? Yesterday I had a man's soul in my hand. I set him in the way of life with his face to salvation. But when we took your money he turned back to drunkenness and derision. [With intense conviction] I will never forgive you that. If I had a child, and you destroyed its body with your explosives--if you murdered Dolly with your horrible guns--I could forgive you if my forgiveness would open the gates of heaven to you. But to take a human soul from me, and turn it into the soul of a wolf! that is worse than any murder.

UNDERSHAFT. Does my daughter despair so easily? Can you strike a man to the heart and leave no mark on him?

BARBARA [her face lighting up] Oh, you are right: he can never be lost now: where was my faith?

CUSINS. Oh, clever clever devil!

BARBARA. You may be a devil; but God speaks through you sometimes. [She takes her father's hands and kisses them]. You have given me back my happiness: I feel it deep down now, though my spirit is troubled.

UNDERSHAFT. You have learnt something. That always feels at first as if you had lost something.

BARBARA. Well, take me to the factory of death, and let me learn something more. There must be some truth or other behind all this frightful irony. Come, Dolly. [She goes out].

CUSINS. My guardian angel! [To Undershaft] Avaunt! [He follows Barbara].

STEPHEN [quietly, at the writing table] You must not mind Cusins, father. He is a very amiable good fellow; but he is a Greek scholar and naturally a little eccentric.

UNDERSHAFT. Ah, quite so. Thank you, Stephen. Thank you. [He goes out].

Stephen smiles patronizingly; buttons his coat responsibly; and crosses the room to the door. Lady Britomart, dressed for out-of-doors, opens it before he reaches it. She looks round far the others; looks at Stephen; and turns to go without a word.

STEPHEN [embarrassed] Mother--

LADY BRITOMART. Don't be apologetic, Stephen. And don't forget that you have outgrown your mother. [She goes out].

Perivale St Andrews lies between two Middlesex hills, half climbing the northern one. It is an almost smokeless town of white walls, roofs of narrow green slates or red tiles, tall trees, domes, campaniles, and slender chimney shafts, beautifully situated and beautiful in itself. The best view of it is obtained from the crest of a slope about half a mile to the east, where the high explosives are dealt with. The foundry lies hidden in the depths between, the tops of its chimneys sprouting like huge skittles into the middle distance. Across the crest runs a platform of concrete, with a parapet which suggests a fortification, because there is a huge cannon of the obsolete Woolwich Infant pattern peering across it at the town. The cannon is mounted on an experimental gun carriage: possibly the original model of the Undershaft disappearing rampart gun alluded to by Stephen. The parapet has a high step inside which serves as a seat.

Barbara is leaning over the parapet, looking towards the town. On her right is the cannon; on her left the end of a shed raised on piles, with a ladder of three or four steps up to the door, which opens outwards and has a little wooden landing at the threshold, with a fire bucket in the corner of the landing. The parapet stops short of the shed, leaving a gap which is the beginning of the path down the hill through the foundry to the town. Behind the cannon is a trolley carrying a huge conical bombshell, with a red band painted on it. Further from the parapet, on the same side, is a deck chair, near the door of an office, which, like the sheds, is of the lightest possible construction.

Cusins arrives by the path from the town.

BARBARA. Well?

CUSINS. Not a ray of hope. Everything perfect, wonderful, real. It only needs a cathedral to be a heavenly city instead of a hellish one.

BARBARA. Have you found out whether they have done anything for old Peter Shirley.

CUSINS. They have found him a job as gatekeeper and timekeeper. He's frightfully miserable. He calls the timekeeping brainwork, and says he isn't used to it; and his gate lodge is so splendid that he's ashamed to use the rooms, and skulks in the scullery.

BARBARA. Poor Peter!

Stephen arrives from the town. He carries a fieldglass.

STEPHEN [enthusiastically] Have you two seen the place? Why did you leave us?

CUSINS. I wanted to see everything I was not intended to see; and Barbara wanted to make the men talk.

STEPHEN. Have you found anything discreditable?

CUSINS. No. They call him Dandy Andy and are proud of his being a cunning old rascal; but it's all horribly, frightfully, immorally, unanswerably perfect.

Sarah arrives.

SARAH. Heavens! what a place! [She crosses to the trolley]. Did you see the nursing home!? [She sits down on the shell].

STEPHEN. Did you see the libraries and schools!?

SARAH. Did you see the ballroom and the banqueting chamber in the Town Hall!?

STEPHEN. Have you gone into the insurance fund, the pension fund, the building society, the various applications of co-operation!?

Undershaft comes from the office, with a sheaf of telegrams in his hands.

UNDERSHAFT. Well, have you seen everything? I'm sorry I was called away. [Indicating the telegrams] News from Manchuria.

STEPHEN. Good news, I hope.

UNDERSHAFT. Very.

STEPHEN. Another Japanese victory?

UNDERSHAFT. Oh, I don't know. Which side wins does not concern us here. No: the good news is that the aerial battleship is a tremendous success. At the first trial it has wiped out a fort with three hundred soldiers in it.

CUSINS [from the platform] Dummy soldiers?

UNDERSHAFT. No: the real thing. [Cusins and Barbara exchange glances. Then Cusins sits on the step and buries his face in his

hands. Barbara gravely lays her hand on his shoulder, and he looks up at her in a sort of whimsical desperation]. Well, Stephen, what do you think of the place?

STEPHEN. Oh, magnificent. A perfect triumph of organization. Frankly, my dear father, I have been a fool: I had no idea of what it all meant--of the wonderful forethought, the power of organization, the administrative capacity, the financial genius, the colossal capital it represents. I have been repeating to myself as I came through your streets "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than War." I have only one misgiving about it all.

UNDERSHAFT. Out with it.

STEPHEN. Well, I cannot help thinking that all this provision for every want of your workmen may sap their independence and weaken their sense of responsibility. And greatly as we enjoyed our tea at that splendid restaurant--how they gave us all that luxury and cake and jam and cream for threepence I really cannot imagine!--still you must remember that restaurants break up home life. Look at the continent, for instance! Are you sure so much pampering is really good for the men's characters?

UNDERSHAFT. Well you see, my dear boy, when you are organizing civilization you have to make up your mind whether trouble and anxiety are good things or not. If you decide that they are, then, I take it, you simply don't organize civilization; and there you are, with trouble and anxiety enough to make us all angels! But if you decide the other way, you may as well go through with it. However, Stephen, our characters are safe here. A sufficient dose of anxiety is always provided by the fact that we may be blown to smithereens at any moment.

SARAH. By the way, papa, where do you make the explosives?

UNDERSHAFT. In separate little sheds, like that one. When one of them blows up, it costs very little; and only the people quite close to it are killed.

Stephen, who is quite close to it, looks at it rather scaredly, and moves away quickly to the cannon. At the same moment the door of the shed is thrown abruptly open; and a foreman in overalls and list slippers comes out on the little landing and holds the door open for Lomax, who appears in the doorway.

LOMAX [with studied coolness] My good fellow: you needn't get into a state of nerves. Nothing's going to happen to you; and I suppose it wouldn't be the end of the world if anything did. A little bit of British pluck is what you want, old chap. [He descends and strolls across to Sarah].

UNDERSHAFT [to the foreman] Anything wrong, Bilton?

BILTON [with ironic calm] Gentleman walked into the high explosives shed and lit a cigaret, sir: that's all.

UNDERSHAFT. Ah, quite so. [To Lomax] Do you happen to remember what you did with the match?

LOMAX. Oh come! I'm not a fool. I took jolly good care to blow it out before I chucked it away.

BILTON. The top of it was red hot inside, sir.

LOMAX. Well, suppose it was! I didn't chuck it into any of your messes.

UNDERSHAFT. Think no more of it, Mr Lomax. By the way, would you mind lending me your matches?

LOMAX [offering his box] Certainly.

UNDERSHAFT. Thanks. [He pockets the matches].

LOMAX [lecturing to the company generally] You know, these high explosives don't go off like gunpowder, except when they're in a gun. When they're spread loose, you can put a match to them without the least risk: they just burn quietly like a bit of paper. [Warming to the scientific interest of the subject] Did you know that Undershaft? Have you ever tried?

UNDERSHAFT. Not on a large scale, Mr Lomax. Bilton will give you a sample of gun cotton when you are leaving if you ask him. You can experiment with it at home. [Bilton looks puzzled].

SARAH. Bilton will do nothing of the sort, papa. I suppose it's your business to blow up the Russians and Japs; but you might really stop short of blowing up poor Cholly. [Bilton gives it up and retires into the shed].

LOMAX. My ownest, there is no danger. [He sits beside her on the shell].

Lady Britomart arrives from the town with a bouquet.

LADY BRITOMART [coming impetuously between Undershaft and the deck chair] Andrew: you shouldn't have let me see this place.

UNDERSHAFT. Why, my dear?

LADY BRITOMART. Never mind why: you shouldn't have: that's all. To think of all that [indicating the town] being yours! and that you have kept it to yourself all these years!

UNDERSHAFT. It does not belong to me. I belong to it. It is the Undershaft inheritance.

LADY BRITOMART. It is not. Your ridiculous cannons and that noisy banging foundry may be the Undershaft inheritance; but all that plate and linen, all that furniture and those houses and orchards and gardens belong to us. They belong to me: they are not a man's

business. I won't give them up. You must be out of your senses to throw them all away; and if you persist in such folly, I will call in a doctor.

UNDERSHAFT [stooping to smell the bouquet] Where did you get the flowers, my dear?

LADY BRITOMART. Your men presented them to me in your William Morris Labor Church.

CUSINS [springing up] Oh! It needed only that. A Labor Church!

LADY BRITOMART. Yes, with Morris's words in mosaic letters ten feet high round the dome. NO MAN IS GOOD ENOUGH TO BE ANOTHER MAN'S MASTER. The cynicism of it!

UNDERSHAFT. It shocked the men at first, I am afraid. But now they take no more notice of it than of the ten commandments in church.

LADY BRITOMART. Andrew: you are trying to put me off the subject of the inheritance by profane jokes. Well, you shan't. I don't ask it any longer for Stephen: he has inherited far too much of your perversity to be fit for it. But Barbara has rights as well as Stephen. Why should not Adolphus succeed to the inheritance? I could manage the town for him; and he can look after the cannons, if they are really necessary.

UNDERSHAFT. I should ask nothing better if Adolphus were a foundling. He is exactly the sort of new blood that is wanted in English business. But he's not a foundling; and there's an end of it.

CUSINS [diplomatically] Not quite. [They all turn and stare at him. He comes from the platform past the shed to Undershaft]. I think--Mind! I am not committing myself in any way as to my future course--but I think the foundling difficulty can be got over.

UNDERSHAFT. What do you mean?

CUSINS. Well, I have something to say which is in the nature of a confession.

SARAH.	{	
LADY BRITOMART.	{	Confession!
BARBARA.	{	
STEPHEN.	{	

LOMAX. Oh I say!

CUSINS. Yes, a confession. Listen, all. Until I met Barbara I thought myself in the main an honorable, truthful man, because I wanted the approval of my conscience more than I wanted anything else. But the moment I saw Barbara, I wanted her far more than the approval of my conscience.

LADY BRITOMART. Adolphus!

CUSINS. It is true. You accused me yourself, Lady Brit, of joining the Army to worship Barbara; and so I did. She bought my soul like a flower at a street corner; but she bought it for herself.

UNDERSHAFT. What! Not for Dionysos or another?

CUSINS. Dionysos and all the others are in herself. I adored what was divine in her, and was therefore a true worshipper. But I was romantic about her too. I thought she was a woman of the people, and that a marriage with a professor of Greek would be far beyond the wildest social ambitions of her rank.

LADY BRITOMART. Adolphus!!

LOMAX. Oh I say!!!

CUSINS. When I learnt the horrible truth--

LADY BRITOMART. What do you mean by the horrible truth, pray?

CUSINS. That she was enormously rich; that her grandfather was an earl; that her father was the Prince of Darkness--

UNDERSHAFT. Chut!

CUSINS.--and that I was only an adventurer trying to catch a rich wife, then I stooped to deceive about my birth.

LADY BRITOMART. Your birth! Now Adolphus, don't dare to make up a wicked story for the sake of these wretched cannons. Remember: I have seen photographs of your parents; and the Agent General for South Western Australia knows them personally and has assured me that they are most respectable married people.

CUSINS. So they are in Australia; but here they are outcasts. Their marriage is legal in Australia, but not in England. My mother is my father's deceased wife's sister; and in this island I am consequently a foundling. [Sensation]. Is the subterfuge good enough, Machiavelli?

UNDERSHAFT [thoughtfully] Bidy: this may be a way out of the difficulty.

LADY BRITOMART. Stuff! A man can't make cannons any the better for being his own cousin instead of his proper self [she sits down in the deck chair with a bounce that expresses her downright contempt for their casuistry.]

UNDERSHAFT [to Cusins] You are an educated man. That is against the tradition.

CUSINS. Once in ten thousand times it happens that the schoolboy

is a born master of what they try to teach him. Greek has not destroyed my mind: it has nourished it. Besides, I did not learn it at an English public school.

UNDERSHAFT. Hm! Well, I cannot afford to be too particular: you have cornered the foundling market. Let it pass. You are eligible, Euripides: you are eligible.

BARBARA [coming from the platform and interposing between Cusins and Undershaft] Dolly: yesterday morning, when Stephen told us all about the tradition, you became very silent; and you have been strange and excited ever since. Were you thinking of your birth then?

CUSINS. When the finger of Destiny suddenly points at a man in the middle of his breakfast, it makes him thoughtful. [Barbara turns away sadly and stands near her mother, listening perturbedly].

UNDERSHAFT. Aha! You have had your eye on the business, my young friend, have you?

CUSINS. Take care! There is an abyss of moral horror between me and your accursed aerial battleships.

UNDERSHAFT. Never mind the abyss for the present. Let us settle the practical details and leave your final decision open. You know that you will have to change your name. Do you object to that?

CUSINS. Would any man named Adolphus--any man called Dolly!--object to be called something else?

UNDERSHAFT. Good. Now, as to money! I propose to treat you handsomely from the beginning. You shall start at a thousand a year.

CUSINS. [with sudden heat, his spectacles twinkling with mischief] A thousand! You dare offer a miserable thousand to the son-in-law of a millionaire! No, by Heavens, Machiavelli! you shall not cheat me. You cannot do without me; and I can do without you. I must have two thousand five hundred a year for two years. At the end of that time, if I am a failure, I go. But if I am a success, and stay on, you must give me the other five thousand.

UNDERSHAFT. What other five thousand?

CUSINS. To make the two years up to five thousand a year. The two thousand five hundred is only half pay in case I should turn out a failure. The third year I must have ten per cent on the profits.

UNDERSHAFT [taken aback] Ten per cent! Why, man, do you know what my profits are?

CUSINS. Enormous, I hope: otherwise I shall require twenty-five per cent.

UNDERSHAFT. But, Mr Cusins, this is a serious matter of business. You are not bringing any capital into the concern.

CUSINS. What! no capital! Is my mastery of Greek no capital? Is my access to the subtlest thought, the loftiest poetry yet attained by humanity, no capital? my character! my intellect! my life! my career! what Barbara calls my soul! are these no capital? Say another word; and I double my salary.

UNDERSHAFT. Be reasonable--

CUSINS [peremptorily] Mr Undershaft: you have my terms. Take them or leave them.

UNDERSHAFT [recovering himself] Very well. I note your terms; and I offer you half.

CUSINS [disgusted] Half!

UNDERSHAFT [firmly] Half.

CUSINS. You call yourself a gentleman; and you offer me half!!

UNDERSHAFT. I do not call myself a gentleman; but I offer you half.

CUSINS. This to your future partner! your successor! your son-in-law!

BARBARA. You are selling your own soul, Dolly, not mine. Leave me out of the bargain, please.

UNDERSHAFT. Come! I will go a step further for Barbara's sake. I will give you three fifths; but that is my last word.

CUSINS. Done!

LOMAX. Done in the eye. Why, I only get eight hundred, you know.

CUSINS. By the way, Mac, I am a classical scholar, not an arithmetical one. Is three fifths more than half or less?

UNDERSHAFT. More, of course.

CUSINS. I would have taken two hundred and fifty. How you can succeed in business when you are willing to pay all that money to a University don who is obviously not worth a junior clerk's wages!--well! What will Lazarus say?

UNDERSHAFT. Lazarus is a gentle romantic Jew who cares for nothing but string quartets and stalls at fashionable theatres. He will get the credit of your rapacity in money matters, as he

has hitherto had the credit of mine. You are a shark of the first order, Euripides. So much the better for the firm!

BARBARA. Is the bargain closed, Dolly? Does your soul belong to him now?

CUSINS. No: the price is settled: that is all. The real tug of war is still to come. What about the moral question?

LADY BRITOMART. There is no moral question in the matter at all, Adolphus. You must simply sell cannons and weapons to people whose cause is right and just, and refuse them to foreigners and criminals.

UNDERSHAFT [determinedly] No: none of that. You must keep the true faith of an Armorer, or you don't come in here.

CUSINS. What on earth is the true faith of an Armorer?

UNDERSHAFT. To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect of persons or principles: to aristocrat and republican, to Nihilist and Tsar, to Capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man white man and yellow man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all causes and all crimes. The first Undershaft wrote up in his shop IF GOD GAVE THE HAND, LET NOT MAN WITHHOLD THE SWORD. The second wrote up ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FIGHT: NONE HAVE THE RIGHT TO JUDGE. The third wrote up TO MAN THE WEAPON: TO HEAVEN THE VICTORY. The fourth had no literary turn; so he did not write up anything; but he sold cannons to Napoleon under the nose of George the Third. The fifth wrote up PEACE SHALL NOT PREVAIL SAVE WITH A SWORD IN HER HAND. The sixth, my master, was the best of all. He wrote up NOTHING IS EVER DONE IN THIS WORLD UNTIL MEN ARE PREPARED TO KILL ONE ANOTHER IF IT IS NOT DONE. After that, there was nothing left for the seventh to say. So he wrote up, simply, UNASHAMED.

CUSINS. My good Machiavelli, I shall certainly write something up on the wall; only, as I shall write it in Greek, you won't be able to read it. But as to your Armorer's faith, if I take my neck out of the noose of my own morality I am not going to put it into the noose of yours. I shall sell cannons to whom I please and refuse them to whom I please. So there!

UNDERSHAFT. From the moment when you become Andrew Undershaft, you will never do as you please again. Don't come here lusting for power, young man.

CUSINS. If power were my aim I should not come here for it. YOU have no power.

UNDERSHAFT. None of my own, certainly.

CUSINS. I have more power than you, more will. You do not drive this place: it drives you. And what drives the place?

UNDERSHAFT [enigmatically] A will of which I am a part.

BARBARA [startled] Father! Do you know what you are saying; or are you laying a snare for my soul?

CUSINS. Don't listen to his metaphysics, Barbara. The place is driven by the most rascally part of society, the money hunters, the pleasure hunters, the military promotion hunters; and he is their slave.

UNDERSHAFT. Not necessarily. Remember the Armorer's Faith. I will take an order from a good man as cheerfully as from a bad one. If you good people prefer preaching and shirking to buying my weapons and fighting the rascals, don't blame me. I can make cannons: I cannot make courage and conviction. Bah! You tire me, Euripides, with your morality mongering. Ask Barbara: SHE understands. [He suddenly takes Barbara's hands, and looks powerfully into her eyes]. Tell him, my love, what power really means.

BARBARA [hypnotized] Before I joined the Salvation Army, I was in my own power; and the consequence was that I never knew what to do with myself. When I joined it, I had not time enough for all the things I had to do.

UNDERSHAFT [approvingly] Just so. And why was that, do you suppose?

BARBARA. Yesterday I should have said, because I was in the power of God. [She resumes her self-possession, withdrawing her hands from his with a power equal to his own]. But you came and showed me that I was in the power of Bodger and Undershaft. Today I feel--oh! how can I put it into words? Sarah: do you remember the earthquake at Cannes, when we were little children?--how little the surprise of the first shock mattered compared to the dread and horror of waiting for the second? That is how I feel in this place today. I stood on the rock I thought eternal; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me. I was safe with an infinite wisdom watching me, an army marching to Salvation with me; and in a moment, at a stroke of your pen in a cheque book, I stood alone; and the heavens were empty. That was the first shock of the earthquake: I am waiting for the second.

UNDERSHAFT. Come, come, my daughter! Don't make too much of your little tinpot tragedy. What do we do here when we spend years of work and thought and thousands of pounds of solid cash on a new gun or an aerial battleship that turns out just a hairsbreadth wrong after all? Scrap it. Scrap it without wasting another hour or another pound on it. Well, you have made for yourself something that you call a morality or a religion or what not. It doesn't fit the facts. Well, scrap it. Scrap it and get one that does fit. That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions. What's the result? In machinery it does very well; but in morals and religion and

politics it is working at a loss that brings it nearer bankruptcy every year. Don't persist in that folly. If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and a better one for tomorrow.

BARBARA. Oh how gladly I would take a better one to my soul! But you offer me a worse one. [Turning on him with sudden vehemence]. Justify yourself: show me some light through the darkness of this dreadful place, with its beautifully clean workshops, and respectable workmen, and model homes.

UNDERSHAFT. Cleanliness and respectability do not need justification, Barbara: they justify themselves. I see no darkness here, no dreadfulness. In your Salvation shelter I saw poverty, misery, cold and hunger. You gave them bread and treacle and dreams of heaven. I give from thirty shillings a week to twelve thousand a year. They find their own dreams; but I look after the drainage.

BARBARA. And their souls?

UNDERSHAFT. I save their souls just as I saved yours.

BARBARA [revolted] You saved my soul! What do you mean?

UNDERSHAFT. I fed you and clothed you and housed you. I took care that you should have money enough to live handsomely--more than enough; so that you could be wasteful, careless, generous. That saved your soul from the seven deadly sins.

BARBARA [bewildered] The seven deadly sins!

UNDERSHAFT. Yes, the deadly seven. [Counting on his fingers] Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from Man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted. I lifted them from your spirit. I enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara; and I saved her from the crime of poverty.

CUSINS. Do you call poverty a crime?

UNDERSHAFT. The worst of crimes. All the other crimes are virtues beside it: all the other dishonors are chivalry itself by comparison. Poverty blights whole cities; spreads horrible pestilences; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing: a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then: what do they matter? they are only the accidents and illnesses of life: there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill fed, ill clothed people. They poison us morally and physically: they kill the happiness of society: they force us to do away with our own liberties and to organize unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us and drag us down into their abyss. Only fools fear crime: we all fear poverty. Pah! [turning on Barbara] you talk of your half-saved ruffian in West Ham: you accuse me of dragging his soul back to perdition.

Well, bring him to me here; and I will drag his soul back again to salvation for you. Not by words and dreams; but by thirty-eight shillings a week, a sound house in a handsome street, and a permanent job. In three weeks he will have a fancy waistcoat; in three months a tall hat and a chapel sitting; before the end of the year he will shake hands with a duchess at a Primrose League meeting, and join the Conservative Party.

BARBARA. And will he be the better for that?

UNDERSHAFT. You know he will. Don't be a hypocrite, Barbara. He will be better fed, better housed, better clothed, better behaved; and his children will be pounds heavier and bigger. That will be better than an American cloth mattress in a shelter, chopping firewood, eating bread and treacle, and being forced to kneel down from time to time to thank heaven for it: knee drill, I think you call it. It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms. Try your hand on my men: their souls are hungry because their bodies are full.

BARBARA. And leave the east end to starve?

UNDERSHAFT [his energetic tone dropping into one of bitter and brooding remembrance] I was an east ender. I moralized and starved until one day I swore that I would be a fullfed free man at all costs--that nothing should stop me except a bullet, neither reason nor morals nor the lives of other men. I said "Thou shalt starve ere I starve"; and with that word I became free and great. I was a dangerous man until I had my will: now I am a useful, beneficent, kindly person. That is the history of most self-made millionaires, I fancy. When it is the history of every Englishman we shall have an England worth living in.

LADY BRITOMART. Stop making speeches, Andrew. This is not the place for them.

UNDERSHAFT [punctured] My dear: I have no other means of conveying my ideas.

LADY BRITOMART. Your ideas are nonsense. You got oil because you were selfish and unscrupulous.

UNDERSHAFT. Not at all. I had the strongest scruples about poverty and starvation. Your moralists are quite unscrupulous about both: they make virtues of them. I had rather be a thief than a pauper. I had rather be a murderer than a slave. I don't want to be either; but if you force the alternative on me, then, by Heaven, I'll choose the braver and more moral one. I hate poverty and slavery worse than any other crimes whatsoever. And let me tell you this. Poverty and slavery have stood up for centuries to your sermons and leading articles: they will not stand up to my machine guns. Don't preach at them: don't reason with them. Kill them.

BARBARA. Killing. Is that your remedy for everything?

UNDERSHAFT. It is the final test of conviction, the only lever strong enough to overturn a social system, the only way of saying Must. Let six hundred and seventy fools loose in the street; and three policemen can scatter them. But huddle them together in a certain house in Westminster; and let them go through certain ceremonies and call themselves certain names until at last they get the courage to kill; and your six hundred and seventy fools become a government. Your pious mob fills up ballot papers and imagines it is governing its masters; but the ballot paper that really governs is the paper that has a bullet wrapped up in it.

CUSINS. That is perhaps why, like most intelligent people, I never vote.

UNDERSHAFT Vote! Bah! When you vote, you only change the names of the cabinet. When you shoot, you pull down governments, inaugurate new epochs, abolish old orders and set up new. Is that historically true, Mr Learned Man, or is it not?

CUSINS. It is historically true. I loathe having to admit it. I repudiate your sentiments. I abhor your nature. I defy you in every possible way. Still, it is true. But it ought not to be true.

UNDERSHAFT. Ought, ought, ought, ought, ought! Are you going to spend your life saying ought, like the rest of our moralists? Turn your oughts into shalls, man. Come and make explosives with me. Whatever can blow men up can blow society up. The history of the world is the history of those who had courage enough to embrace this truth. Have you the courage to embrace it, Barbara?

LADY BRITOMART. Barbara, I positively forbid you to listen to your father's abominable wickedness. And you, Adolphus, ought to know better than to go about saying that wrong things are true. What does it matter whether they are true if they are wrong?

UNDERSHAFT. What does it matter whether they are wrong if they are true?

LADY BRITOMART [rising] Children: come home instantly. Andrew: I am exceedingly sorry I allowed you to call on us. You are wickedder than ever. Come at once.

BARBARA [shaking her head] It's no use running away from wicked people, mamma.

LADY BRITOMART. It is every use. It shows your disapprobation of them.

BARBARA. It does not save them.

LADY BRITOMART. I can see that you are going to disobey me. Sarah: are you coming home or are you not?

SARAH. I daresay it's very wicked of papa to make cannons; but I don't think I shall cut him on that account.

LOMAX [pouring oil on the troubled waters] The fact is, you know, there is a certain amount of tosh about this notion of wickedness. It doesn't work. You must look at facts. Not that I would say a word in favor of anything wrong; but then, you see, all sorts of chaps are always doing all sorts of things; and we have to fit them in somehow, don't you know. What I mean is that you can't go cutting everybody; and that's about what it comes to. [Their rapt attention to his eloquence makes him nervous] Perhaps I don't make myself clear.

LADY BRITOMART. You are lucidity itself, Charles. Because Andrew is successful and has plenty of money to give to Sarah, you will flatter him and encourage him in his wickedness.

LOMAX [unruffled] Well, where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered, don't you know. [To Undershaft] Eh? What?

UNDERSHAFT. Precisely. By the way, may I call you Charles?

LOMAX. Delighted. Cholly is the usual ticket.

UNDERSHAFT [to Lady Britomart] Biddy--

LADY BRITOMART [violently] Don't dare call me Biddy. Charles Lomax: you are a fool. Adolphus Cusins: you are a Jesuit. Stephen: you are a prig. Barbara: you are a lunatic. Andrew: you are a vulgar tradesman. Now you all know my opinion; and my conscience is clear, at all events [she sits down again with a vehemence that almost wrecks the chair].

UNDERSHAFT. My dear, you are the incarnation of morality. [She snorts]. Your conscience is clear and your duty done when you have called everybody names. Come, Euripides! it is getting late; and we all want to get home. Make up your mind.

CUSINS. Understand this, you old demon--

LADY BRITOMART. Adolphus!

UNDERSHAFT. Let him alone, Biddy. Proceed, Euripides.

CUSINS. You have me in a horrible dilemma. I want Barbara.

UNDERSHAFT. Like all young men, you greatly exaggerate the difference between one young woman and another.

BARBARA. Quite true, Dolly.

CUSINS. I also want to avoid being a rascal.

UNDERSHAFT [with biting contempt] You lust for personal righteousness, for self-approval, for what you call a good conscience, for what Barbara calls salvation, for what I call

patronizing people who are not so lucky as yourself.

CUSINS. I do not: all the poet in me recoils from being a good man. But there are things in me that I must reckon with: pity--

UNDERSHAFT. Pity! The scavenger of misery.

CUSINS. Well, love.

UNDERSHAFT. I know. You love the needy and the outcast: you love the oppressed races, the negro, the Indian ryot, the Pole, the Irishman. Do you love the Japanese? Do you love the Germans? Do you love the English?

CUSINS. No. Every true Englishman detests the English. We are the wickedest nation on earth; and our success is a moral horror.

UNDERSHAFT. That is what comes of your gospel of love, is it?

CUSINS. May I not love even my father-in-law?

UNDERSHAFT. Who wants your love, man? By what right do you take the liberty of offering it to me? I will have your due heed and respect, or I will kill you. But your love! Damn your impertinence!

CUSINS [grinning] I may not be able to control my affections, Mac.

UNDERSHAFT. You are fencing, Euripides. You are weakening: your grip is slipping. Come! try your last weapon. Pity and love have broken in your hand: forgiveness is still left.

CUSINS. No: forgiveness is a beggar's refuge. I am with you there: we must pay our debts.

UNDERSHAFT. Well said. Come! you will suit me. Remember the words of Plato.

CUSINS [starting] Plato! You dare quote Plato to me!

UNDERSHAFT. Plato says, my friend, that society cannot be saved until either the Professors of Greek take to making gunpowder, or else the makers of gunpowder become Professors of Greek.

CUSINS. Oh, tempter, cunning tempter!

UNDERSHAFT. Come! choose, man, choose.

CUSINS. But perhaps Barbara will not marry me if I make the wrong choice.

BARBARA. Perhaps not.

CUSINS [desperately perplexed] You hear--

BARBARA. Father: do you love nobody?

UNDERSHAFT. I love my best friend.

LADY BRITOMART. And who is that, pray?

UNDERSHAFT. My bravest enemy. That is the man who keeps me up to the mark.

CUSINS. You know, the creature is really a sort of poet in his way. Suppose he is a great man, after all!

UNDERSHAFT. Suppose you stop talking and make up your mind, my young friend.

CUSINS. But you are driving me against my nature. I hate war.

UNDERSHAFT. Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated. Dare you make war on war? Here are the means: my friend Mr Lomax is sitting on them.

LOMAX [springing up] Oh I say! You don't mean that this thing is loaded, do you? My ownest: come off it.

SARAH [sitting placidly on the shell] If I am to be blown up, the more thoroughly it is done the better. Don't fuss, Cholly.

LOMAX [to Undershaft, strongly remonstrant] Your own daughter, you know.

UNDERSHAFT. So I see. [To Cusins] Well, my friend, may we expect you here at six tomorrow morning?

CUSINS [firmly] Not on any account. I will see the whole establishment blown up with its own dynamite before I will get up at five. My hours are healthy, rational hours eleven to five.

UNDERSHAFT. Come when you please: before a week you will come at six and stay until I turn you out for the sake of your health. [Calling] Bilton! [He turns to Lady Britomart, who rises]. My dear: let us leave these two young people to themselves for a moment. [Bilton comes from the shed]. I am going to take you through the gun cotton shed.

BILTON [barring the way] You can't take anything explosive in here, Sir.

LADY BRITOMART. What do you mean? Are you alluding to me?

BILTON [unmoved] No, ma'am. Mr Undershaft has the other gentleman's matches in his pocket.

LADY BRITOMART [abruptly] Oh! I beg your pardon. [She goes into the shed].

UNDERSHAFT. Quite right, Bilton, quite right: here you are. [He

gives Bilton the box of matches]. Come, Stephen. Come, Charles. Bring Sarah. [He passes into the shed].

Bilton opens the box and deliberately drops the matches into the fire-bucket.

LOMAX. Oh I say! [Bilton stolidly hands him the empty box]. Infernal nonsense! Pure scientific ignorance! [He goes in].

SARAH. Am I all right, Bilton?

BILTON. You'll have to put on list slippers, miss: that's all. We've got em inside. [She goes in].

STEPHEN [very seriously to Cusins] Dolly, old fellow, think. Think before you decide. Do you feel that you are a sufficiently practical man? It is a huge undertaking, an enormous responsibility. All this mass of business will be Greek to you.

CUSINS. Oh, I think it will be much less difficult than Greek.

STEPHEN. Well, I just want to say this before I leave you to yourselves. Don't let anything I have said about right and wrong prejudice you against this great chance in life. I have satisfied myself that the business is one of the highest character and a credit to our country. [Emotionally] I am very proud of my father. I-- [Unable to proceed, he presses Cusins' hand and goes hastily into the shed, followed by Bilton].

Barbara and Cusins, left alone together, look at one another silently.

CUSINS. Barbara: I am going to accept this offer.

BARBARA. I thought you would.

CUSINS. You understand, don't you, that I had to decide without consulting you. If I had thrown the burden of the choice on you, you would sooner or later have despised me for it.

BARBARA. Yes: I did not want you to sell your soul for me any more than for this inheritance.

CUSINS. It is not the sale of my soul that troubles me: I have sold it too often to care about that. I have sold it for a professorship. I have sold it for an income. I have sold it to escape being imprisoned for refusing to pay taxes for hangmen's ropes and unjust wars and things that I abhor. What is all human conduct but the daily and hourly sale of our souls for trifles? What I am now selling it for is neither money nor position nor comfort, but for reality and for power.

BARBARA. You know that you will have no power, and that he has none.

CUSINS. I know. It is not for myself alone. I want to make power

for the world.

BARBARA. I want to make power for the world too; but it must be spiritual power.

CUSINS. I think all power is spiritual: these cannons will not go off by themselves. I have tried to make spiritual power by teaching Greek. But the world can never be really touched by a dead language and a dead civilization. The people must have power; and the people cannot have Greek. Now the power that is made here can be wielded by all men.

BARBARA. Power to burn women's houses down and kill their sons and tear their husbands to pieces.

CUSINS. You cannot have power for good without having power for evil too. Even mother's milk nourishes murderers as well as heroes. This power which only tears men's bodies to pieces has never been so horribly abused as the intellectual power, the imaginative power, the poetic, religious power that can enslave men's souls. As a teacher of Greek I gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man. I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyer, the doctor, the priest, the literary man, the professor, the artist, and the politician, who, once in authority, are the most dangerous, disastrous, and tyrannical of all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a democratic power strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good or else perish.

BARBARA. Is there no higher power than that [pointing to the shell]?

CUSINS. Yes: but that power can destroy the higher powers just as a tiger can destroy a man: therefore man must master that power first. I admitted this when the Turks and Greeks were last at war. My best pupil went out to fight for Hellas. My parting gift to him was not a copy of Plato's Republic, but a revolver and a hundred Undershaft cartridges. The blood of every Turk he shot--if he shot any--is on my head as well as on Undershaft's. That act committed me to this place for ever. Your father's challenge has beaten me. Dare I make war on war? I dare. I must. I will. And now, is it all over between us?

BARBARA [touched by his evident dread of her answer] Silly baby Dolly! How could it be?

CUSINS [overjoyed] Then you--you--you-- Oh for my drum! [He flourishes imaginary drumsticks].

BARBARA [angered by his levity] Take care, Dolly, take care. Oh, if only I could get away from you and from father and from it all! if I could have the wings of a dove and fly away to heaven!

CUSINS. And leave me!

BARBARA. Yes, you, and all the other naughty mischievous children of men. But I can't. I was happy in the Salvation Army for a moment. I escaped from the world into a paradise of enthusiasm and prayer and soul saving; but the moment our money ran short, it all came back to Bodger: it was he who saved our people: he, and the Prince of Darkness, my papa. Undershaft and Bodger: their hands stretch everywhere: when we feed a starving fellow creature, it is with their bread, because there is no other bread; when we tend the sick, it is in the hospitals they endow; if we turn from the churches they build, we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave. As long as that lasts, there is no getting away from them. Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life.

CUSINS. I thought you were determined to turn your back on the wicked side of life.

BARBARA. There is no wicked side: life is all one. And I never wanted to shirk my share in whatever evil must be endured, whether it be sin or suffering. I wish I could cure you of middle-class ideas, Dolly.

CUSINS [gasping] Middle class--! A snub! A social snub to ME! from the daughter of a foundling!

BARBARA. That is why I have no class, Dolly: I come straight out of the heart of the whole people. If I were middle-class I should turn my back on my father's business; and we should both live in an artistic drawingroom, with you reading the reviews in one corner, and I in the other at the piano, playing Schumann: both very superior persons, and neither of us a bit of use. Sooner than that, I would sweep out the guncotton shed, or be one of Bodger's barmaids. Do you know what would have happened if you had refused papa's offer?

CUSINS. I wonder!

BARBARA. I should have given you up and married the man who accepted it. After all, my dear old mother has more sense than any of you. I felt like her when I saw this place--felt that I must have it--that never, never, never could I let it go; only she thought it was the houses and the kitchen ranges and the linen and china, when it was really all the human souls to be saved: not weak souls in starved bodies, crying with gratitude or a scrap of bread and treacle, but fullfed, quarrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their little rights and dignities, and thinking that my father ought to be greatly obliged to them for making so much money for him--and so he ought. That is where salvation is really wanted. My father shall never throw it in my teeth again that my converts were bribed with bread. [She is transfigured]. I have got rid of the bribe of bread. I have got rid of the bribe of heaven. Let God's work be done for its own sake: the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done by living men and women. When I die, let him be in my debt, not I in his; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank.

CUSINS. Then the way of life lies through the factory of death?

BARBARA. Yes, through the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of The Shadow. [Seizing him with both hands] Oh, did you think my courage would never come back? did you believe that I was a deserter? that I, who have stood in the streets, and taken my people to my heart, and talked of the holiest and greatest things with them, could ever turn back and chatter foolishly to fashionable people about nothing in a drawingroom? Never, never, never, never: Major Barbara will die with the colors. Oh! and I have my dear little Dolly boy still; and he has found me my place and my work. Glory Hallelujah! [She kisses him].

CUSINS. My dearest: consider my delicate health. I cannot stand as much happiness as you can.

BARBARA. Yes: it is not easy work being in love with me, is it? But it's good for you. [She runs to the shed, and calls, childlike] Mamma! Mamma! [Bilton comes out of the shed, followed by Undershaft]. I want Mamma.

UNDERSHAFT. She is taking off her list slippers, dear. [He passes on to Cusins]. Well? What does she say?

CUSINS. She has gone right up into the skies.

LADY BRITOMART [coming from the shed and stopping on the steps, obstructing Sarah, who follows with Lomax. Barbara clutches like a baby at her mother's skirt]. Barbara: when will you learn to be independent and to act and think for yourself? I know as well as possible what that cry of "Mamma, Mamma," means. Always running to me!

SARAH [touching Lady Britomart's ribs with her finger tips and imitating a bicycle horn] Pip! Pip!

LADY BRITOMART [highly indignant] How dare you say Pip! pip! to me, Sarah? You are both very naughty children. What do you want, Barbara?

BARBARA. I want a house in the village to live in with Dolly. [Dragging at the skirt] Come and tell me which one to take.

UNDERSHAFT [to Cusins] Six o'clock tomorrow morning, my young friend.

<http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/george-bernard-shaw.shtml>

Do We Agree?

DO WE AGREE?

**A debate between G. K. Chesterton and George Bernard Shaw
with Hilaire Belloc in the chair**

A Prefatory Note

In justice to all concerned I feel it to be my duty to state frankly that this account of a public discussion between Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Shaw is something less than a verbatim report. But with some assistance from the debaters it has been possible to save enough from oblivion to justify publication.

Cecil Palmer

London, 1928

Mr. Belloc

I am here to take the chair in the debate between two men whom you desire to hear more than you could possibly desire to hear me. They will debate whether they agree or do not agree. From what I know of attempts at agreement between human beings there is a prospect of a very pretty fight. When men debate agreement between nations then you may be certain a disastrous war is on the horizon. I make an exception for the League of Nations, of which I know nothing. If the League of Nations could make a war it would be the only thing it ever has made.

I do not know what Mr. Chesterton is going to say. I do not know what Mr. Shaw is going to say. If I did I would not say it for them. I vaguely gather from what I have heard that they are going to try to discover a principle: whether men should be free to possess private means, as is Mr. Shaw, as is Mr. Chesterton; or should be, like myself, an embarrassed person, a publishers' hack. I could tell them; but my mouth is shut. I am not allowed to say what I think. At any rate, they are going to debate this sort of thing. I know not what more to say. They are about to debate. You are about to listen. I am about to sneer.

Mr. Shaw

Mr. Belloc, and Ladies and Gentlemen. Our subject this evening, "Do We Agree?" was an inspiration of Mr. Chesterton's. Some of you might reasonably wonder, if we agree, what we are going to debate about. But I suspect that

you do not really care much what we debate about provided we entertain you by talking in our characteristic manners.

The reason for this, though you may not know it — and it is my business to tell you — is that Mr. Chesterton and I are two madmen. Instead of doing honest and respectable work and behaving ourselves as ordinary citizens. we go about the world possessed by a strange gift of tongues — in my own case almost exclusively confined to the English language — uttering all sorts of extraordinary opinions for no reason whatever.

Mr. Chesterton tells and prints the most extravagant lies. He takes ordinary incidents of human life — commonplace middle-class life — and gives them a monstrous and strange and gigantic outline. He fills suburban gardens with the most impossible murders, and not only does he invent the murders but also succeeds in discovering the murderer who never committed the murders. I do very much the same sort of thing. I promulgate lies in the shape of plays; but whereas Mr. Chesterton takes events which you think ordinary and makes them gigantic and colossal to reveal their essential miraculousness, I am rather inclined to take these things in their utter commonplaceness, and yet to introduce among them outrageous ideas which scandalize the ordinary play-goer and send him away wondering whether he has been standing on his head all his life or whether I am standing on mine.

A man goes to see one of my plays and sits by his wife. Some apparently ordinary thing is said on the stage, and his wife says to him: “Aha! What do you think of that?” Two minutes later another apparently ordinary thing is said and the man turns to his wife and says to her: “Aha! What do you think of that?”

Curious, is it not, that we should go about doing these things and be tolerated and even largely admired for doing them? Of late years I might say that I have almost been revered for doing these things.

Obviously we are mad; and in the East we should be revered as madmen. The wisdom of the East says: “Let us listen to these men carefully; but let us not forget that they are madmen.”

In this country they say “Let us listen to these amusing chaps. They are perfectly sane, which we obviously are not.” Now there must be some reason for showing us all this consideration. There must be some force in nature which...

At this point the debate was interrupted by persistent knocking at the doors by

ticket-holders who had, through some misunderstanding, been locked out. On the chairman's intervention the doors were opened, and order was restored Mr. Shaw then proceeded.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I must go on because, as you see, if I don't begin to talk everybody else does. Now I was speaking of the curious respect in which mad people are held in the East and in this country. What I was leading up to is this, that it matters very little on what points they differ: they have all kinds of aberrations which rise out of their personal circumstances, out of their training out of their knowledge or ignorance. But if you listen to them carefully and find that at certain points they agree, then you have some reason for supposing that here the spirit of the age is coming through, and giving you an inspired message. Reject all the contradictory things they say and concentrate your attention on the things upon which they agree, and you may be listening to the voice of revelation.

You will do well to-night to listen attentively, because probably what is urging us to these utterances is not personal to ourselves but some conclusion to which all mankind is moving either by reason or by inspiration. The mere fact that Mr. Chesterton and I may agree upon any point may not at all prevent us from debating it passionately. I find that the people who fight me generally hold the very ideas I am trying to express. I do not know if it is because they resent the liberty I am taking or because they do not like the words I use or the twist of my mind; but they are the people who quarrel most with me.

You have at this moment a typical debate raging in the Press. You have a very pretty controversy going on in the Church of England between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Birmingham. I hope you have all read the admirable letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Everybody is pleased with that letter. It has the enormous virtue of being entirely good-humoured, of trying to make peace, of avoiding making mischief: a popular English virtue which is a credit to the English race. But it has another English quality which is a little more questionable, and that is the quality of being entirely anti-intellectual. The letter is a heartfelt appeal for ambiguity. You can imagine the Archbishop of Canterbury, if he were continuing the controversy in private, saying to the Bishop of Birmingham: "Now, my dear Barnes, let me recommend you to read that wonderful book, the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Read the history of the hero, Christian, no doubt a very splendid fellow, and from the literary point of view the only hero of romantic fiction resembling a real

man. But he is always fighting. He is out of one trouble into another. He is leading a terrible life. How different to that great Peacemaker, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways! Mr. Facing-Both-Ways has no history. Happy is the country that has no history; and happy, you may say, is the man who has no history; and Mr. Facing-Both-Ways in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is that man."

Bunyan, by the way, does not even mention Mr. Facing-Both Ways' extraordinary historical feat of drafting the Twenty-seventh Article of the Church of England. There being some very troublesome people for Elizabeth to deal with — Catholics and Puritans, for instance, quarrelling about Transubstantiation — Mr. Facing-Both Ways drafted an Article in two paragraphs. The first paragraph affirmed the doctrine of Transubstantiation. The second paragraph said it was an idle superstition. Then Queen Elizabeth was able to say "Now you are all satisfied; and you must all attend the Church of England. If you don't I will send you to prison."

But I am not for one moment going to debate the doctrine of Transubstantiation. I mention it only to show, by the controversy between the Archbishop and the Bishop, that in most debates you will find two types of mind playing with the same subject. There is one sort of mind that I think is my own sort. I sometimes call it the Irish mind, as distinct from the English mind. But that is only to make the English and Irish sit up and listen. Spengler talks not of Irish and English minds, but of the Greek, or Grecian mind, and the Gothic mind — the Faustian mind as he, being a German, calls it. And in this controversy you find that what is moving Bishop Barnes is a Grecian dislike of not knowing what it is he believes, and on the other side a Gothic instinctive feeling that it is perhaps just as well not to know too distinctly. I am not saying which is the better type of mind. I think on the whole both of them are pretty useful. But I always like to know what it is I am preaching. It gets me into trouble in England, where people say, "Why go into these matters? Why do you want to think so accurately and sharply?" I can only say that my head is built that way; but I protest that I do not claim any moral superiority because when I know what I mean the other people do not know what they mean, and very often do not know what I mean. And one subject on which I know what I mean is the opinion which has inevitably been growing up for the last hundred years or so, not so much an opinion as a revolt against the mis-distribution, the obviously monstrous and anomalous mis-distribution of wealth under what we call the capitalist system.

I have always, since I got clear on the subject of Socialism said, Don't put in the foreground the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange: you will never get there if you begin with them. You have to begin with the question of the distribution of wealth.

The other day a man died and the Government took four and a half million pounds as death duty on his property. That man made all his money by the labour of men who received twenty-six shillings a week after years of qualifying for their work. Was that a reasonable distribution of wealth between them? We are all coming to the opinion that it was not reasonable. What does Mr. Chesterton think about it? I want to know, not only because of the public importance of his opinions, but because I have always followed Mr. Chesterton with extraordinary interest and enjoyment, and his assent to any view of mine is a great personal pleasure, because I am very fond of Mr. Chesterton.

Mr. Chesterton has rejected Socialism nominally, probably because it is a rather stupid word. But he is a distributist, which means today a Redistributist. He has arrived by his own path at my own position. (Laughter.) I do not see why you should laugh: I cannot imagine anything more natural.

But now comes the question upon which I will ask Mr. Chesterton whether he agrees with me or not. The moment I made up my mind that the present distribution of wealth was wrong, the peculiar constitution of my brain obliged me to find out exactly how far it was wrong and what is the right distribution. I went through all the proposals ever made and through the arguments used in justification of the existing distribution; and I found they were utterly insensate and grotesque.

Eventually I was convinced that we ought to be tolerant of any sort of crime except unequal distribution of income. In organized society the question always arises at what point are we justified in killing for the good of the community. I should answer in this way. If you take two shillings as your share and another man wants two shillings and sixpence, kill him. Similarly, if a man accepts two shillings while you have two shillings and sixpence, kill him.

On the stroke of the hour, I ask Mr. Chesterton: "Do you agree with that?"

Mr. Chesterton

Ladies and gentlemen. The answer is in the negative. I don't agree with it. Nor does Mr. Shaw. He does not think, any more than I do, that all the people in this hall, who have already created some confusion, should increase the confusion by killing each other and searching each other's pockets to see whether there is half-a-crown or two shillings in them. As regards the general question, what I want to say is this: I should like to say to begin with that I have no intention of following Mr. Shaw into a discussion which would be very improper on my part on the condition of the Church of England. But since he has definitely challenged me on the point I will say — he will not agree — that Mr. Shaw is indeed a peacemaker and has reconciled both sides. For if the Arch bishop is anti-intellectual there will be nobody to pretend that the Bishop is intellectual.

Voice

Yes he is.

Mr. Chesterton

Now as to the much more interesting question, about a much more interesting person than Bishop Barnes — I mean Mr. Shaw — I should like to say that in a sense I can agree with him, in which case he can claim a complete victory. This is not a real controversy or debate. It is an enquiry, and I hope a profitable and interesting enquiry. Up to a point I quite agree with him, because I did start entirely by agreeing with him, as many years ago I began by being a Socialist, just as he was a Socialist. Barring some difference of age we were in the same position. We grew in beauty side by side. I will not say literally we filled one home with glee: but I do believe we have filled a fair number of homes with glee. Whether those homes included our own personal households it is for others to say. But up to a point I agreed with Mr. Shaw by being a Socialist, and I agreed upon grounds he has laid down with critical justice and lucidity, grounds which I can imagine nobody being such a fool as to deny: the distribution of property in the modern world is a monstrosity and a blasphemy. Thus I come to the important stage of the proceedings. I claim that I might agree with Mr. Shaw a step farther.

I have heard from nearly all the Socialists I have known, the phrase which Mr. Shaw has with characteristic artfulness avoided, a phrase which I think everyone will agree is common to collectivist philosophy, and the phrase is this: "that the means of production should be owned by the community." I ask you to note that phrase because it is really upon that that the whole question turns.

Now there is a sense in which I do agree with Mr. Bernard Shaw. There is a point up to which I would agree with that formula. So far as is possible under human conditions I should desire the community — or, as we used to call it in the old English language, The Commons — to own the means of production. So far, I say, you have Mr. Bernard Shaw and me walking in fact side by side in the flowery meads... But after that, alas! a change takes place. The change is owing to Mr. Shaw's vast superiority, to his powerful intellect. It is not my fault if he has remained young, while I have grown in comparison wrinkled and haggard, old and experienced, and acquainted with the elementary facts of human life.

Now the first thing I want to note is this. When you say the community ought to own the means of production, what do you mean? That is the whole point. There was a time when Mr. Shaw would probably have said in all sincerity that anything possessed by the State or the Government would be in fact possessed by the Commons: in other words, by the community. I do not wish to challenge Mr. Shaw about later remarks of his, but I doubt whether Mr. Shaw, in his eternal youth, still believes in democracy in that sense. I quite admit he has a more hopeful and hearty outlook in some respects, and he has even gone to the length of saying that if democracy will not do for mankind, perhaps it will do for some other creature different from mankind. He has almost proposed to invent a new animal, which might be supposed to live for 300 years. I am inclined to think that if Mr. Shaw lived for 300 years — and I heartily hope he will — I never knew a man more likely to do it — he would certainly agree with me. I would even undertake to prove it from the actual history of the last 300 years, but though I think it is probable I will not insist upon it. As a very profound philosopher has said, "You never can tell." And it may be that Mr. Shaw's immortal power of talking nonsense would survive even that 300 years and he would still be fixed in his unnatural theories in the matter.

Now I do not believe myself that Mr. Shaw thinks that the community,

in the sense of that state which owns and rules, the thing that issues postage stamps and provides policemen, I do not believe he thinks that that community is now, at this moment, identical with the Commons, and I do not believe he ready thinks that in his own socialistic state it would be identical. I am glad therefore that he has sufficient disordered common sense to perceive that, as a matter of fact, when you have vast systems, however just and however reasonably controlled, indirectly, by elaborate machinery of officials and other things, you do in fact find that those who rule are the few. It may be a good thing or a bad thing, but it is not true that all the people directly control. Collectivism has put all their eggs in one basket. I do not think that Mr. Shaw believes, or that anybody believes, that 12,000,000 men, say, carry the basket, or look after the basket, or have any real distributed control over the eggs in the basket. I believe that it is controlled from the centre by a few people. They may be quite right or quite necessary. A certain limit to that sort of control any sane man will recognise as necessary: it is not the same as the Commons controlling the means of production. It is a few oligarchs or a few officials who do in fact control all the means of production.

What Mr. Shaw means is not that all the people should control the means of production, but that the product should be distributed among the vast mass of the Commons, and that is quite a different thing. It is not controlling the means of production at all. If all the citizens had simply an equal share of the income of the State they would not have any control of the capital. That is where G. K. Chesterton differs from George Bernard Shaw. I begin at the other end. I do not think that a community arranged on the principles of Distributism and on nothing else would be a perfect community. All admit that the society that we propose is more a matter of proportion and arrangement than a perfectly clear system in which all production is pooled and the result given out in wages. But what I say is this: Let us, so far as is possible in the complicated affairs of humanity, put into the hands of the Commons the control of the means of production — and real control. The man who owns a piece of land controls it in a direct and real sense. He really owns the means of production. It is the same with a man who owns a piece of machinery. He can use it or not use it. Even a man who owns his own tools or works in his own workshop, to that extent owns and controls the means of production.

But if you establish right in the middle of the State one enormous machine,

if you turn the handle of that machine, and somebody, who must be an official, and therefore a ruler, distributes to everybody equally the food or whatever else is produced by that machine, no single one of any of these people receiving more than any other single person, but all equal fragments: that fulfils a definite ideal of equality, yet no single one of those citizens has any control over the means of production. They have no control whatever — unless you think that the prospect of voting about once every five years for Mr. Vanboodle — then a Socialist member — with the prospect that he will or will not make a promise to a political assembly or that he will or will not promise to ask a certain question which may or may not be answered — unless you think that by this means they possess control.

I have used the metaphor of the Collectivists of having all your eggs in one basket. Now there are men whom we are pleased to call bad eggs. They are not all of them in politics. On the other hand there are men who deserve the encomium of “good egg.” There are, in other words, a number of good men and a number of bad men scattered among the commonwealth.

To put the matter shortly, I might say that all this theory of absolutely equal mechanical distribution depends upon a sort of use of the passive mood. It is easy enough to say Property should be distributed, but who is, as it were, the subject of the verb? Who or what is to distribute? Now it is based on the idea that the central power which condescends to distribute will be permanently just, wise, sane, and representative of the conscience of the community which has created it.

That is what we doubt. We say there ought to be in the world a great mass of scattered powers, privileges, limits, points of resistance, so that the mass of the Commons may resist tyranny. And we say that there is a permanent possibility of that central direction, however much it may have been appointed to distribute money equally, becoming a tyranny. I do not think it would be difficult to suggest a way in which it could happen. As soon as any particular mob of people are behaving in some way which the governing group chooses to regard as anti-civic, supplies could be cut off easily with the approval of this governing group. You have only to call someone by some name like Bolshevist or Papist. You have only to tie some label on a set of people and the community will contentedly see these people starved into surrender.

We say the method to be adopted is the other method. We admit, frankly, that our method is in a sense imperfect, and only in that sense illogical. It is

imperfect, or illogical, because it corresponds to the variety and differences of human life. Mr. Shaw is making abstract diagrams of triangles, squares, and circles; we are trying to paint a portrait, the portrait of a man. We are trying to make our lines and colours follow the characteristics of the real object. Man desires certain things. He likes a certain amount of liberty, certain kinds of ownership, certain kinds of local affection, and won't be happy without them.

There are a great many other things that might be said, but I think it will be clearer if I repeat some of the things we have already said.

I do in that sense accept the propositions that the community should own the means of production, but I say that the Commons should own the means of production, and the only way to do that is to keep actual hold upon land. Mr. Bernard Shaw proposes to distribute wealth. We propose to distribute power.

Mr. Shaw

I cannot say that Mr. Chesterton has succeeded in forcing a difference of opinion on me. There are, I suppose, at least some people in this room who have heard me orating on this platform at lectures of the Fabian Society, and they must have been considerably amused at Mr. Chesterton's attempt to impress upon me what income is. My main activity as an economist of late has been to try to concentrate the attention of my party on the fact not only that they must distribute income, but that there is nothing else to distribute.

We must be perfectly clear as to what capital is. I will tell you. Capital is spare money. And, of course, spare money means spare food. If I happen to have more of the means of subsistence than I can use, I may take that part that is unconsumed, and say to another man: "Let me feed you whilst you produce some kind of contraption that will facilitate my work in future." But when the man has produced it for me, the capital has all gone: there is nothing left for me or him to eat. If he has made me a spade I cannot eat that spade.

I have said I may employ my spare subsistence in this way; but I must employ it so because it will not keep: if nobody eats it, it will go rotten. The only thing to be done with it is to have it promptly consumed. All that remains of it then is a figure in a ledger. Some of my capital was employed in the late war; and this country has still my name written down as the proprietor of the capital they blew to pieces in that war.

Having said that for your instruction, let us come down to facts. Mr.

Chesterton has formed the Distributist League which organized this meeting. What was the very first thing the League said must be done? It said the coal-mines must be nationalized. Instead of saying that the miner's means of production must be his own property, it was forced to advocate making national property of the coal mines. These coal-mines, when nationalized, will not be managed by the House of Commons: if they were you would very soon have no coal. But neither will they be managed by the miners. If you ask the man working in the mine to manage the mine he will say, "Not me, governor! That is your job."

I would like Mr. Chesterton to consider what he understands by the means of production. He has spoken of them in rather a nineteenth-century manner. He has been talking as though the means of production were machines. I submit to you that the real means of production in this country are men and women, and that consequently you always have the maximum control of the individual over the means of production, because it means self-control over his own person. But he must surrender that control to the manager of the mine because he does not know how to manage it himself. Under the present capitalistic system he has to surrender it to the manager appointed by the proprietors of the mine. Under Socialism he would have to surrender it to the manager appointed by the Coalmaster-General. That would not prevent the product of the mine being equally distributed among the people.

There is no difficulty here. In a sense Mr. Chesterton really does not disagree with me in this matter, since he does see that in the matter of fuel in this country you have to come to nationalization. Fuel must be controlled equally for the benefit of all the people. Since we agreed upon that, I am not disposed to argue the matter further. Now that Mr. Chesterton agreed that the coal-mines will have to be nationalized he will be led by the same pressure of facts to agree to the nationalization of everything else.

I have to allow for the pressure of facts because, as a playwright, I think of all problems in terms of actual men and women. Mr. Chesterton lets himself idealize them sometimes as virtuous peasant proprietors and self-managing petty capitalists.

The capitalist and the landlord have their own particular ways of robbing the poor; but their legal rights are quite different. It is a very direct way on the part of the landlord. He may do exactly what he likes with the land he owns. If I own a large part of Scotland I can turn the people off the land practically

into the sea, or across the sea. I can take women in child-bearing and throw them into the snow and leave them there. That has been done. I can do it for no better reason than I think it is better to shoot deer on the land than allow people to live on it. They might frighten the deer.

But now compare that with the ownership of my umbrella. As a matter of fact the umbrella I have to-night belongs to my wife; but I think she will permit me to call it mine for the purpose of the debate. Now I have a very limited legal right to the use of that umbrella. I cannot do as I like with it. For instance, certain passages in Mr. Chesterton's speech tempted me to get up and smite him over the head with my umbrella. I may presently feel inclined to smite Mr. Belloc. But should I abuse my right to do what I like with my property — with my umbrella — in this way I should soon be made aware — possibly by Mr. Belloc's fist — that I cannot treat my umbrella as my own property in the way in which a landlord can treat his land. I want to destroy ownership in order that possession and enjoyment may be raised to the highest point in every section of the community. That, I think, is perfectly simple.

There are points on which a landlord, even a Scottish landlord, and his tenant the crofter entirely agree. The landlord objects to being shot at sight. The Irish landlord used to object. His tenants sometimes took no notice of his objection, but all the same they had a very strong objection to being shot themselves. You have no objection to a State law being carried out vigorously that people shall not shoot one another. There is no difficulty in modern civilized States in having it carried out. If you could once convince the people that inequality of income is a greater social danger than murder, very few people would want to continue to commit it; and the State could suppress it with the assent of the community generally. We are always adding fresh crimes to the calendar. Why not enact that no person shall live in this community without pulling his weight in the social boat, without producing more than he consumes — because you have to provide for the accumulation of spare money as capital — who does not replace by his own labour what he takes out of the community, who attempts to live idly, as men are proud to live nowadays. Is there any greater difficulty in treating such a parasite as a malefactor, than in treating a murderer as a malefactor?

Having said that much about the property part of the business, I think I have succeeded in establishing that Mr. Chesterton does not disagree with me.

I should like to say I do not believe in Democracy. I do believe in Catholicism; but I hold that the Irish Episcopal Protestant Church, of which I was baptized a member, takes the name of Catholicism in vain; that the Roman Church has also taken it in vain; and so with the Greek Church and the rest. My Catholicism is really catholic Catholicism: that is what I believe in, as apart from this voting business and democracy. Does Mr. Chesterton agree with me on that?

Mr. Chesterton

Among the bewildering welter of fallacies which Mr. Shaw has just given us, I prefer to deal first with the simplest. When Mr. Shaw refrains from hitting me over the head with his umbrella, the real reason — apart from his real kindness of heart, which makes him tolerant of the humblest of the creatures of God — is not because he does not own his umbrella, but because he does not own my head. As I am still in possession of that imperfect organ, I will proceed to use it to the confutation of some of his other fallacies.

I should like to say now what I ought perhaps to have said earlier in the evening, that we are enormously grateful to Mr. Shaw for his characteristic generosity in consenting to debate with a humble movement like our own. I am so conscious of that condescension on his part that I should feel it a very unfair return to ask him to read any of our potty little literature or cast his eye over our little weekly paper or become conscious of the facts we have stated a thousand times. One of these facts, with which every person who knows us is familiar, is our position with regard to the coal question. We have said again and again that in our human state of society there must be a class of things called exceptions. We admit that upon the whole in the very peculiar case of coal it is desirable and about the best way out of the difficulty that it should be controlled by the officials of the State, just in the same way as postage stamps are controlled. No one says anything else about postage stamps. I cannot imagine that anyone wants to have his own postage stamps, of perhaps more picturesque design and varied colours. I can assure you that Distributists are perfectly sensible and sane people, and they have always recognized that there are institutions in the State in which it is very difficult to apply the principle of individual property, and that one of these cases is the discovery under the earth of valuable minerals. Socialists are not alone in believing this. Charles I, who, I suppose, could not be called a Socialist,

pointed out that certain kinds of minerals ought to belong to the State, that is, to the Commons. We have said over and over again that we support the nationalization of the coal-mines, not as a general example of Distribution but as a common-sense admission of an exception. The reason why we make it an exception is because it is not very easy to see how the healthy principle of personal ownership can be applied. If it could we should apply it with the greatest pleasure. We consider personal ownership infinitely more healthy. If there were a way in which a miner could mark out one particular piece of coal and say, "This is mine, and I am proud of it," we should have made an enormous improvement upon State management. There are cases in which it is very difficult to apply the principle, and that is one of them. It is the reverse of the truth for Mr. Shaw to say that the logic of that fact will lead me to the application of the same principle to other cases, like the ownership of the land. One could not illustrate it better than by the case of coal. It may be true for all I know that if you ask a miner if he would like to manage the mine he would say, "I do not want to manage it; it is for my betters to manage it." I had not noticed that meek and simple manner among miners. I have even heard complaints of the opposite temper in that body. I defy Mr. Shaw to say if you went to the Irish farmers, or the French farmers, or the Serbian or the Dutch farmers, or any of the millions of peasant owners throughout the world, I defy him to say if you went to the farmer and said, "Who controls these farms?" he would say, "It is not for the likes of me to control a farm." Mr. Shaw knows perfectly well it is nonsense to suggest that peasants would talk that way anywhere. It is part of his complaints against peasants that they claim personal possessions. I am not likely to be led to the denial of property in land, for I know ordinary normal people who feel property in land to be normal. I fully agree with Mr. Shaw, and speak as strongly as he would speak, of the abomination and detestable foulness and sin of landlords who drove poor people from their land in Scotland and elsewhere. It is quite true that men in possession of land have committed these crimes; but I do not see why wicked officials under a socialistic state could not commit these crimes. But that has nothing to do with the principle of ownership in land. In fact these very Highland crofters, these very people thus abominably outraged and oppressed, if you asked them what they want would probably say, "I want to own my own croft; I want to own my own land."

Mr. Shaw's dislike of the landlord is not so much a denial of the right to

private property. not so much that he owns the land, but that the landlord has swallowed up private property. In the face of these facts of millions and millions of ordinary human beings who have private property, who know what it is like to own property, I must confess that I am not overwhelmed and crushed by Mr. Shaw's claim that he knows all about men and women as they really are. I think Mr. Shaw knows something about certain kinds of men and women; though he sometimes makes them a little more amusing than they really are. But I cannot agree with his discovery that peasants do not like peasant property, because I know the reverse is the fact.

Then we come to the general point he raised about the State. He raised a very interesting question. He said that after all the State does command respect, that we all do accept laws even though they are issued by an official group. Up to a point I willingly accept his argument. The Distributist is certainly not an anarchist. He does not believe it would be a good thing if there were no such laws. But the reason why most of these laws are accepted is because they correspond with the common conscience of mankind. Mr. Shaw and Bishop Barnes might think it would be an inadequate way of explaining it, but we might call attention to an Hebraic code called the Ten Commandments. They do, I think, correspond pretty roughly to the moral code of every religion that is at all sane. These all reverence certain ideas about "Thou shalt not kill." They all have a reverence for the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." They reverence the idea that you must not covet his house or his ox or his ass. It should be noted, too, that besides forbidding us to covet our neighbour's property, this commandment also implies that every man has a right to own some property.

Mr. Shaw

I now want to ask Mr. Chesterton why he insists, on the point about the nationalization of the coal-mines — on which he agrees with me — that they are an exception. Are they an exception? In what way are the coal-mines an exception? What is the fundamental reason why you must nationalize your coal-mine? The reason is this. If you will go up to the constituency of Mr. Sidney Webb, to the Sunderland coast, you will be able to pick up coal for nothing, absolutely nothing at all. You see people doing it there. You take a perambulator, or barrow, or simple sack, and when the tide goes out you go out on the foreshore and pick up excellent coal. If you go to other parts of

England, like Whitehaven, you will find you have to go through workings driven out under the sea, which took 20 years to make, 20 years continual expenditure of capital before coal could be touched, where men going down the shaft have to travel sometimes two or three miles to their work. That is the reason at bottom why you cannot distribute your coal mine. The reason you have to pay such monstrous prices for your coal is they are fixed by the cost of making the submarine mines. People who have mines like the Sunderland foreshore naturally make colossal fortunes. Everyone can see at once that in order to have any kind of equable dealing in coal, the only way is to charge the citizens the average cost for the total national supply. You cannot average the cost by putting your eggs into different baskets. Now this is not the exception: it is the rule. You have exactly the same difference in the case of the land. You have land worth absolutely nothing at all and land worth a million an acre or more. And the acre worth more than a million and the acre worth nothing are within half-an-hour's drive in a taxi.

You cannot say that the coal-mine is an exception. The coal-mine is only one instance. Mr. Chesterton in arriving at the necessity for the nationalization of the coal-mines has started on his journey towards the nationalization of all the industries. If he goes on to the land, and from the land to the factory, and from there to every other industrial department, he will find that every successive case is an exception; and eventually he will have to say to himself: "I think it will be better to call nationalization the rule rather than the exception."

I must deny that I ever said that the coal-miner says he wants to be ruled by his betters. I may not be a democrat; but I am not a snob. Intellectually I am a snob, and you will admit that I have good ground for that. Socially I am not a snob. There is no question of betters at all in the matter. The manager is not better than the executant, nor the executant better than the manager. Both are equally necessary and equally honourable. But if you ask the executant to manage he will refuse on the ground that it is not his job; and vice versa.

Mr. Chesterton says he does not see why State officials under a system which recognises nationalization of land should not act as the old landlords acted. I should say, in the first place, they won't have the power. A State official does what he is instructed to do and paid to do, just as a landlord's agent does; and there is no more danger of the official making himself a landlord than there is now of the agent making himself one.

As to the instinct of owning — and you have it widely in the country — you have not got it in the towns. People are content to live in houses they do not own: when they possess them they often find them a great nuisance. But you must not conclude that because a miner would refuse to manage a mine a farmer will refuse to manage his farm. The farmer is himself a manager.

How does this wonderful system of peasant proprietorship work? Do you realise that it has to be broken up every day? The reason is that when a man owning a farm has a family, each son, when the farmer dies, has a right to an equal part of the land. They find that this arrangement is entirely impossible, and they have to make some other arrangement, and some of the sons have to go off into the towns to work. It is unthinkable that all could remain on the land: you cannot split up the land and give every person a bit of property.

I have stolen two minutes from Mr. Chesterton, and I apologise.

Mr. Chesterton

I am sure Mr. Shaw is very welcome to as many minutes as I can offer him, or anything else, for his kindness in entertaining us this evening. It is rather late now and there is not much time left for me. He has been rather slow in discovering what Distributism is and what the whole question is about. If this were the beginning of the discussion I could do over our system completely. I could tell him exactly what we think about property in towns. It is absurd to say it does not exist.

In rural ownership different problems have to be faced. We are not cutting a thing up into mathematical squares. We are trying to deal with human beings, creatures quite outside the purview of Mr. Shaw and his political philosophy. We know town people are a little different from country people; business of one kind is different from business of another kind; difficulties arise about family, and all the rest of it. We show man's irrepressible desire to own property and because some landlords have been cruel, it is no use talking of abolishing, denying, and destroying property, saying no one shall have any property at all. It is characteristic of his school, of his age. The morality he represents is above all the morality of negations. Just as it says you must not drink wine at all as the only solution to a few people drinking too much: just as it would say you must not touch meat or smoke tobacco at all. Let us always remember, therefore, that when Mr. Shaw says he can persuade all men to give up the sentiment of private property, it is in exactly the same

hopeful spirit that he says he will get all of you to give up meat, tobacco, beer, and a vast number of other things. He will not do anything of the sort and I suspect he himself suspects by this time that he will not do it. It is quite false to say you must have a centralised machinery, even in towns. It is quite false to say that all forces must be used, as they are in monopolies, from the centre. It is absurd to say that because the wind is a central thing you cannot separate windmills. How am I to explain all that in five minutes? I could go through a vast number of fallacies into which he has fallen. He said, ironically, he would like to see me go down a mine. I have no difficulty in imagining myself sinking in such a fashion in any geological deposit. I really should like to see him doing work on a farm, because he would find out about five hundred pieces of nonsense he has been speaking to be the nonsense they are.

It is absolutely fallacious to suggest that there is some sort of difficulty in peasantries whereby they are bound to disappear. The answer to that is that they have not disappeared. It is part of the very case against peasantry, among those who do not like them, that they are antiquated, covered with hoary superstition. Why have they remained through all these centuries, if they must immediately break up and become impossible? There is an answer to all that and I am quite prepared to give it at some greater length than five minutes. But at no time did I say that we must make the whole community a community of agricultural peasants. It is absurd. What I said was that a desire for property which is universal, everywhere, does appear in a perfect and working example in the ownership of land. It only remains for me to say one thing. Mr. Shaw said, in reference to the State owning the means of production, that men and women are the only means of production. I quite accept the parallel of the phrase. His proposition is that the government, the officials of the State, should own the men and women: in other words that the men and women should be slaves.

Mr. Belloc

I was told when I accepted this onerous office that I was to sum up. I shall do nothing of the sort. In a very few years from now this debate will be antiquated. I will now recite you a poem:

Our civilization
Is built upon coal.

Let us chant in rotation
Our civilization
That lump of damnation
Without any soul,
Our civilization
Is built upon coal.

“In a very few years,
It will float upon oil.
Then give three hearty cheers,
In a very few years
We shall mop up our tears
And have done with our toil.
In a very few years
It will float upon oil.

In I do not know how many years — five, ten, twenty — this debate will be as antiquated as crinolines are. I am surprised that neither of the two speakers pointed out that one of three things is going to happen. One of three things: not one of two. It is always one of three things. This industrial civilization which, thank God, oppresses only the small part of the world in which we are most inextricably bound up, will break down and therefore end from its monstrous wickedness, folly, ineptitude, leading to a restoration of sane, ordinary human affairs, complicated but based as a whole upon the freedom of the citizens. Or it will break down and lead to nothing but a desert. Or it will lead the mass of men to become contented slaves, with a few rich men controlling them. Take your choice. You will all be dead before any of the three things comes off. One of the three things is going to happen, or a mixture of two, or possibly a mixture of the three combined.

Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association

Paper Presented By: **Joseph L. Grabowski**

George Bernard Shaw (1909): **G.K. Chesterton's Contribution to the British Drama**

Session 1.7 – “G.K. Chesterton”

Area & Panel Chair: Jill Kriegel, *Florida Atlantic University*

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During the first decade of the twentieth century, George Bernard Shaw was a dazzlingly popular controversialist and playwright. G.K. Chesterton, Shaw's junior by nearly twenty years, was an up-and-coming belletrist whose burgeoning career promised success in many different fields, including novels, essays, and poetry. Despite the age difference, and a clash of opinion regarding almost every topic they discussed, the two writers were nonetheless intimate friends. With mutual goodwill and admiration, each beleaguered the other with ideological attacks and repartee, not only in private conversation, but frequently in the public forum to the great delight of literary society. In 1908, Shaw publicized a particular challenge with which he had pestered his young acquaintance privately for years: Shaw contended that Chesterton "should contribute something to the British drama."¹ Shaw's obvious intention was to educe a play from Chesterton's fertile imagination. Chesterton's response to this challenge in 1909, however, was an altogether different sort of contribution to British drama. Chesterton's book, *George Bernard Shaw*, is perhaps the most important and celebrated work in all Shavian scholarship.² More literary criticism than biography, the work boldly outlines the influences of Shaw's complex personality on his art and philosophy; and, despite eliciting powerful and prompt argument from Shaw himself, Chesterton's study also drew this notable acknowledgment: "The book is... the best work of literary art I have yet provoked."³

In his introduction to *George Bernard Shaw*, Chesterton wrote: "Most people say that they agree with Bernard Shaw or that they do not understand him. I am the only person who

¹ Denis J. Conlin, "Introduction," in *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton XI: Plays and Chesterton on Shaw*, eds. George J. Marlin *et al.* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 19.

² See William B Furlong, *Shaw and Chesterton: The Metaphysical Jesters* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970), 40. See also: Eric Bentley, *Bernard Shaw* (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2002), 243: Chesterton's "the *best* book" Shaw has inspired.

³ Joseph Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence: A Life of G. K. Chesterton* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 143.

understands him, and I do not agree with him.”⁴ That Chesterton often disagreed with Shaw was certainly no revelation. But the claim that he alone understood Shaw: this was a rather more provocative assertion. Shaw was after all an eminent celebrity whose opinions could be found in countless periodicals; several biographies of the playwright had already been published.⁵ Furthermore, Chesterton’s study of Shaw might ostensibly be judged inadequate: he is typically scant on all of the ordinary biographical data – such as dates and proper names – which a reader might expect to find in such a work.⁶ It is not even until the third chapter that Chesterton finally gets around to admitting a fact which usually comes at the beginning of a biography: after pages of prefatory material, Chesterton writes, “Now... for the first time I may be permitted to confess that Bernard Shaw was, like other men, born. He was born in Dublin on the 26th of July, 1856.”⁷

The justification for Chesterton’s remark that only he really understands Shaw can be traced to the unique methodology for Chesterton’s biographical study, according to which he used Shaw’s own work as a model. Noting a tendency in Shaw to “write a very long preface even to a very short play,”⁸ Chesterton began his book with three introductory chapters outlining the main influences upon Shaw’s literary career before ever even mentioning one of his famous writings. This method, “putting the moral in front of the fable,” was Chesterton’s way of “explaining such matters as Shaw himself might explain them.”⁹ For Chesterton, Shaw was a “man of many introductions,”¹⁰ and he felt that it would be “indefensibility foolish to attempt to

⁴ Quoted in Furlong, 61.

⁵ Furlong, 41.

⁶ Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence*, 134.

⁷ G.K. Chesterton, “George Bernard Shaw,” in *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton XI: Plays and Chesterton on Shaw*, 384. Hereafter: *G.B.S.*

⁸ *G.B.S.*, 363.

⁹ *G.B.S.*, 365.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

explain a man whose whole object through life has been to explain himself.”¹¹ This is what others, failing to understand Shaw, had attempted. So Chesterton chose to approach Shaw through a Shavian perspective, treating Shaw the way that Shaw would treat a character in one of his own plays.¹²

The approach was a brilliant success. Not only did it lend a useful structure to Chesterton’s book, but it grew out of Chesterton’s uncanny insight into Shaw’s psychology, an insight which can be appreciated in light of a statement made by Shaw himself. Years after the publication of Chesterton’s seminal work, Shaw acknowledged in an interview that he had in fact lived much of his life as a self-made character: “I had to become an actor, and create for myself a fantastic personality fit and apt for dealing with men, and adaptable to the various parts I had to play as an author, journalist, politician, committee man, man of the world, and so forth.”¹³ Shaw had been all along putting on one or another Shavian *persona*. The celebrated Shavian scholar, Eric Bentley, puts this point succinctly: “In a sense what we are looking for is not biography at all. In a sense Shaw has no biography.”¹⁴ Chesterton’s unique methodology positioned him to penetrate keenly into Shaw’s various *personae* to illuminate the personality underneath.

One of Chesterton’s most remarkable observations in *George Bernard Shaw* is the identification of puritanical biases informing Shaw’s work. In the prefatory section entitled “The Puritan,” Chesterton builds the case that Shaw’s teetotalism and anti-romanticism stem from a particularly priggish form of Calvinism, a theme to which he returns frequently in his later

¹¹ *G.B.S.*, 366.

¹² See Furlong, 51-52.

¹³ Erik H. Erikson, “Biographic: G.B.S. (70) on George Bernard Shaw (20),” in *G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. J. Kaufmann (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 24.

¹⁴ Bentley, 205.

discussion of Shaw's works.¹⁵ This element in Shaw's intellectual development, rarely appreciated before Chesterton's book, became subsequently a cornerstone in Shavian scholarship; in the words of one scholar, "[Chesterton's] insight was to haunt [Shaw] down through the years."¹⁶

In this instance, too, the verity of Chesterton's observations would be corroborated many years later by Shaw himself. At age seventy, Shaw would admit that his mother's flighty lack of organization significantly facilitated the development of his fastidious and even fanatically precise personality.¹⁷ To quote Chesterton:

There is at least one outstanding fact about the man we are studying; Bernard Shaw is never frivolous.... [He] exhibits all that is purest in the Puritan; the desire to see truth face to face even if it slay us, the high impatience with irrelevant sentiment or obstructive symbol; the constant effort to keep the soul at its highest pressure and speed.¹⁸

Similarly, the prudish and cynical portrayal of inebriants stumbling through Shaw's plays were later admitted to have been crafted in response to his own father's "drink neurosis" – they were the means by which Shaw tried to cope with his difficult childhood: "It had to be either a family tragedy or a family joke."¹⁹ Perhaps the most significant insight Chesterton had *vis a vie* Shaw's "puritanical" tendencies comes from a section dedicated to Shaw's play about Caesar and Cleopatra. Chesterton describes what he calls Shaw's "primary and defiant proposition... that the elect do not earn virtue, but possess it," which he rightly identifies as a Calvinist tenet.²⁰ It is

¹⁵ *G.B.S.*, 381-382. For an example of Chesterton contextualizing this in discussion of a particular play, see his treatment of romance in *Candida* on 421-422.

¹⁶ Furlong, 45.

¹⁷ Erikson, 22.

¹⁸ *G.B.S.*, 381.

¹⁹ Erikson, 21.

²⁰ *G.B.S.*, 438.

noteworthy that Chesterton makes this distinction in the midst of a discussion of the character of Julius Caesar, who might at first glance appear just another instance of the stock character of a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, a device common to many Shaw plays. Chesterton boldly repositions Shaw's entire religion and philosophy, not in the framework in which it was commonly understood, namely that of Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht* (Will to Power),²¹ but in a radically different frame: as a developed form of John Calvin's doctrine of election.²²

Another of Chesterton's revolutionary Shavian distinctions deals with the notion of paradox. While most of their contemporaries regarded paradox as an element essential to Shavian drama, Chesterton startlingly maintained that Shaw was "almost entirely without paradox."²³ In fact, Chesterton found this to be Shaw's major weakness.²⁴ In Chesterton's words:

Paradox is about the only thing in the world that [Shaw] does not understand. All his splendid vistas and startling suggestions arise from carrying some one clear principle further than it has yet been carried. His madness is all consistency, not inconsistency.²⁵

Thus, Chesterton explains, Shaw could not fully understand or appreciate so many institutions founded upon paradoxes. Specific examples given by Chesterton are romance, marriage, patriotism, and Christianity – all themes central to plays like *Major Barbara*, *Candida*, and *Man*

²¹ See for example Stuart E. Baker, *Bernard Shaw's Remarkable Religion: A Faith That Fits the Facts* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), especially 43-59. Notably, Chesterton himself had opted for this more simple approach in his earlier essay on Shaw found in *Heretics*, Christian Classic Ethereal Library: "Heretics by G.K. Chesterton," available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/chesterton/heretics.html>; Internet; accessed 01 November 2009. Hereafter *Heretics*.

²² *G.B.S.*, 437-440, especially 439: "Caesar is not saved by works, or even by faith: he is saved because he is one of the elect."

²³ *G.B.S.*, 448. See also, Furlong, 60.

²⁴ E.g., G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Image Doubleday, 1959), 3-4. Hereafter *Orthodoxy*. See also *Heretics*, chapter 4.

²⁵ *G.B.S.*, 448.

and *Superman*.²⁶ Chesterton deduces that, as a result of Shaw's inability to grapple with the paradoxes underlying these basic human traditions, they are never genuinely portrayed in any of Shaw's plays. Rather, such institutions merely form the skeletons of "straw men" which Shaw invariably proceeds to subject to ironical derision.

Chesterton illustrates this point with several examples from Shaw's work. First, he cites the portrayal of religious faith in *Major Barbara*, saying: "[T]he actual expressions of religion in the play are somewhat unsatisfactory as expressions of religion – or even of reason."²⁷ For instance, Chesterton shows that Barbara's final conviction that God should be her debtor betrays a denial of her former faith or at least an imperfection in her knowledge of the God she had believed; for, "if God owes everything to her He is not God."²⁸ Chesterton also criticizes "the incredibly weak fight which [Cusins] makes... in answer to the elephantine sophistries of Undershaft."²⁹ Cusins is the character whom Shaw portrays as the exponent of traditional virtues in opposition to the diabolical dynamite tycoon, Andrew Undershaft. At one point, – during a debate which Chesterton calls "disgraceful" – Undershaft argues against the value of voting by pointing to the historical success of violent revolutions, and Shaw has Cusins feebly concede: "It is historically true. I loathe having to admit it. I repudiate your sentiments. I abhor your nature. I defy you in every possible way. Still, it is true. But it ought not to be true."³⁰ Indeed, the young

²⁶ See *G.B.S.*, 422, 450, 455-458.

²⁷ *G.B.S.*, 457.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; Cf., "The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Major Barbara*, by George Bernard Shaw," act III, available from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3790/3790-h/3790-h.htm>; Internet; accessed 01 November 2009. Henceforth "Major Barbara." Chesterton, infamous for misquoting, here paraphrases Barbara's speech in his own words to the same effect. Shaw's original: "When I die, let [God] be in my debt, not I in his; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank."

²⁹ *G.B.S.*, 447.

³⁰ "Major Barbara," act III.

Greek professor Cusins seems hardly a credible witness for the cause of civility and virtue when he makes this dramatic confession: “[A]ll the poet in me recoils from being a good man.”³¹

A further example of Shaw’s straw man technique is found, according to Chesterton, in the play *Man and Superman*.³² In this play, Shaw addresses the theme of marriage through the relationship between Ann Whitefield and John Tanner. “[S]till haunted with his old impotence of the unromantic writer,” Chesterton says, Shaw fails to paint a believable picture of premarital courtship.³³ Chesterton acknowledges that Ann does shine as a strong and compelling character; but alleges that Shaw must greatly attenuate Ann’s femininity in order to make her more assertive. Here again, Shaw’s trouble arises from a failure to understand paradox: he cannot contrive to paint his female protagonist in a manner both strong and ladylike. In the end, says Chesterton, readers “are convinced successfully that Anne wishes to marry Tanner, but in the very process... lose all power of conceiving why Tanner should ever consent to marry Anne.”³⁴ The character of Ann, whom one critic describes as “an incorrigible liar, an inveterate hypocrite... [but] nevertheless thoroughly charming,”³⁵ is typical of the “Woman” described by the play’s moral mouthpiece, Don Juan, in the famous scene in Hell: “Marriage is... the most licentious of human institutions.... And a woman seeking a husband is the most unscrupulous of all the beasts of prey.”³⁶ Thus, although Shaw maintains the play as an argument for the dismissal of marriage as an idea and an institution, he does not really sustain the case; for the

³¹ “Major Barbara,” 703.

³² See “The Project Gutenberg EBook of Man and Superman, by George Bernard Shaw,” available from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3328/3328-h/3328-h.htm>; Internet; accessed 01 November 2009. Henceforth “Man and Superman.”

³³ *G.B.S.*, 465.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Frank N. Magill et al., eds., “Man and Superman: A Comedy and a Philosophy,” in *Masterplots: 1,801 Plot Stories and Critical Evaluations of the World’s Finest Literature, Volume 7: Los-Myr* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1996), 3900.

³⁶ See “Man and Superman,” act III.

romance he portrays and the marriage he debates are not accurate representations of the real, but just two more Shavian chimeras. Hence, it is easy to see why Chesterton's accusation of Shaw constructing straw-men for his ideological pugilism was picked up by many subsequent critics, such as John Freeman, who wrote in 1916: "[Shaw] has mastered the trick of showing up one character vividly at the expense of another, but he has not mastered the trick of letting one character speak for itself and by itself...."³⁷

Chesterton's last and greatest criticism for Shaw is a condemnation of his personal espousal and the embodiment through his work of a neo-Neitzschean and neo-Darwinian philosophy called *creative evolution*.³⁸ Although the fullest expression of this concept came after Chesterton's book was written – in *Back to Methuselah* – the idea is present in seminal form throughout Shaw's earlier works.³⁹ In *Major Barbara*, for example, Andrew Undershaft is a veritable "superman" whose iron will keeps him and his legacy atop the social ladder.⁴⁰ The point of that play, as Chesterton describes it, is that "even the noblest enthusiasm of [Barbara] who becomes a Salvation Army officer fails under the brute money power of [Undershaft] who is a modern capitalist."⁴¹ Chesterton tries to argue that there is an inconsistency here; that, if Barbara's will can be so easily dominated by Undershaft's, then Shaw has failed to demonstrate the supremacy of sovereign willpower. However, as Harold Bloom points out, this is admittedly

³⁷ John Freeman, "[Excerpt from] 'George Bernard Shaw' in *The Moderns: Essays in Literary Criticism*," in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Volume 3*, eds. Sharon K. Hall et al. (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Company, 1900), 384. See also the discussion in Furlong, 59.

³⁸ See Furlong, 155.

³⁹ Stuart E. Baker, *Bernard Shaw's Remarkable Religion: A Faith That Fits the Facts* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 41. See also Furlong, 156.

⁴⁰ Baker, 41.

⁴¹ *G.B.S.*, 458.

a somewhat weak reading of the play, not to mention of Nietzsche.⁴² Nevertheless, Chesterton's chief argument with the philosophy of *creative evolution* and the advent of the Superman was not so much that it was inconsistent as that it was iniquitous. Chesterton, always wary of the eugenics craze sweeping his contemporaries, a concept which drew heavily upon notions like *creative evolution*, reacted vehemently against Shaw's Lamarckian social theory.⁴³ In *Heretics*, he wrote:

Mr. Shaw cannot understand that the thing which is valuable and loveable in our eyes is man... And the things that have been founded on this creature immortally remain; the things that have been founded on the fancy of the Superman have died with the civilizations which alone have given them birth.⁴⁴

Literary scholar Joseph Pearce describes the danger which Chesterton so keenly observed in Shaw's philosophy. The fancy of the Superman, Pearce writes, "blinded [Shaw] to the base and basic reality of man's weakness, and this in turn hardened his heart and hindered his ability to sympathize... with beleaguered humanity."⁴⁵ With its reference to Shaw's heart, Pearce's description reminds one of Chesterton's own famous characterization from *Orthodoxy*: "... [Shaw] has a heroically large and generous heart; but not a heart in the right place."⁴⁶ The popular quotation is perhaps the best representation of how Chesterton was able – paradoxically – to love Shaw while abhorring his philosophy.

⁴² Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Views: George Bernard Shaw* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 15-16.

⁴³ See Furlong, 155. See also Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence*, 281-284.

⁴⁴ *Heretics*, 20-21.

⁴⁵ Joseph Pearce, *Literary Catholics, Literary Giants* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 233.

⁴⁶ *Orthodoxy*, 26.

Stung by Chesterton's penetrating insight into his interior motives, Shaw reacted with some fervor against *George Bernard Shaw*.⁴⁷ He even went so far as to disparage the work in his advice to subsequent biographers inquiring after sources.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Chesterton, writing two years before his own death, in an essay called "Second Thoughts on Shaw," repudiated very little if anything from his former observations about his dear friend, and certainly none of those regarding *creative evolution*. In this late essay, Chesterton was able to appraise Shaw's *magnum opus* on *creative evolution*, *Back to Methuselah*: an enormous play spanning three nights of performance time and telling a story beginning in Eden with Adam and Eve and ending with their ghosts in 31,000 A.D. Chesterton notes two great failures in the work: first, he says, Shaw "fails to explain why this unaccountably and everlastingly unfolding universe... should be supposed to be always changing for the better;" and second, "he most definitely fails to make us feel that it *is* changing for the better [emphasis added]."⁴⁹

After years of argumentation, Chesterton still could not find his way round to being convinced by Shaw, nor Shaw by Chesterton. Each, however, amidst his theory and his philosophy, had a heart – misplaced maybe, but large and caring nonetheless. And they remained great friends throughout all their lives. For his part, Chesterton objected to the ideas of *creative evolution* and the Superman, but he had his Christian beliefs, and the firm faith and hope that men could be improved and become still better men. This was the hope Chesterton held for all his fellow men, and perhaps for no one more than for George Bernard Shaw. And to that cause of helping Shaw become a better man – and better writer – Chesterton lent his very constructive criticism.

⁴⁷ Furlong, 43.

⁴⁸ Furlong, 46-47.

⁴⁹ G.K. Chesterton, "Second Thoughts on Shaw," in *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton XI: Plays and Chesterton on Shaw*, 601.

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