

George Bernard Shaw:
A Study in Modern Didacticism.

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by

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I am by profession what is called an original thinker, my business being to question and test all the established creeds and codes to see how far they are still valid and how far worn out or superseded, and even to draft new creeds and codes.

P. 64

--George Bernard Shaw.

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I

Introduction

I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals....I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters. (1)

Bernard Shaw refers thus to himself in the Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" (1909). This would seem to indicate his relation to the didactic tradition, an honored one in English literature.

Certain requirements of this tradition appear to be outstanding. In the forefront is the condition that a preacher must have a great message, timely and of vital importance to mankind, in response to a sense of crisis, to a sense of the jeopardy of the individual or of society at large. He must see more clearly than the individual, or society, the urgent need for salvation and, with purity of motive, feel that through his message he can at least give direction in a time of stress and change.

(1) pp. 410-11

Rose Macaulay says,

I started with a theory that most religious literature was the outcome of some kind of clash or conflict and bore stamped on it the nature of this conflict...(1)

and she then proceeds in her book to show five periods of conflict in English religious literature from the Middle Ages on.

H.J.C. Grierson defines literature as

reflecting the spiritual conflicts of an age, the growing pains of civilization at a definite epoch. (2)

As Bunyan's mental constitution was not such that he could remain indifferent to what was passing around him he

did strive also to discover and condemn and remove those false supports and props on which the world doth both lean and by them fall and perish. (3)

For that wickedness, like a flood, is like to drown our English world. It is the duty of those that can to cry out against this deadly plague, yea, to lift up their voice as with a trumpet against it, that men may be awakened about it, fly from it, as from that which is the greatest of evils. (4)

- (1) Rose Macaulay. Note to Some Religious Elements in English Literature. p. 5
- (2) H.J.C. Grierson. Cross Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century. Preface p. ix
- (3) John Bunyan. "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners." p. 86
- (4) John Bunyan. "Author to Reader" in "The Life and Death of Mr. Badman." Introduction, p. 145

Perhaps Robert Burton's preaching on the social crisis, and his moral indignation at the evil, folly and injustice of the world, come nearer than any other's to being a forerunner of Bernard Shaw's. It is said of him,

If he could have infused into the Churches some of his condemnation of war, of unjust lawyers and laws, social oppressions, dishonest commerce, hypocritical zealots, religious persecution and tyrannies and ambitions of governors and kings, there might have been no Civil War in England. (1)

L.P. Smith, in discussing Donne's sermons, gives this quotation,

Great prose needs a great subject matter, great themes and high spectacular vision, a solemn and steadfast conception of life and its meaning, handled with deep earnestness, (2)

which sums up a number of leading points applicable to any great sermon.

Nevertheless, whatever the crisis, whatever the message, the preacher himself must be sincerely convinced of the truth of the statements he makes and of the worth of the panaceas he offers, and he must be prepared to utter them with complete fearlessness, regardless of any possible consequences to himself. Jeremy Taylor was convinced)

Yet to Taylor his style was never more than the instrument by which he registered the passionate sincerity of his convictions. (3)

- (1) Rose Macaulay. Some Religious Elements in English Literature. p. 106
- (2) L.P. Smith. Reperusals and Recollections. p. 227-8
- (3) More and Cross. Anglicanism. p. 62

Since one is not as capable of either recognizing a crisis or offering helpful advice unless his mind is alert and stored with much varied knowledge, the mental equipment of a preacher must be taken into consideration. It is said of John Donne that he put into his sermons,

conceptions of existence inherited from the doctrines of his faith, his own hopes and fears, self-accusations, furthest flights of imagination, the ripest results of his philosophic meditations, all the wisdom of his experience and the most amusing details of satiric observation. (1)

This mention of imagination transfers the thought from the consideration of the didactic content to the field of expression--a necessary adjunct to the message if a work is to be considered literary. Hugh Latimer wrote vigorous moral sermons but was so careless of his style that a study of literature gives little thought to him. Likewise, Robert Burton's

social ethic was not infectious as it lacked the hypnotic attractions of style. (2)

Expression is of first importance, also, for unless the preacher has the power to make people listen, it will matter little to the world what he is thinking and saying.

Being original is one way of getting people to listen. Perhaps the originality will lie in what a preacher is saying, perhaps in his way of saying it.

- (1) L.P. Smith. Reperusals and Re-Collections. p. 227.
- (2) Rose Macaulay. Some Religious Elements in English Literature. p. 106

Repetition, too, is a means of attracting attention--repetition with a difference--arising from the preacher's own enthusiasm. Or, he may word his title and text to arouse curiosity and so win the hearing he desires. Once having gained this point, he may use humor as a protection against a too fierce attack upon his ideas; he may use satire to stir his hearers to a realization of the crisis; but whatever his method, he will pour out his soul with vividness, power and intensity, with beauty and nobility. His utterances will be inspired by creative imagination and will often rise to poetic heights.

Legouis says of Sir Thomas Brown,

His strangeness of thought is indeed excused by a vein of humor. (1)

While Hooker's prose aimed at convincing the reason, it was not without passages which impress the imagination. (2)

Knowing how much Shaw admires John Bunyan, it is interesting to note how many qualities they have in common. As for example: Bunyan had imagination and sincerity. He felt and perceived with the greatest keenness and knew how to express what he perceived. He knew also how to tell a tale, how to link up the incidents in a drama. His style was racy and full of sap; it had ease, lucidity, order and a sense of construction. (3)

- (1) Legouis and Cazamian. History of English Literature. p. 523
- (2) Ibid. p. 361
- (3) Ibid. p. 694

In the light of the above outlined qualities, it seems a natural and appropriate approach to Bernard Shaw to consider him as a modern preacher. In so doing, the attempt will be made to assemble his fundamental ideas, to examine his own sense of their importance and to enquire into his method of presenting them.

II

Awareness of the Crisis

The age in which George Bernard Shaw was to grow up and seek to find and fill his place, was one of change, of intellectual turbulence; a time of discarding old, established beliefs and substituting new, untried ones, which did not always seem to be improvements. In a number of his writings, Shaw refers to conditions as he found them, in England particularly, and does not hesitate to let us know that he considers that there was ample room for change and improvement--and still is--in the Church, in religion, in politics, in the theatre, in morals, and in man's whole attitude to life.

The first change of the age was away from belief in its own perfection.

Those of us who as adults saw it face to face --can recall the strange confidence with which it (the nineteenth century) regarded itself as the very summit of civilization, and talked of the past as a cruel gloom that had been dispelled for ever by the railway and the electric telegraph. But centuries, like men, begin to find themselves out in middle age.

(1)

Certain writers, certain movements, contributed to this awakening of the nineteenth century from its smug self-satisfaction with itself as it was, to an

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Three Plays by Brieux." p. 196

awareness of the hollowness of much of its creed. The novelists, William Thackeray and Charles Dickens, exposed social evils; Charles Darwin with his theory of Natural Selection upset some of the legendary beliefs about religion; (1) Samuel Butler attacked conventional morality, respectability, poverty and the institutions of the home, the school and the church; (2) Karl Marx, Henry George, Havelock Ellis and many others in the Socialist Movement attacked economic inequality and class distinction.

Unfortunately, in spite of this good ground work, this exposing of Victorian orthodoxy by showing the weakness of its foundations, the results were disappointing. The following description of society leaves little doubt as to the need for further change:

In this new phase we see the bourgeoisie, after a century and a half of complacent vaunting of its own probity and modest happiness, suddenly turning bitterly on itself with accusations of hideous sexual and commercial corruption. Thackeray's cam-

- (1) "I had been caught by a great wave of scientific enthusiasm which was then passing over Europe as a result of the discovery of Natural Selection by Darwin, and of the blow it dealt to the vulgar Bible worship and redemption mongering which had hitherto passed among us for religion."
(Shaw. Preface to "Three Plays by Ibsen."
p. 198)
- (2) Butler's fierce denunciation of these points is embodied in his two novels, Erewhon and The Way of all Flesh.

paign against snobbery and Dicken's against hypocrisy were directed against the vices of respectable men; but now even the respectability was passionately denied; the bourgeois was depicted as a thief, a tyrant, a sweater, a selfish voluptuary whose marriages were simple legalizations of unbridled licentiousness. (1)

The Theatre, too, was in an intolerable state:

The fashionable theatre prescribed one serious subject; clandestine adultery; the duldest of all subjects for a serious author. The worst convention of the criticism of the theatre current at that time was that intellectual seriousness is out of place on the stage; that the theatre is a place of shallow amusement;--in short, that a playwright is a person whose business it is to make unwholesome confectionery out of cheap emotions. (2)

Shaw records as early as his novel, The Unsocial Socialist, (1883), that instead of using the freedom of intelligence, gained at this time of mental and spiritual upheaval, to effect changes leading to the improvement of man, modern English society was content in its new corruption; (3) and he notes little improvement by 1919 when he writes,

For half a century before the war, civilization had been going to the devil very precipitately under the influence of a pseudo-science as disastrous as the blackest Calvinism. (4)

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "Three Plays by Brieux" p. 196
- (2) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah." p. 546
- (3) "A canting, lie-loving, fact-mating, scribbling, chattering, wealth-hunting, pleasure-hunting, celebrity-hunting mob, that, having lost the fear of hell, and not replaced it by the love of justice, cares for nothing but the lion's share of the wealth wrung by threat of starvation from the hands of the classes that create it." (Shaw. An Unsocial Socialist. p. 67)
- (4) Shaw. Preface to "Heartbreak House." p. 381

One of the very serious results from Materialism and Darwinism was that,

Between the two of them religion was knocked to pieces; and where there had been a god, a cause, a faith that the universe was ordered however inexplicable by us its order might be, and therefore a sense of moral responsibility as part of that order, there was now an utter void. (1)

Into the political portion of that void rushed men who, no longer having a sense of God or of moral responsibility, neglected political science, thought only of their own interests and ambitions and left the country to just muddle along on a policy of unprincipled opportunism, whereas, Shaw thought,

If the fear of God was in them (politicians) it might be possible to come to some general understanding as to what God disapproves of; and Europe might pull together on that basis.
(2)

Little wonder then, considering the state of nineteenth century England, that Shaw felt that not he, nor any serious thinker, could behold the condition of the people, the danger to society at large in their absorption in self and indifference to the fate of humanity, and not feel the urgent need for some means of salvation. This would necessitate a religion and Bernard

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah." p. 533
(2) Ibid. p. 535

11.

Shaw set out to find one, acceptable to himself, and to preach it. (1)

- (1) "I had always known that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life or death." (Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah." p. ~~555~~ 545)

Preparation for a Life-Work

Needless to say, years of living and learning, of coming into contact with many people and varying influences, contributed first, to Bernard Shaw's awareness of this crisis in his times; second, to the crystallization of his controlling idea that mankind was in dire need of a religion if civilization was to survive; and third, to his preparation for the self-imposed task of exposing to the view of society its own false foundations and of preaching a new world-order.

Even as a boy, although Shaw claims to have learned nothing at school, (1) he was learning, in a casual fashion outside of school, much which was to color his outlook and to stand him in good stead later; and he was also freeing his mind of conventionally accepted opinions to make room for new ideas.

For instance, Shaw had an unsatisfactory home experience. His mother was so engrossed in music that she allowed her children to grow up as best they could without attention. His father was a failure, financially and

- (1) "I was never in a school where the teachers cared enough about me--or had enough conviction and cruelty, to take any such trouble; (i.e. to force learning through fear) so I learnt nothing at school, not even what I could and would have learned if any attempt had been made to interest me." (Preface to "Immaturity", p. 671)

socially, who seemed to count for little in his own household. As this was unlikely to impress Shaw with the idea that the family is the best means of raising and training children, his irreverent handling of this conventionally sacred subject in his prefaces and plays is not surprising. (1)

On the other hand, Shaw was imbibing from this same home atmosphere, such a love for and knowledge of the best in music as was to be a great asset to him all his life. His mother was an accomplished musician, as was George John Vandaleur Lee, another member of that unusual household. Before Shaw was out of his teens, he was very familiar with the best operas and oratorios and could whistle the airs from most of the major works. Then, during his first years in London, his ability to play at sight an acceptable accompaniment, gave him access to drawing rooms which would otherwise have been closed to him and by this means he not only kept up his music but came to see a little something of "society".

Another phase of life for which Shaw, because of his boyhood experience, has no reverence is traditional, institutional religion. The Shaws were Irish Protestants, and the very young Bernard so hated the cold formality

(1) See Prefaces to "Misalliance" and "Immaturity" and the plays "You Never Can Tell" and "Heartbreak House."

and rigidity of the Puritanical form of service and the repression practised by its members, that he was glad to cease attendance--before the age of ten--when his mother rebelled against going herself and no longer insisted upon her son's going to church. This, plus the attitude of Shaw's father and an uncle toward the Bible as a legitimate source of material for, and object of, a joke, were instrumental, Shaw feels, in clearing his mind of religious superstition, of dogma and of cant, so leaving him with an open mind ready to listen to and accept such new articles of faith as might seem good to him. (1)

While Shaw's father was only a negative influence in religion, he did make a positive contribution to his son's development when he encouraged him to visit the National Art Gallery in Dublin. There Shaw made the intimate acquaintance of the best in the world of Art, and more often spent his pocket money (when he had any) on a Bohn translation of Vasari than on boyish treats. (2)

- (1) "but in my case it (the vacuum left by his mother's policy) only made a clear space for positive beliefs later on. In view of my subsequent work in the world it seems providential that I was driven to the essentials of religion by the reduction of every factitious or fictitious element in it to the most irreverent absurdity." (Shaw. Preface to "Immaturity" p. 667)
- (2) Shaw. Letter to A. Henderson, Welwyn, England, Jan. 17, 1905, referred to on p. 47, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet.

Still another field into which Shaw dipped extensively from his boyhood on, was that of literature. (1) (2) As a child in Dublin and as a man in London, where his favorite haunt was the British Museum Reading Room, in which he has spent so many hours of his life, he never ceased to delight in reading. Of the many authors Shaw found time to read, A.B. Henderson feels that he owes his heaviest obligations to Dickens, Shelley and Samuel Butler. (3)

But Bernard Shaw did more than read in the British Museum, he also wrote. Here he made his first conscious effort to win a place for himself in the field of literature, for his Dublin effort--a voluminous correspondence with a school friend, Edward McNulty--while affording excellent practice in vigorous, imaginative writing, had been before he realized that he wanted to write. Now, in London, he first tried his skill at novel writing and over a period of five years he wrote five novels which were not acceptable at the time, it is certain, for

- (1) "My father had read Sir Walter Scott and other popular classics; and he always encouraged me to do the same, and to frequent the National Gallery, and to go to the theatre and the opera when I could afford it." (Shaw, Preface to "Immaturity" p. 666.)
- (2) "Back of Shaw were years of acquisitive reading of genuine stylists:- La Rochefoucauld, Swift, Sterne, Dryden and Butler." (A. Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet, p.263.)
- (3) "To the first, that farcical element in his comedy which has sometimes enriched and sometimes cheapened it. To the second his vegetarianism, his atheism, his habitual sense of revolt. To the third, inspiration for inverted truism, the turning topsy turvy of familiar sayings, the satire of home, family and education." (A. Henderson, Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet, p. 611.)

he could not find publishers for them^{then} (1) And they are now almost completely unheard of, in spite of the fact that a number of original ideas, which make their appearance later in plays, were already incorporated within the compass of these books.

This was a difficult period for Shaw--as a period of persistent failure is for anyone--but it developed within him that reserve power of self-sufficiency, begun in his home, of indifference to the opinion of the whole world because he felt that he was right and that sometime his position would be vindicated.

During these same years, Shaw was doing a third thing, beyond reading and novel-writing. He was joining debating societies and through them acquiring the platform manner which has been so notable. He first joined the Zetetical Society, in 1879, with his friend James Lecky, and a year later the Dialectical Society--to mention only two outstanding ones--and by persistent effort in the face of extreme nervousness and early failures, he became facile, imperturbable, and brilliant in repartee. As these clubs mentioned were both strongly interested in

(1) "Their satire, sharp and penetrative, was resented. They aroused antagonism by the author's outspoken hostility to respectable Victorian thought and Society." (A. Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet. p. 611. 92.)

John Stuart Mill's work and in evolution, Shaw had a common ground on which to meet the members for,

In his boyhood, Shaw had read Mill on Liberty, on Representative Government, and on the Irish Land Question. In knowledge and comprehension of the evolutionary theories and philosophical ideas of Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, George Eliot and their school, he was on equal terms with his fellow members of the Aetetical. (1)

It is interesting that both of these Societies should have considered Socialism as obsolete and yet within five years Shaw was to be using his public-speaking skill, acquired within them, in support of the Socialistic movement.

While these phases: art, music, reading, novel-writing and debating, are important, probably the greatest single influence in the moulding of the man Shaw was his association with the Fabian Society. This he joined in 1884 and within the movement Shaw's mind touched the minds of such thinkers as Henry George, William Morris, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Henry Salt, Sidney Olivier and Graham Wallas, and came away enriched. As is characteristic of him, he threw himself heart and soul first into a study of the principles of socialism. In this connection

(1) A. Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet
p. 123

he read Henry George's Progress and Poverty and Karl Marx' Das Kapital and Henderson says of him,

Shaw was as completely carried away by Das Kapital as Samuel Butler, was by The Origin of Species. (1) Marx's Nereiad against the bourgeoisie awoke instant response in Shaw: it changed the whole tenor of his life..... It made him a Socialist. Although he has since repudiated some of the fundamental economic theories of Marx, at this time he found in Das Kapital the concrete expression of all those social convictions, grievances and wrongs which seethed in the crater of his being. 'From that Hour', says Shaw, in connection with reading Das Kapital, 'I became a man with some business in the world'.
(2)

Because of this sense of a mission, he then threw himself into a campaign to spread his newly acquired ideas among the unenlightened. For years, until his health broke in 1898, Shaw spoke on Socialism on every possible occasion, to every class of people that would listen, on any street corner or in any kind of hall. Often he lectured several nights a week and on Sunday. To do this he travelled great distances, in all kinds of weather, and never accepted a penny for his services, never even accepted his railway fare unless he were quite out of funds.

Nor was Shaw content with just lecturing for he does not believe that the world can be saved by talk alone. He allowed his name to stand for, and was elected to St. Pancras Borough Council in 1897 and served as a vestryman for six years. This meant serving on

(1) A. Henderson. Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet
p. 153

(2) A. Henderson. Bernard Shaw: His Life and Work p. 98

committee after committee in an effort to put his knowledge and ideas to practical use and so benefit the community (1). Yet he seemed tireless at this often tedious job.

I never lived the literary life...My time was fully taken up (when I was not actually writing or attending performances) by public work, in which I was fortunate enough to be associated with a few men of exceptional ability and character. I got the committee habit, the impersonality, and imperturbability of the statesman, the constant and unceremonious criticism of men who were at many points much abler and better informed than myself, and a great deal of experience which cannot be acquired in conventional grooves. (2)

During this time of lecturing, and working on the Borough Council, and long afterwards, Shaw was also writing for the movement: innumerable articles for periodicals, and in a more permanent form embodying many of his most fundamental ideas in "Fabian Tracts", "The Intelligent Woman's Guide" and in Plays and Prefaces.

This enthusiasm for Socialism would hardly have been sustained at such a high pitch over such a period of time had there not been a real conviction in Shaw's mind of its ultimate truth and worth.

- (1) "He was placed on the Health Committee, the Parliamentary Committee, the Electric Lighting Committee, the Housing Committee, and the Drainage Committee" (A. Henderson. Introduction to Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet p. 234)
- (2) Quoted by A. Henderson, Introduction to Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet p. XXIV from a letter from a letter from Shaw to Henderson, dated June 30, 1904)

Just a year after Shaw became a Fabian, his opportunity for a journalistic career as a critic came to him through his friend, William Archer, and from 1885 to 1888 he was successively: Art, Music, and Dramatic Critic. Shaw began as art critic on the 'World' and found his knowledge gained in the Dublin Gallery invaluable. By 1888 he was making practical use of the musical information he had acquired for pleasure. He became music critic on 'The Star', where, over the signature of "Corno di Bassetto", and under cover of much tomfoolery, he was able to use this considerable body of musical knowledge, which few were aware he possessed, to give genuine criticism of the musical compositions he heard; to decry mere sensation in art and to advocate an essentially ⁱ intellectual quality. Having this as a standard, Shaw recognized the high quality of the work of the newcomer, Richard Wagner, and fought for him with the same revolutionary enthusiasm as he did for Ibsen. In championing Wagner against a hostile London, Shaw began his career of attempting to convert people to his viewpoint.

These years contributed no small measure to the sum total of Shaw's experience of life, to his knowledge of how and what people were thinking, and to his skill in writing; so that, coupled with his ideals as determined within the Fabian movement, he was prepared to seek the medium of expression best suited to his talent and purpose,

and to begin his serious life work.

It was in the ten years prior to, and during his term as Dramatic Critic that Shaw, not yet having decided upon his final mode of conveying his ideas to people, came to appreciate the decadence of drama on the English stage and of the morals it presented to its public. But it was also at this time that he came to a realization of the possibility of the stage being used for something infinitely more worth while: as a medium for the expression of the ills of the world as he saw them and of the remedy which he sought to offer. Shaw claimed that

The theatre was as important as the Church was in the Middle Ages and more important than the Church in London in the Nineties. He was aware that church going had been largely replaced by playgoing. This would be a very good thing if the theatre took itself seriously as a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armory against despair and dullness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man. (1)

Shaw decided to take the theatre seriously and to make it a means to his end.

This decision marks the close of Shaw's years of preparation. Perhaps few men have had such a lengthy and varied preparation for a life work as Shaw had, few made as good use of the years and of the opportunities as they presented themselves. His will to know, his energy and his

(1) Shaw. "Our Theatres in the Nineties", Author's Apology. p. 779.

capacity for work were stupendous. One realizes, the more one reads of his work, that Shaw was aware of everything that was going on around him; of the most commonplace details of practical everyday life, as well as of those things which contribute to a cultural life. This awareness had shown him, not only the need of the civilized world, but what seemed to him to be ^a remedy; and Shaw was ready now with the message which had been slowly evolving in his mind during the first thirty or forty years of his life.

IV

The Message

The next step in showing the didactic element in the work of Bernard Shaw must be to show that this message of his fulfills the conditions, posited in the introduction, of being great, timely, and of vital importance to mankind, and of at least pointing a way in this crisis of human affairs which Shaw felt he saw more clearly than the multitude, and about which he felt an obligation to preach.

If my actions are God's, nobody can fairly hold me responsible for them...but if I am a part of God, if my eyes are God's eyes, my hands God's hands and my conscience God's conscience, then also I share His responsibility for the world and woe is me if the world goes wrong.

(1)

Socialism

Perhaps it is unfair to speak of Shaw's "message" in the singular and as though it were unchanging. But it does seem that although it can be sub-divided roughly into three phases:-Pure Socialism, Creative Evolution and Politics--nevertheless there is always an underlying current of socialism, in its economic aspect, for Shawian Socialism is definitely and predominantly eco-

(1) Quoted, from an address Shaw delivered in City Temple, by Edwin Slosson, Six Major Prophets, p. 12

conomic. (1) Also, there is one theme which persists throughout his work: a plea for the betterment of world conditions, of human beings and their lot, for Shaw is never willing to accept as fact that there will always be the rich and the poor so the best must be made of the situation.

It was a deeply religious, fundamentally humanitarian motive which drew Shaw into Socialism. Birth of the social passion in his soul finds its origin in the individual desire to compass the salvation of his fellow man for only so could he achieve the salvation of his own soul. A burning sense of social injustice, a great passion for social reform directed his steps. (2)

Not without great study and deliberation did Shaw arrive at the conclusions which he expounded first orally and then with greater detail and elaboration in writing, as preachers of other ages have done. It was only after delving into all known forms of Socialism, that he came to think and preach the following.

To Bernard Shaw, believing, as so many philosophers before him have believed, in the greatest good for the greatest number, Socialism is just Common Sense. The system, still too prevalent, of a few people controlling the wealth of a nation and living in luxury and

- (1) "Marx left me with a very strong disposition to back the economic situation to control all the other situations, religious, nationalist, or romantic, in the long run." (Shaw. Preface to "John Bull's Other Island." p. 474)
- (2) Henderson. Bernard Shaw: His Life and Work p. 189

idleness while masses of their fellow men slave without securing the bare necessities of life, is not reasonable.

As Shaw found on reading Das Kapital:

Marx---seized on the blue books which contained the true history of the leaps and bounds of England's prosperity, and convicted private property of wholesale spoliation, murder and compulsory prostitution; of plague, pestilence, and famine; battle, murder, and sudden death. This was hardly what had been expected from an institution so highly spoken of. (1)

The alternative to private property, which the Socialists propose, is nationalization of land, industry and capital, henceforth to be controlled by the State for the common benefit of all.

In the first place, rent,

"being that part of the produce which is individually unearned--owed to the bounty of nature or the advantage of situation"; (2)

which is now being appropriated by the few in the propertied class, would, under a Socialistic regime where land was transferred to the State, benefit everyone.

Secondly, the main points in favor of nationalizing industry are to remove it from the control of irresponsible private individuals and, by eliminating the middlemen and profiteering contractors, to get work done at cost for the consumer by the authorities of the municipality. Of course this change to State control cannot be effected over night. It must come gradually as the State organizes to handle the industry or land it takes over and to employ

(1) Shaw. Fabian Essays in Socialism. p. 179
 (2) Ibid. p. 179

it productively. The Fabians realized that this organization will probably begin in a small way in the municipalities and that only after a system has been successfully developed there, will a central government--probably the House of Commons--begin to federate the municipalities by establishing a new department of the Civil Service, a department financially to be trusted and anxious to make a success of the undertaking. These State departments will have to be set up and ready to take charge before the transition is effected. Another reason for this gradual assumption of control is the money entailed, for it is not proposed that private property will be seized illegally, but rather that a fair market price will be paid to the owner when the State is ready to manage the concern. In fact, private enterprise is to be encouraged to undertake new ventures, and to build them up until they are successful on a large scale before they are transferred to the State. The money for this transference is to come from taxes on rent. Shaw sums up this point of nationalizing production in the following paragraph:

Practical Socialism must proceed by the Government nationalizing our industries one at a time by a series of properly compensated expropriations, after elaborate preparation for their administration by a body of civil servants, who will consist largely of the old employees, but who will be controlled and financed by Government departments manned by

public servants very superior in average ability, training and social dignity to the commercial profiteers and financial gamblers who ^{now} have all our livelihoods at their mercy.
(1)

This gives the first point in the bone of Shaw's contention regarding Socialism. Long before he wrote it down in such considered detail as is to be found in The Intelligent Woman's Guide (1937), he had preached it to his street-corner, Hyde Park and Town Hall congregations and he had embodied it in novels, plays, and prefaces. To these latter it is possible to turn to discover that volume upon volume has been published giving to the world in highly entertaining, reasonably digestible form his beliefs about nationalization. The reason for the number of books carrying the same ideas is, no doubt, that because of the world's indifference, its obtuseness, Shaw has been forced, as have most preachers, to repeat himself many times. He is always careful, however, to say the thing in a different way with the hope that eventually his message will register with the populace and begin to produce results.

Shaw deals with his first point, the failure of private property to give the world a satisfactory economic system, in his novel An Unsocial Socialist (1883), written just after he began to take an interest in

(1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide p. 360

Socialistic movements. In it, Trefusis denounces the unfairness of his father's having amassed a fortune by exploiting his workmen. They did the manual labor, he supplied the organizing and managing ability and collected all the profits; e.g. they built a bridge and he collected tolls from them and from their children. The only possible excuse Trefusis can see for this is that his father had either to exploit others or be exploited himself --it was the system that was wrong. The two points which he thought most unjustified were first, his being able to inherit a fortune--stolen money he calls it--when he had done nothing whatever to help earn it, not even so much as his father had done; and second, men supplying his father with capital on which they expected interest but asked no questions as to how it was made. But there was no use the workers objecting to their slaving with little return for their work, for they could get no better terms from other factory owners and their places could so readily be filled with other starving wretches. This threat of dismissal was like a sword in the hands of the capitalist. Trefusis objects, too, to the power of the country landlord who can turn peasants off his land, to starve for all he cares, so that he may use the land for pasture or a deer forest; and to the power of the city landlord who owns tenements in extremely bad repair in poor districts because he makes more out of them than out of

houses in respectable districts. The only solution which Trefusis can see is Socialism or Smash, so he spends his capitalistic fortune in trying to introduce Socialism which will be possible,

if the race has at last evolved the faculty of co-ordinating the functions of a society too crowded and complex to be worked any longer on the old haphazard private property system. (1)

When Shaw began his career as a playwright, his very first play dealt with the evils of slum landlordism. In "Widower's Houses" (1885-92) he depicts Blanche Sartorius, of a respectable, middle-class family, and Dr. Harry Trench, of the lesser nobility, living in comfort and refinement, being educated, and enjoying themselves on incomes squeezed from the wretched and helpless poor who were forced to live in tenements owned or operated by Sartorius, Blanche's father. At first Harry is not aware of the source of his income and it is a rude shock to him when Lickcheese, Sartorius' dirty, down-trodden rent collector, in dismay at being discharged, reveals the appalling truth of space rented by the quarter room, of stairs in such bad repair that women are seriously injured, of money extorted when it was needed to feed hungry children. Shaw makes it clear in the preface that his hostility is not against his

(1) Shaw. An Unsocial Socialist p. 207

stage figures but against the whole of Capitalistic society whose public conscience is so lethargic that it can permit such criminal social conditions to exist.

Then, in "John Bull's Other Island" (1904), Shaw has Larry Doyle also denounce landlords. Doyle tells Matt that Ireland has been despoiled by the wealthy landowners who took all they could get from the peasants, raised their rent if they made any improvements on the land, turned them off the land if they couldn't pay, and then went off to England to spend the money. But he sees no improvement, nor hope of it, in the land being taken over by small landlords who will be even more grasping, for five shillings will mean as much to them as a hundred pounds did to the former owners.

Both in Act III of "Man and Superman" (1902-03) and in "The Revolutionists' Handbook" does Shaw next touch on Socialism. In the description of the setting of the third act, with tramps and able-bodied paupers as characters, he takes occasion to suggest how the world could very quickly be forced to reorganize itself industrially, by eighty percent of the workers refusing to drudge any longer and demanding relief. This would knock the social system to pieces and bring reconstruction. In the Handbook, Shaw offers the opinion that property might be abolished and everyone become a

paid worker in the public service without the majority of people noticing any drastic change.

The point which Shaw is making in the play, "Androcles and the Lion" (1911-12), that the Romans persecuted partly for amusement, not realizing what a threat Jesus' teachings offered to the existing social order, the gospel of the "Have and Holders", is, as usual, amplified in the Preface. There he reminds his readers that God is the ultimate maker of all products and that all people have a right to do with them is see that they are distributed so that everyone has the necessities of life.

There are two problems involved in the play, "The Apple Cart" (1929) and discussed in its Preface. One is the economic point of how to produce and distribute the world's subsistence, for which so far only one solution has been tried---the capitalistic system---which leaves everything to irresponsible private individuals interested only in themselves. This has achieved sufficient production, it is true, but has failed so miserably to distribute the goods that manufacturers talk of overproduction while millions stand in need. Since Socialism saved the situation during the war by controlling munitions, when experienced business men failed, Shaw thinks it has much to teach private enterprise in peace time.

The society which depends on the incentive of private property is doomed...(1)

says Shaw in his preface to "The Millionairess" (1936), as the manufacture of products necessary to life does not bring in such huge profits as do the products which cause death, e.g. munitions, liquor, drugs.

Perhaps nowhere has Bernard Shaw spoken more vehemently against private property than in the Preface of "Too True To Be Good." (1931).

We know that private property distributes wealth, work and leisure so unevenly that a wretchedly poor and miserably overworked majority are forced to maintain a minority inordinately rich and passionately convinced that labor is so disgraceful to them that they dare not be seen carrying a parcel down Bond Street.---And so we are driven to the conclusion that the modern priesthood must utterly renounce, abjure, abhor, abominate and annihilate private property as the very worst of all the devils' inventions for the demoralization and damnation of mankind. (2)

Along with the nationalization of private property for production, is to go the nationalization of distribution. One point has already been mentioned, that of distribution of services and manufactured goods at cost. An even more outstanding point is the distribution of the national wealth and income which presupposes that the government has become the national financier and acquired all the powers now possessed by private owners.

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "The Millionairess" p. 480.
- (2) Shaw. "Too True To Be Good." p. 350.

Shaw advocates equality of income for all, regardless of birth, education, age or position for he contends that all useful work is equally indispensable and that it costs no more to support an artist than a mason. (1) In this stand he is not supported by all his brother Fabians. However, he feels justified in his position and explains it at some length. (2) Since he could not see any fair way of deciding how much each person was to have according to his individual ability or merit or achievement, he advocates equal incomes beginning from birth. To the objection that such a distribution would be impractical, Shaw replies by pointing out that there are already equal incomes within professions with no disastrous consequences. He feels that the system could be extended if man could be educated to calculate his reward for service in terms of social betterment, instead of in terms of individual pecuniary gain. On this point Shaw finds that his conclusions are virtually the same as the teaching of Jesus. As he sums up Jesus' message, it reads:

Get rid of property by throwing it into the common stock. Dissociate your work entirely from money payments. If you let a child starve you are letting God starve.

- (1) "You must also get rid of the notion that it costs some workers more than others to live. The same allowance of food that will keep a laborer in health will keep a king." (Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide. p. 52).
- (2) Ibid. pp. 37-63.

Get rid of all anxiety about tomorrow's dinner and clothes, because you cannot serve two masters: God and Mammon. As Jesus said, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. That was why he recommended that money should cease to be a treasure. (1)

Shaw thinks, too, a great advantage will be that, freed of the worry as to how he is to obtain sufficient food, clothing and shelter to keep alive, man would be free to develop and use his higher faculties. (2)

However, if anyone is still unconvinced by his reasoning, Shaw offers this further aid to thinking through the question:

You may be unable to see any beauty in equality of income. But the least idealistic woman can see the disasters of inequality when the evils with which she is herself in daily conflict are traced to it. (3)

In any number of places Shaw shows the importance of money by showing the disasters of poverty. In no place does he describe them more forcefully perhaps than in the Fabian Essays. (1889)

Their poverty breeds filth, ugliness, dishonesty, disease, Abscenity, drunkenness, and murder. In the midst of the riches

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "Androcles and the Lion." pp. 574, 580.
- (2) Undershaft expresses it, "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." (Shaw. "Major Barbara." p. 498)
- (3) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide p. 63

which their labor piles up for you, their misery rises up to and stifles you. You withdraw in disgust to the other end of the town from them;....you set your life apart from theirs by every class barrier you can devise; and yet they swarm about you still; your face gets stamped with your habitual loathing and suspicion of them; your ears get so filled with the language of the vilest of them that you break into it when you lose your self-control; they poison your life as remorselessly as you have sacrificed theirs heartlessly. (1)

Turning to the plays for confirmation of this point, the question of the poor is dealt with in two plays in particular. In "Mrs. Warren's Profession" (1894), it is a specific phase of the subject: the necessity for the economic independence of women in order to eliminate prostitution, that social evil which spreads so much disease, degradation, and misery. Again Capitalistic society must shoulder the blame for a state of affairs wherein a woman must marry, sell her affections illicitly, or suffer privations, instead of being able to support herself by reasonable and honest industry. In Mrs. Warren's own words:

What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man's fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him?....as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing! Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick!....The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be

(1) Shaw. Fabian Essays p. 21

good to her.....It can't be right, Vivie,
that there shouldn't be better opportuni-
ties for women. (1)

The other play, "Major Barbara" (1905), reveals Capitalism, responsible for poverty and its attendant distresses, trying to cover up or make partial restitution for them by giving large donations of money as Badger, the distiller, does to the Salvation Army and as Barbara's father, Undershaft, maker of munitions, does to hospitals. Barbara's spirits are dashed, at least for the time, when she comes to realize the corruptness of the social order and her utter inability as an individual to remedy it. (2) It is in this play, too, that Shaw sets forth the idea, (for which he acknowledges indebtedness to Samuel Butler) (3) of poverty being the greatest evil and the worst crime and money the most important thing in the world!

It represents health, strength, honor, generosity and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness and ugliness. (4)

- (1) Shaw. "Mrs. Warren's Profession". pp. 76, 77.
- (2) "Her discovery: that there is no salvation for them through personal righteousness, but only through the redemption of the whole nation from its vicious, lazy, competitive anarchy." (Shaw. Preface to "Major Barbara" p. 125.)
- (3) "It drives one almost to despair of English Literature---that when, some years later, I produce plays in which Butler's extraordinarily fresh, free and future-piercing suggestions have an obvious share, I am met with nothing but vague cacklings about Ibsen and Nietzsche." (Shaw. Preface to "Major Barbara" p. 161.)
- (4) Ibid. p. 122.

On the other side of the question, Bernard Shaw indicates the difficulties of the rich, although these are not as easily measured. Riches do bring responsibilities but not necessarily happiness: there is the servant problem; concern for property and investments; a need for keeping up a social position and its attendant exhaustion from a round of social duties; a compulsion to dress and act as other rich people do; too much time with too little to do; a running after cures, for real or imaginary ills, in a vain attempt to fill in time. (1)

This lack of happiness on the part of the idle rich Shaw shows in three plays: "Heartbreak House" (1917), "The Millionairess" (1936), "Too True To Be Good" (1931).

In the first, he pictures cultured, leisured England, or Europe, before the Great War, with every opportunity for advanced study, with time and money to interest Parliament in improvements for the country, but doing nothing except look on as the world dashes toward destruction. And the void left by the inactivity and futility of their existence, which frankly bores them, they attempt to fill with music, literature, married women--- and men.

In the second of these plays, Eppy, the millionairess, bewails her fate in being rich, for she claims she has to fight every minute to prevent herself being harassed and beggared by all manner of societies which know her to be a rich woman. Also she feels there is no

(1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide. pp. 60-62.

justice for her, for she hasn't been able to keep either her husband or her lover,--just her money, and that has not meant happiness.

And in the third, Shaw depicts two kinds of misery from money. The "Patient", a very rich young lady, is completely miserable (without realizing it till later) because her Mother makes an invalid of her, overfeeds her, surrounds her with nurses, Doctors, and medicine bottles and never permits her to do anything. When, with the aid of the nurse, and a burglar friend of the nurse, the three young people steal the Patient's own pearl necklace, sell it, and so for the time have unlimited money, they encounter the other kind of dissatisfaction. They all go off to Africa, incognito, to enjoy themselves but they never have a happy moment; they cannot agree among themselves, there is the fear of detection and of the Patient's being returned to her Mother, they have nothing with which to occupy their time. It is all so useless as far as happiness is concerned, that they separate and go their several ways, having had much less fun than Private Meek who is dependant on the pay of a soldier in the ranks. Shaw leaves no doubt in our minds on this point of the rich, for he says,

The moral of my play is that our capitalistic system, with its golden exceptions of idle richery and its leaden rule of anxious poverty, is as desperate a failure from the point of view of the rich as of the poor. (1)

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Too True To Be Good" p. 341.

From both ends of the social scale then, Bernard Shaw sees the disasters of inequality, so reiterates, as fundamental to a solution, his claim for equality of income. This opens the question, given this condition of an equal income irrespective of ability or achievement, what will be the stimulus to labor? for the Fabians expect that there will be a standard whereby everyone will work to contribute a fair share to the sum total necessary for a well run society. Indeed, every able-bodied person is to work enough to repay the debt he incurred in childhood, to pay his way as he goes, to accumulate a surplus to cover enforced idleness through sickness and to provide a pension for his later years, as well as to leave something over for the betterment of the world. To this end, Trefusis, in An Unsocial Socialist (1883) tries to organize an international association of men pledged to share the world's work, as well as the produce of that work, justly and to refuse a share to those trying to get wealth without work. Again, in Shaw's discourse on schools in the Preface to "Misalliance" (1909-1910), he gives as one of his objections to the system, the fact that no one ever teaches that whoever consumes goods or services without producing their equivalent by his own work, is a thief. He arrives at the same conclusion in the Preface to "Major Barbara" (1905) and to "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" (1935).

In the nature of things a human creature must incur a considerable debt for its nurture and education (if it gets any) before it becomes productive. And as it can produce under under-modern conditions much more than it need consume it ought to be possible for it to pay off its debt and provide for its old age in addition to supporting itself during its active period. (1)

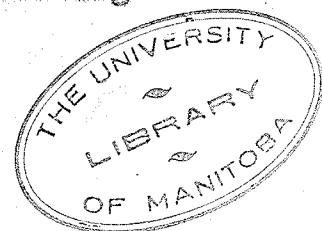
But immediately the government is up against the difficulty of eradicating the old idea that work is a curse and a disgrace and that some kinds of work are beneath the dignity of certain people. If it becomes necessary, the government will have to enforce compulsory social service as it enforced compulsory military service during the last war. However, the stimulus to labor will come, the Fabians consider, not so much through the compulsion of the government, as through the primary condition of communal effort, that one must work or starve; through the determination of other workers to make every one do a share of the work; through the desire for a bonus which will come with increased production; and through joy in creative work and a desire to excel. (2)

Still there is the problem of all kinds of work not being equally attractive and sought after. To ensure people volunteering for all forms of labor, the Fabians suggest such inducements as: more leisure, longer holidays and earlier retirement for those who are less agreeably employed. When, under Socialism, everyone comes to

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" p. 641.
- (2) Shaw. Fabian Essays pp. 166-8.

do a share of the nation's work, then there will be a more equal distribution of leisure than there is at present and since Shaw thinks that all wage workers value leisure more than money, they will be anxious for the day when Socialism is an established fact.

Since the Great War and the advent of Dictators, Bernard Shaw has had a new problem to think through: that of the place of the natural leader, the "born boss" as Shaw calls him, the person with exceptional ability. How will he fit into the Socialistic system. This problem Shaw presents in "The Millionairess" (1936). Eppy has a flair for business. Everything she turns her hand to, whether it is running the basement sweat shop in Commercial Road or transforming the "Old Pig and Whistle Inn", prospers, at least financially. In the Preface, Shaw discusses this vexed question of bosses. If only Eppy's services could be secured for society instead of being used for private profit, what an advantage the world would have, for the centralizing of all production and distribution will only be possible under the direction of a large number of people who have the ability to manage other people and industry. The only possibility Shaw sees of the services of the Eppys of the world being placed at the disposal of the world, is by introducing Socialism and by educating the children to think of success as accumulating wealth for all, not as accumulating



as much as possible for themselves. (1)

To the objection that this Utopia of equality is too impossible to contemplate its ever being achieved, Bernard Shaw points out that England already has considerable nationalization:

The army and navy, the civil service, the posts and telegraphs, and telephones, the roads and bridges, the lighthouses and royal dockyards and arsenals, are all nationalized services. (2)

Also, every year certain taxes simply take the money out of the pockets of the rich for the Government to redistribute to the poor in doles and pensions, which is a step towards equalization of income. In an essay, "The Transition to Social Democracy" (1889) Shaw notes further advances of Socialism in Factory Acts, extension of the Franchise, and State Education. Sidney Webb supports this view that people little realize the extent to which the State has taken over enterprises which used to be matters for private exploitation, nor how it controls by law those which it has not yet absorbed. Nationalization is being accomplished, with or without the world's consent and awareness.

As one proof of the desirability of introducing Socialism, with an equal income, Shaw cites the case of Women, particularly with reference to Marriage, and the attendant subjects of the Family and Children. So

- (1) "Communism is the fairy godmother who can transform Bosses into "servants of all the rest." (Shaw. Preface to "The Millionairess" p. 493)
- (2) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide p. 113.

frequently has he written on these vexed questions, that it will be impossible within the limits of this thesis to discuss more than a few of the works in which the ideas appear.

Under Capitalism, people are divided into classes by virtue of the amount of money they have, and there is very little intermarrying between classes. This restriction of choice of a mate, not to the man a woman loves, but to the one she can get in her own class, leads to unhappy marriages which are not conducive to the improvement of the race--an end toward which Bernard Shaw is anxious that everyone should be working. With the break up of the class caste-system, there would be much more happiness in the world, Shaw thinks, and since there are so many difficulties in the way of Selective Breeding of humans, Nature, given a free rein, will doubtless make as good a job as any one of improving the stock of civilized man. Then, too, with equal income, women whether married or single will be economically independent. That will greatly change their status and the way they will be treated, since marriage will no longer be compulsory as woman's only profession. It will eliminate, too, the necessity for a choice between prostitution and starvation. (1)

(1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide. chap. 16

Shaw objects to his being expected to think of marriage as a moral institution with regard for honor, chastity, temperance and health. He considers it the most licentious of human institutions, and therefore popular.

An idea which is illustrated in "Candida" (1894) and elsewhere, as fundamental to the nature of a true marriage, is that marriage should not be founded on a sexual contract, the slavery of the woman, or a chain on love, but on freedom, on actual human relationships and loyalties. It should be an alliance; or, as Soames put it in "Getting Married" (1908), Christian fellowship; or Sagamore in "The Millionairess" (1936), a mating of minds.

Another one of the things Shaw objects to is the body of law governing marriage in England. There is an extended discussion of these laws both in the play "Getting Married" (1908) and in its Preface. Because of the discovery at the eleventh hour of certain of these laws, two young people, Edith Bridgenorth and Cecil Sykes, delay their wedding ceremony while they and their relatives and a few guests discuss what is to be done; for they realize that the marriage contract is not going to be any magic spell which will change their natures nor cause them to live happily ever after. It is the Bishop who says,

I've told our last four Prime Ministers that
if they didn't make our marriage laws reasonable

there would be a strike against marriage.

(1)

And ^{he} tells those assembled that in his studies he has found that in a certain period of ancient Roman history, marriage was repudiated by the propertied class which went in for marriage settlements instead. The Bishop thinks that that is what they are coming to in England: deeds of partnership to replace the old vows. When Hotchkiss suggests that the company there present draw up the first English partnership deed, the Bishop approves, for he thinks they will find that what they have drawn up is very much worse than the existing law. They try the experiment and of course discover that they cannot agree on any of the points. This is just the conclusion at which Shaw usually arrives; namely, that marriage will persist at least in name, and that what is needed to make it tolerable is a change in the divorce laws. (2)

Shaw expects this change in a Socialistic State, for he anticipates within it, divorce granted upon request of either party with no questions asked and no stigma of disgrace attached. When this latter comes, he foresees

(1) Shaw. "Getting Married" p. 558

(2) "The private contract stage of this process was reached in Ancient Rome. The only practicable alternative to it seems to be such an extension of divorce as will reduce the risks and obligations of marriage to a degree at which they will be no worse than those of the alternatives to marriage."
(Shaw. Preface to "Getting Married" p. 19)

that woman will no longer be a slave who must either stay with her husband, however cruel, selfish, and disagreeable he may be, or leave and starve. She will have her own income and be able to leave and live comfortably and happily. The effect of this will be, Shaw believes, not the immediate breaking up of larger numbers of homes than at present, but a stabilizing of homes, for once husband and wife realize that the other may leave, each will probably improve his behaviour and treat his marital partner very much better than he does at present. Yet under Socialism and easy divorce, truly unsuitable and unhappy marriages may be dissolved. (1) (2)

Because of Shaw's early home life, because he saw possible danger in any home life with its narrow views, petty squabbles, sacrifice of the child's future for the sake of immediate help for the parents, and because he knew of cases where the child would have been much better

- (1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide Chapter 80 and Preface to "Getting Married." pp. 43-44
- (2) A.P. Herbert brought before the British House in July, 1937 a motion concerning the English divorce law. The following clauses were adopted as grounds for divorce: ^e desertion without cause for at least three years; cruelty; and incurable unsoundness of mind for five years. While this is still a far cry from what Shaw thinks necessary, it is possible that his preaching on the subject of divorce contributed to the intellectual awareness of the British public and made possible the acceptance of this extension.

off away from its home and family, he advocates that parents be made to justify the custody of their children on penalty of having the family dissolved for not achieving the purposes of a family, as he would have marriage dissolved for not achieving the purpose of marriage. Then children will not have to remain with tyrannical, neglectful parents who disregard their children's ordinary human rights and treat them as animals to be broken in. For, with an income assured them, there will be no scarcity of people willing to rear them properly. Or, the Socialist State may separate all children at an early age from their parents and assume the duty of rearing them and educating them just so far as is consistent with the necessity of living with others in a society, but not forcing them to waste time learning useless subjects. (1)

While Captain Shotover in "Heartbreak House" (1917) gives voice to some of Shaw's ideas on the relationship between parents and children, and while "You Never Can Tell" (1895-7) gives an amusing picture of this relationship, it is in "Misalliance" (1909-10), and especially in its Preface, that Shaw's body of thought on the subject is given. He protests against any attempt on the part of the parents to form the mind or character of a child on the grounds that, while no one knows what the child should be, there is an Energy behind every child

(1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide p. 402.

pressing it forward in an experimental way. Consequently the pursuit of learning should be by the child, who will in this way find his own level. But this he is not allowed to do in the schools to which he is sent to get him out of the way. Schools have arisen, Shaw thinks, as a solution to the incompatibility of children, noisy and inquisitive, attempting to live in the same house with adults who want quietness for their work. There is another point at which Shaw thinks the school system fails. When he went to school, he found that, although there were things in the world to interest him, they were not taught in the schools; interesting books were not used; neither was there any training for citizenship; and Shaw does not think that schools have improved since his day. Although a child has the right to live its own life, according to Shaw, yet that is not an unconditional right, for society has the right to demand that the child qualify itself to live in society without wasting other people's time. The child must be instructed that just as an adult cannot always do as he likes, neither can a child. Shaw suggests a graduated scale of attainments be set for granting privileges or permission to enter different classes of work which he must first be taught to regard,

Not as a course---but as a prime necessity
of a tolerable existence. (1)

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Misalliance" p. 65.

Shaw feels that if there were socialism, the subject of children and schools could be treated from the point of view of the interest of the whole community since it, not the parents, would be bearing the burden of supplying all the needs of the child. And finally, an education in the arts, including religion (to a child that is a belief which affects conduct) is what is needed to make the child as virile in mind as his freedom in sport now makes him in body.

A second proof of the desirability of the Socialism he was preaching is given by Shaw in connection with Doctors. No doubt Shaw's attack on the medical profession was intensified by his own experience during a ^{le} seige of small-pox, which left him an anti-vaccinationist for life, and by the untimely deaths of his friends William Archer and James Leigh Joynes.

As early as The Unsocial Socialist (1883), Shaw refers to the false professional etiquette which would permit one doctor to see a colleague make any number of mistakes rather than expose him.

Later, there is much ridiculing of doctor's practices and some amusing satire in three of the plays. In *The Philanderer* (1893) there is a Dr. Paramore who is greatly excited by his discovery of a new disease from which he says Colonel Craven is suffering. The doctor

puts his patient on a strict diet, prescribes a rigorous routine of living for the year of life remaining to him and writes articles for the medical journals. Then, when his theory is disproved, he is quite down-hearted, irrespective of the new lease of life for the supposed sufferer. This is exactly Samuel Butler's quarrel with the medical profession: its concern with theories rather than with individuals, whom the doctors would sacrifice to these theories.

"The Doctor's Dilemma" (1906), at the same time that it gives due honor to a valuable discovery, shows the danger of placing such a discovery in the hands of one unversed in its nature and exact use. It also depicts two types of doctor, equally narrow-minded in insisting that his practice is the only right one. These are the surgeons, Dr. Arthur Walpole, who, once an operation is made safe and there is a rage for it, prescribes that operation for every ailment; and Sir Patrick Colenso to whom drugs are an infallible cure.

The third play, "Too True To Be Good" (1931), has the Doctor discuss with a Microbe how people get notions and force the Doctor's hand.

Patients insist on having microbes nowadays.
When there is no microbe I invent one. (1)

And when the Microbe accuses the Doctor of letting the

(1) Shaw. "Too True To Be Good" p. 1134

Elderly lady worm another useless prescription out of him, the Doctor defends himself:

I can't cure any disease. But I get the credit when the patients cure themselves...
...I am a faith healer. You don't suppose I believe the bottles cure people? But the patients' faith in the bottle does. (1)

The Preface to the "Doctor's Dilemma" (1906) had previously brought out the same point. (2)

However, contrary to popular belief, Bernard Shaw does not so much despise and poke fun at the doctors as at the system under which they are forced to perpetrate the outrages which he finds so appalling. (3) Under Capitalism, the doctor is forced to make his living by charging patients for curing diseases which he tells them they have. Naturally the more diseases he can diagnose and the more operations perform, the more money he makes; and when it is a question of food and clothing

- (1) Shaw. "Too True To Be Good" p. 1134
- (2) "The demands of this poor public are not reasonable, but they are quite simple. It dreads disease and desires to be protected against it. But it is poor and wants to be protected cheaply....What the public wants, therefore, is a cheap magic charm to prevent, and a cheap pill or potion to cure all disease. It forces all such charms on the doctors." (Shaw. Preface to the "Doctor's Dilemma" pp. 245-6)
- (3) "It is not the fault of our doctors that the medical service of the community, as at present provided for, is a murderous absurdity. That any sane nation should give a surgeon a pecuniary interest in cutting off your leg, is enough to make one despair of political humanity." (Shaw. Preface to the "Doctor's Dilemma" p. 237)

for his family, he doesn't hesitate. (1) Vaccination and inoculation having become a craze, are steady sources of revenue in sickness or in health, and the doctor takes advantage of them. Also, there is the doctor's feverish working to get a little money ahead to assuage the fear that constantly torments him of being incapacitated, for his is a profession in which the moment he stops working, the money stops coming in.

Under Socialism this will be so different, points out Shaw, for there will be a steady income from birth to death; there will be a strong incentive, not just to cure sick people, but to keep healthy people well.

We already have, in the Medical Officer of Health, a sort of doctor who is free from the worst hardships, and consequently from the worst vices, of the private practitioner. He has a safe, dignified, responsible, independent position based wholly on the public health; whereas the private practitioner has a precarious, shabby-genteel, irresponsible, servile position, based wholly on the prevalence of illness. (2)

This last point, of keeping healthy people well, will be made infinitely easier under Socialism; for, by eliminating poverty, with its attendant evils of bad food, bad sanitation, dirt and overcrowding, it will rid the world of the greatest source of disease.

- (1) "Then comes the Doctor, with his tonics, which are simply additional cocktails, and his sure knowledge that if he tells you the truth about yourself and refuses to prescribe the tonics and the drugs, his children^{will} starve." (Shaw. Preface to "Too True To Be Good" pp. 344-5)
- (2) Shaw. Preface to "The Doctor's Dilemma" p. 272

A third brief for Socialism is the beneficial effect it will have on the Courts of Law whose fundamental tenet should be impartiality of justice. Now the law is made by the rich, since the poor cannot afford to enter parliament; its benefits reach only the rich since so frequently the poor cannot afford to hire legal assistance to take their grievances before a judge and jury; the jury is influenced by class prejudice; and the law that each must work to compensate for what he consumes will never be made by the idle rich. But with equal income, each of these points will be changed.

The other duty of the Courts of Law, the judgment and punishment of crime, will also undergo change. First, there will be less work for the Criminal Courts since a great percentage of crime will disappear when everyone has enough money to supply his needs and has no cause for jealousy because his neighbor has more wealth. (1) And second, just as Socialism will remove the condition of many people spending their lives waiting on the idle rich, so it will remove the condition of many people wasting their lives guarding multitudes of convicted criminals

(1) Shaw thinks most of the bad folks could be made passable good by giving them as much money as their neighbors and no more. (Shaw. Pen Portraits and Reviews p. 102)

in the State prisons. Since

The community has a right to put a price on
the right to live in it, (1)

it will come to see that it is more humane to painlessly,
unvindictively kill those who cost Society too much.

The question of these changes must have figured importantly in Shaw's thinking, if the number of times he wrote about them is any criterion. The whole play, "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" (1898-9), aims to show that both the rough justice of the Captain and the refined justice of the civilized courts, as represented by Sir Howard Mallan, are based on a passion for vengeance. In the Prefaces to "Androcles and the Lion" (1911-12) and "On the Rocks" (1933), Shaw points out how contrary to the teachings of Jesus are the present practices with regard to law-breakers; indeed, he knows of no Christian state which adheres to Jesus' teachings. He wonders that no one has tried the plan God used with Cain of putting a brand on him to indicate that he was unworthy to be sacrificed and then letting him face the world as best he could.

Then, in "Major Barbara" (1905), when old Rummy Mitchens and Barbara try different methods of making Bill see the error of his maltreating Jenny, Barbara wins, for

(1) Shaw. "Imprisonment" p. 298

she doesn't threaten him with the law, and punishment as Rummy does but makes him assume the moral responsibility for his act by treating him as an equal. His conscience reacts to this and makes him so uncomfortable that he wants to pay the girl for her suffering in order to expiate his crime. Barbara refuses the money as too easy a way out of his dilemma and lets him know that he cannot buy ease of conscience, he must change his life.

Years later, Shaw returns in the Preface to "On the Rocks" (1933) to what he sees as the essential questions in crime and punishment:

Are you pulling your weight in the social boat? Are you giving more trouble than you are worth? Have you earned the privilege of living in a civilized community? (1)

and discusses the idea of the necessity for extermination if a certain type of civilization and culture are desired.

All these ideas, and more, handled in greater detail, are to be found in Shaw's treatise^s "Imprisonment", which appears as a preface to Sidney and Beatrice Webbs' book "English Local Govern^{ment}" (1921-22). There he analyzes the aims of imprisonment as retributory, deterrent and reformatory and shows why the last two fail almost completely, leaving only vengeance accomplished. The subject is not left, however, without a suggestion from

(1) Shaw. Preface to "On the Rocks" p. 361.

Shaw of what plan might be tried. He divides society into three classes. The first class is comprised of the criminals, relatively few in number, Shaw believes, who cannot be deterred nor reformed and who should therefore be killed. The second class includes those who are too weak morally to go straight on their own responsibility, but who, under discipline and organization, are useful and happy. The last class is made up of those who have only occasional lapses into law-breaking. For these he recommends that they be made to reimburse the State and the victim and be warned that if they permit the lapses to recur with any frequency, they will be put into class two. This, to Shaw, seems so much more humane than the present system of putting all types in together under degrading conditions and with opportunities to learn more about crime than they knew when they entered. Like Samuel Butler, Shaw cannot see why we treat crime and disease so differently. An invalid is sent to the hospital, a criminal to jail. Then why have such a contrast between the hospital and the prison. Shaw closes on the note that the root^{civil} of the present penal system, as he sees it, is the belief in the possibility of imposing virtue from without when it can only be learned by living in full responsibility for one's actions, with conscience, part of the equipment of every normal person, as a guide.

A fourth recommendation for the introduction of Socialism is the greater freedom which will be permitted to the Press, at present owned by the rich and consequently controlled by them for their own interests. Shaw encountered this when he was working as critic on London newspapers but he persistently refused to write favorable reviews, regardless of merit, simply because the artist or playwright happened to be a friend of the owner.

The place where lack of freedom came most home to Shaw was in the theatre. There he ran against the seemingly impregnable wall of the Censorship which refused to license certain plays of his because the ideas contained therein were contrary to the accepted belief of the time. "Mrs. Warren's Profession" (1894) and "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" (1909) were two plays for which Shaw could not, for a long time, obtain a license, so in the preface to each he gives a history of the censorship and shows its inconsistencies and the harm it does to the theatre and the public.

What Bernard Shaw keeps trying to point out to the world is that being dissatisfied with existing conditions and desiring improvement will involve change, for there is no progress without change. This means that many current customs, conventions, and ideals must be challenged,

discarded, and replaced by new ones if mankind is to advance to something higher and better than he now knows. (1) Shaw has given much of his time and energy to preaching the necessity for being an unconventional evaluator; for being open-minded enough to see the superficiality of many controlling ideas and to give new ideas a hearing, even at the risk of shock, on the chance that there may be something worthwhile in them. For creation proceeds by a series of experiments called Evolution.

Put shortly and undramatically the case is that a civilization cannot progress without criticism and must therefore, to save itself from stagnation and putrefaction, declare impunity for criticism. This means impunity not only for propositions which, however novel, seem interesting, statesmanlike, and respectable, but for propositions that shock the uncritical as obscene, seditious, blasphemous, heretical, and revolutionary. (2)

Since, under Capitalism, people are periodically hurled into war against their fellow humans in a drive for new markets or in a frenzied effort to prevent them^{if} trying for new markets; and since all right-thinking people abhor the inevitable atrocities of war, Shaw advocates this as a fifth reason for working toward Socialism. To him, the very thought of men volunteering, or

(1) "The point to seize is that social progress takes effect through the replacement of old institutions by new ones; and since every institution involves the recognitions of the duty of conforming to it, progress must involve the repudiation of an established duty at every step." (Shaw. The Quintessence of Ibsenism. p. 7.)

(2) Shaw. Preface to "On the Rocks" pp. 376-7.

being conscripted, to fight and kill men with whom they have no quarrel, and of women urging them to do so from false patriotic motives or for the sake of the allowance they will receive, is senseless and has come about,

Simply by the original sin of allowing their countries to be moved and governed and fed and clothed by the pursuit of profit ^{for} ~~and~~ capitalists instead of by the pursuit of righteous prosperity for 'all people that on earth do dwell.' (1)

The populace, as well as the capitalists, share the responsibility for war-mindedness, for the people encourage the government to spend millions in armaments and new machines of destruction but protest furiously against the same government spending a penny to relieve poverty and its distress.

the power that governs the earth is not that of Life but of Death. (2)

It is in his book, What I Really Wrote About the War (1931), that Shaw has assembled his serious thinking on this subject. Here, too, he shows war as an offshoot of Capitalism and scorns the idea that one country can claim moral or diplomatic integrity more than another. He reminds us that the policy accepted at Locarno as great statesmanship, had been suggested by himself twelve years earlier, the year before the war indeed, but he receives no credit for it. And he offers proposals for the maintaining of European peace, under a League of Nations.

(1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide. p. 159.

(2) Shaw. "Man and Superman" p. 376.

Government, and the effect that Socialism will have on it, will be dealt with in a later section.

To the fear that Socialism will abolish religion, Shaw replies with the assurance that,

If your religion is compatible with equality of income, there is no reason on earth to fear that a Socialistic Government will treat it or you any worse than any other sort of government would. (1)

Also Shaw points out at some length the very sound economics in the teaching of Jesus which ~~are~~^{is} identical with the Socialist's aims and ideals. But he holds out no hope that the accretions of religion--the ritual, legends and superstitions--will be preserved.

A further fear, that Socialism will inflict a standardization by dictating what everyone shall eat and wear and think and do, is seen to be groundless when the extent to which there is already dictation, by rings of capitalists and by convention, is considered, and how well the world seems to thrive on it.

Because Shaw champions Common Sense in life, he has conducted a campaign against Romance. It has been mentioned previously that, during his period of critical writing, Shaw denounced romantic illusions in art, music, and the theatre. This campaign for reality he continues to wage through the medium of the play and extends it to other than these three subjects. To Butler and

(1) Shaw. The Intelligent Woman's Guide p. 412.

Shaw, seeking for truth, insisting that all things be submitted to the scrutiny of the intellect and be accepted or rejected accordingly, conventional acceptance by society does not make an idea infallible, nor place it above criticism. Shaw thinks that the reason people are seduced by romance, by ideals, (1) is because they are ignorant of the reality. Consequently^{en} Shaw undertakes the task of revealing the reality of a number of subjects.

For instance, in "John Bull's Other Island" (1904) Shaw pictures the absurdity of the hair-raising schemes too often inflicted upon Ireland and leaves us with the conviction that Ireland must find her salvation within herself, not expect it from without.

In the Preface to the same play, Shaw, by relating the story of the Denshawai Horror, attempts to destroy the illusion of the power and greatness of the British Empire and its fitness to rule others because of moral and political superiority which he sees as only coercive military rule. Shaw thinks British imperialism a stupid and blundering policy.

The whole Imperial military system of coercion and terrorism is unnatural, and the truth formulated by William Morris that 'no man is good enough to be another man's master' is true also of nations. (2)

- (1) "A fancy picture invented by the minority as a mask for the reality is called an ideal" (Shaw. The Quintessence of Ibsenism p. 24)
- (2) Shaw. Preface to "John Bull's Other Island" p. 470

In "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" (193⁵), he leaves the tragedy of the Empire to laugh at its follies: a squabble over precedence of the countries' navies assembled in the harbor to protest an English clergyman's association with the eugenic experiment being carried on there.

Another ideal which Shaw hopes to unmask for the world, is the type of morality based on respectability which Margaret Knox condemns thus,

That's all our respectability is, pretending, pretending, pretending. (1)

The play is built up around this restraint of middle class respectability in the home: the Knoxs' and Gilbeys' fear of losing the social position they had worked so hard to win for themselves, should anyone hear that their children have been in jail.

In "The Devil's Disciple" (1896-7), Shaw is contemptuous of the ideal that can conceive of no motive for a man's performing a great sacrifice except love for a woman.

From marriage and the science of medicine, Shaw has also tried stripping off the sentimental illusions to show the reality beneath, but both of these subjects have been covered.

(1) Shaw. "Fanny's First Play" p. 667.

Returning to the question of war, it is apparent that Shaw considered it one of the major departments wherein people are duped by romance instead of seeing reality. In the little recruiting pamphlet "O'Flaherty, V.C." (1915) it becomes plain that soldiers enlist, not from a patriotic desire to defend their king and country but for myriad reasons such as adventure, desire to see the world, boredom and tyranny at home, etc.

It is in one of the earliest plays, "Arms and the Man" (1894) that Shaw, in exuberant spirits, gives expression to what he sees as the foolish romanticizing of warfare. Captain Bluntschli disillusions Raina about war when he tells her that real soldiers carry chocolate, not cartridges in their holsters; and that her hero, Major Sergius Saranoff, had won his fame in a cavalry attack that was really a foolhardy blunder and would have failed ignominiously but for another blunder which left the enemy with the wrong ammunition.

The "Preface to John Bull's Other Island" (1904) is Shaw's indictment of army training. It doesn't make strong, self-controlled, resourceful men of its recruits, as is supposed, but weaklings, ferocious and cowardly, by treating them as children without any democratic freedom or responsibility. "Too True To Be Good" (1931) shows up a commanding officer who turns to water-color painting to occupy his mind and then gracefully accepts a K.C.B.

conferred for the work which has really been accomplished by Private Meek.

And finally, in the Preface to "Heartbreak House" (1917), it is shown that what happens to those who remain at home is as unbelievably disastrous as what happens to those in the army.

War puts a strain on human nature that breaks down the better half of it, and makes the worse half a diabolical virtue. (1)

A delirium ensues during which foods are adulterated, schools closed, culture flung off, law courts demoralized, pacifism persecuted, and swindlers able to live on money supposedly collected for Anti-Enemy leagues.

What Shaw objects to in each of the subjects mentioned is not the thing itself but to its being idealized, to its deceiving people by being made to seem more attractive than it really is.

Bernard Shaw has himself stated what he conceives to be his real function:

I am by profession what is called an original thinker, my business being to question and test all the established creeds and codes to see how far they are still valid and how far worn out or superseded, and even to draft new creeds and codes. (2)

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "Heartbreak House" p. 392
- (2) Quoted by Rattray. Bernard Shaw p. 218

It seems evident that Shaw has been doing just this through his Socialistic writings: testing conventional ideas, especially those of long standing; trying to persuade people to discard the out-dated and useless ones; and presenting positive concepts to take their place. Reading of these new concepts, as presented in his work, one cannot but be aware of how sincerely convinced Shaw himself is of the truth of the statements he makes and of the worth of the redress he offers.

Creative Evolution

Shaw, like John Bunyan, has not permitted any of the controversies of his time to pass unnoticed and unstudied.

(1) All through the ages religion has been a subject for much discussion, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are no exception. In this field, too, Shaw continues to function as an original thinker.

It has already been stated, but will bear repeating, that Shaw realizes civilization's need for a religion as a matter of life or death. This need he felt first in himself.

I had the intellectual habit; and my natural combination of critical faculty with literary resource needed only a clear comprehension of life in the light of an intelligible theory; in short, a religion, to set it in triumphant operation. It was the lack of this last qualification that lamed me in those early days in Victoria Grove. (2)

(1) Stebbing. Prefatory remarks on "The Seventh Day Sabbath" in The Entire Works of John Bunyan Vol. 1V p.193

(2) Shaw. Preface to "Immaturity" p. 680

He sees the need, too, in the education of children. Shaw feels it has been a great mistake to discontinue religious teaching in the schools, for, even though the child may later reconsider his beliefs, at the time a religion affects his conduct, gives him a code of honor, and appeals to the desire for perfection within him. Without this, the child only obeys and behaves when he is watched or to avoid punishment. After the child leaves school and takes his place in the world, he will still need some standard beliefs, formulated into a religion if he is not to drift to destruction at the hands of opportunists in the political and social worlds. (1)

"Heartbreak House" (1917) pictures the futility of a society which lacks design and purpose. And in a later play, "Too True To Be Good" (1931), Shaw is still emphasizing the need of religion by showing the complete absence of religious spirit in modern civilization. The play closes with the preacher-burglar on the beach, with a sea fog slowly thickening about him, declaiming that the world has outgrown its religion and has inserted the fatal word "not" into all its creeds. But this will not

- (1) "Goodnatured, unambitious men are cowards when they have no religion. They are dominated and exploited, not only by greedy weaklings....but by able and sound administrators who can do nothing else with them than dominate and exploit them." (Shaw. Preface to "Methusalem" p. 502)

suffice. He says,

I must have affirmations to preach. Without them the young will not listen to me. The preacher must preach the way of life. I must find the way of life, for myself and all of us, or we shall surely perish. (1)

Before the age of ten, Bernard Shaw had decided that Christianity--as he knew it from his experience in the Irish Protestant Church--was a failure. Judging all churches by this one, he has assumed all religion as taught in the churches, to be just such a failure. (2)

Some of the features wherein Shaw detects this failure in the Christian Church are these. The creed of the Church is a barrier to many as it is not one which is credible and Shaw feels that the Church owes that much to its worshippers, that the creed be intellectually honest.

When religious and ethical formulae become so obsolete that no man of strong mind can believe them, they have also reached the point at which no man of high character will profess them; and from that moment until they are formally disestablished, they stand at the door of every profession and every public office to keep out every able man who is not a sophist or a liar. A nation which revises its parish councils once in three years but will

(1) Shaw. "Too True To Be Good" p. 1167

(2) "The Church is on the rocks, breaking up. I told him (the rector) it would unless it headed for God's open sea." (Shaw. "Heartbreak House" p. 801)

not revise its articles of religion once in three hundred, is a nation that needs remaking. (1)

Shaw blames the clergy for preventing any reformation in religious beliefs as they insist on the Bible as infallible when they should be encouraging people to read it for themselves, honestly trying to understand it and remembering that it could have been inspired by God and still have man-made mistakes in its writing and translation. The fact that the Church does not encourage freethinking is proof to Shaw that it must have doubts of the validity of its doctrine and be afraid of the result should Science and Religion meet. One of these beliefs that made Shaw and others turn with relief to Charles Darwin's theory was,

the notion that everything that happened in the world was the arbitrary personal act of an arbitrary personal god of dangerously jealous and cruel personal character. (2)

Another point of failure is in the Church permitting rich people to think that they can do as they please through the week and then atone for any misdeeds by attending church on Sunday and by money gifts; (3) or that they can undo by repentance the evil they have done.

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "Man and Superman" p. 185
- (2) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah" p. 520
- (3) "All religious organizations exist by selling themselves to the rich." (Shaw. "Major Barbara" p. 480.)

The inability of the Church to remain as one body, its breaking up into numerous sects which dispute among themselves and persecute one another, has seriously weakened its prestige. In The Adventures of a Black Girl (1932), Shaw gives a vivid picture of this. Peter and others come in carrying unsubstantial paper churches and each claims to be the true Church. Each calls to the Black Girl not to believe the others. They throw stones at one another and then it is discovered that they are blind--as the Church is blind to the world's needs.

Then there is the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland where the poor peasantry is held completely under the thumb of the wealthy clergy in matters of money, education and freedom of thought. Also, Shaw thinks that the Church should teach its people that everyone must justify his existence by doing sufficient work to pay his way in the world--but it doesn't. Shaw uses the idea of the Day of Judgment in "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" (1935) to drive home his point that it is desirable for people to think that they are responsible for the use they make of their lives and will be called to account for it.

But in "Fanny's First Play" (1910), Shaw has Mrs. Knox bring the really telling indictment against religion:

We're all right as long as things go on
the way they always did; and it goes on all
right until something out of the way hap-
pens. We find out then that with all our

respectability and piety, we've no real religion and no way of telling right from wrong. We've nothing but our habits; and when they're upset, where are we? (1)

In spite of Bernard Shaw's clear-eyed comprehension of these points of failure in the Christian Church, and his rejection of some of its beliefs, it seems no exaggeration to say that all his life Shaw has championed the cause of Jesus. Scames says in "Getting Married" (1908),

I am a Christian, that obliges me to be a Communist. (2)

It is this social and economic aspect of Christianity, which forms such a large part of Jesus' teaching, that Shaw endorses whole heartedly and has endeavored to disseminate. Although in his own life time Jesus was considered an impractical dreamer, the ideas which he preached now seem sound common sense to Shaw and he marvels that no state has yet seen fit to put them into practice.

In the Preface to "Androcles and the Lion" (1911-12) in the section "On the Prospects of Christianity", he discusses in detail these doctrines: God is a spirit and not an elderly gentleman to be bribed and begged from. Get rid of property. Get rid of punishment and revenge. Get rid of your family entanglements. (3) The last three of

- (1) Shaw. "Panny's First Play" p. 676
- (2) Shaw. "Getting Married" p. 588
- (3) Shaw. Preface to "Androcles and the Lion" p. 574

these have already been linked to Shaw's social gospel and need not here be given further consideration. The first indicates one of Shaw's major disagreements with what he thinks all Churches teach. He discards salvationism or "Crosstianity" as he so aptly calls it. Instead of having to retain full moral responsibility for his acts, it is too easy for man to think he may do as he pleases and then have his debt cancelled by professing faith in the atonement for all, obtained by Christ's dying on the cross. (1) And it is ludicrous to accord worship to the cross itself--symbol of torture and revenge--when Jesus preached so definitely against punishment as revenge. Shaw feels sure that Jesus would not endorse "Crosstianity".

Then the Bible itself has kept many people from embracing Christianity because of the legends and miracles in it which they cannot credit. But Shaw sees no reason why they should be taken any more literally than any

- (1) "Tradition of a blood sacrifice whereby the vengeance of a terribly angry god can be bought off by a vicarious and hideously cruel blood sacrifice persists even through the New Testament, where it attaches itself to the torture and execution of Jesus--as a means by which we can all cheat our consciences, evade our moral responsibilities and turn our shame into self-congratulation by loading all our infamies on to the scourged shoulders of Christ. It would be hard to imagine a more demoralizing and unchristian doctrine." (Shaw. Preface to "The Adventures of a Black Girl" p. 649)

other legends which are the heritage of the race and necessary for the understanding of truths by the multitude. He does not see that they in any way affect the central teachings of Jesus.

What is to many people the foundation on which the Christian religion has been built; the belief in the divinity of Jesus, is completely discarded by Shaw. He thinks, as many others have thought, that

the legend of the divine birth was sure to be attached sooner or later to every eminent person in Roman imperial times. (1)

However, he leaves that point to be settled by each individual and reiterates the one that is important in his own eyes:

Decidedly, whether you think Jesus was God or not, you must admit that he was a first-rate political economist. (2)

One further point at which Shaw's practice parallels Jesus' is in his looking at the members of the human race, not as they are, but in the light of their possibilities, of what they might become.

Being convinced of the need for a religion, and of the failure of Christianity, Bernard Shaw for some time looked on Socialism as the new religion to fill this need, for he saw the possibility of its exerting a definite ethical influence in the lives of men. Then he became

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Androcles and the Lion" p. 556
 (2) Ibid. p. 580

conscious that Socialism would not do and, as he was broad-minded enough to be able to change his opinions, (1) he shifted his point of view from an economic to a philosophic interpretation of life, though he never forgot the economic motivation or overlooked the effects of the injustices and inequalities of material conditions on the spiritual development.

The reason that Socialism was found wanting, as a religion, was that a religion must be essentially spiritual, the expression of man's need to indentify himself with powers greater than himself and thus get into a soul-satisfying relationship with them. (2) Shaw felt that he found this central exalted idea in Creative Evolution which is, he says;

the religion of the twentieth century newly arisen from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity, of mere scepticism, and of the soulless affirmations and blind negations of the Mechanists and Neo-Darwinians. But it cannot become a popular religion until it has its legends, its parables, its miracles. (3)

Shaw offers his play "Back to Methuselah" (1921) as a

- (1) That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scrapes 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. If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and a better one for tomorrow. (Shaw. "Major Barbara" p. 498).
- (2) Harris. Bernard Shaw p. 355
- (3) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah" p. 541

legend of the new faith, as he had offered "Man and Superman" (1903) earlier:

And as the conception of Creative Evolution developed, I saw that we were at last within reach of a faith which complied with the first condition of all the religions that have ever taken hold of humanity: namely, that it must be, first and fundamentally, a science of metaphysics. (1)

When Darwin first popularized Evolution, Shaw and his contemporaries grasped at the idea that the world could have made itself, as a relief from the Biblical theories of life and God. But Shaw later questions the sufficiency of Darwin's theory. No doubt he was greatly influenced in his thinking by Samuel Butler's furious reaction against Darwin as one who had banished mind from the universe by concentrating on Circumstantial Selection in Evolution, and by Butler's acceptance of Lamarckian Evolution, formerly called Functional adaptation and now Creative Evolution. Another reason why Shaw came to question Darwin and to feel contempt for the Neo-Darwinians was because of the inane controversies which occupied their time and the cruel and senseless experiments by which they attempted to prove them. Furthermore, they discounted free-will and therefore self-control, which did not fit in with Shaw's insistence on man's assuming full moral responsibility for his actions.

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah" p. 345.

The nucleus of Butler's and Shaw's theory of Creative Evolution may be briefly expressed thus: There is a Force within man, not blind and mechanical, nor yet perfect and complete, but aspiring, struggling upwards, changing by trial and error. As the monkey had evolved from the amoeba, and man from the monkey, not just by chance fitting into his environment and so surviving, but by desiring and striving to adapt himself to his environment, so a higher being than man--a Superman--would in time evolve, slowly it is true, for the amount of change from generation to generation in increased command over self, which is the only command relevant to man's evolution into a higher being, is infinitesimal. According to their premise, it is the race which is all important. The Life Force, which they identify with God, cares little for the individual and his happiness, though it will use outstanding individuals to achieve its purpose.

This statement may be amplified at a number of points. For instance: this Force. Don Juan, in "Man and Superman" (1903) felt it working within him. As his finger was a part of him, so he was a part of Nature with a brain to find out the why of things so he would be able to direct his course in life, not just drift. (1)

- (1) "Though the Life Force supplies us with its own purpose it has no other brains to work with than those it has painfully and imperfectly evolved in our heads." (Shaw. Preface to "The Irrational Knot" p. 689)

The Force within him was striving for a greater self-consciousness and self-understanding in pursuit of greater power and knowledge. (1)

One reason for crediting this Force with a purpose is that the world doesn't look like pure accident. There are evidences of design more wonderful than in a watch, which Shaw thinks few people could conceive of having made itself. But while there is a purpose, there does not seem a definite plan, rather a trial and error method. Hence Shaw thinks of childhood as a phase in the remanufacture of the Life Stuff, an experiment for Superman, and as no one can say what the Life Force intends for any child, his own feelings should be allowed to determine what the Life Force wants of him. With the brains developed in him by the Life Force, man must continue to improve the race if he is to save himself, for

Man is not God's last word: God can still create. If you cannot do His work He will produce some being who can---The power my brother calls God proceeds by the method of Trial and Error; and if we turn out to be one of the errors, we shall go the way of all other scrapped experiments. (2)

This identification of God with the Life Force--an eternal but as yet unfulfilled purpose, instead of an omnipotent Being, and able to act solely through the agency of the creatures evolved on earth--has brought many bitter denunciations on Shaw's head.

- (1) Shaw. "Man and Superman." pp. 385-6
- (2) Shaw. "Back to Methuselah" p. 888

Two plays in which Shaw gives concrete examples of individuals coming into conflict with the Creative Will are "St. Joan" (1923) and "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" (1909). Within Joan was struggling for expression the evolutionary principle of the right of private opinion, especially in religious matters. She was defeated, as an individual, but not so the Life Force which continued to try through other individuals until there is now the right to personal judgment undictated by the church.

Blanco Posnet felt himself as clay in the grip of some Force mightier than himself which made him do something that he never intended--give up a horse in an attempt to save a child's life, when the loss of the horse meant his almost certain capture, with trial and death to follow. Blanco himself does not understand what made him do it. In a sense he resents it, and yet he is happy and wants it to happen to him again.

You bet He didn't make us for nothing; and He wouldn't have made us at all if He could have done His work without us. By Gum, that must be what we're for! He'd never have made us to be rotten drunken blackguards like me, and good-for-nothing rips like Feemy. He made me because He had a job for me. He let me run loose till the job was ready; and then I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging. And I tell you it didn't feel rotten: it felt bully, just bully. (1)

(1) Shaw. "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet." p. 602

Shaw realized that this is what qualifies Creative Evolution to be a religion. As he expressed it elsewhere:

The true joy in life is being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. (1)

the conception of something greater than oneself and striving to bring it into existence i.e. helping Life in its struggle upward. (2)

In this solemn and steadfast conception of life and its meaning in terms of the Life Force religion, Shaw is a mystic.

One of the principal ramifications of this belief in the Life Force is its effect on Marriage. According to Shaw, woman has a determination to be married at all costs as she has a primary urge toward reproduction--the working of the Life Force within her--and because of this, the initiative comes from her and she becomes the pursuer of man and as unscrupulous as a beast of prey. This particular point is the one around which the play "Man and Superman" (1903) is written. Ann Whitefield wants to marry Tanner and pursues him relentlessly, at home and in a mad auto race through the Spanish Sierras, until she gains her point. She has been so blatant, so tactless about it that it is hard to understand Tanner's succumbing. Half a dozen other

(1) Shaw. Epistle Dedicatory to "Man and Superman" p. 163

(2) Shaw. "Man and Superman" p. 375

instances of this same motif can so easily be named. Julia Craven in "The Philanderer" (1893), Gloria Glandon in "You Never Can Tell" (1897), Hypatia in "Misalliance" (1910), Aloysia Brollikins in "On the Rocks" (1933) and Eppy in "The Millionairess" (1936). From the dates of these different plays it is deducible that this theory, or better, conviction, of Woman the Pursuer, has been one that has not wavered nor changed throughout Shaw's career.

Another ramification is its effect on morality. The Life Force will revolt against much current, ready-made morality and replace it with codes of thought and conduct which will appear as misconduct to those who are quite satisfied with the present accepted ideas. This revolt has already come independently through the pens of Ibsen and Shaw.

I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular, I regard much current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters. (1)

Such is Shaw's faith in the natural goodness of human beings, in their ability to do right if given a chance; such his belief in the rigorous discipline of their own

(1) Shaw. Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" pp. 410-411

passions as more severe than convention, that he feels man should be allowed some freedom to experiment, by stepping outside of the bounds laid out by society, to prevent the world from becoming stagnant.

But Shaw realizes that a ready made code of conduct is a necessity to a community as a convenience for those who have not the ability or the time to formulate one for themselves. The dangers are in relieving man of the ethical responsibility of his own actions, and in the code becoming static and a blind for crimes committed in its name. (1)

This last is what Shaw feels has happened in his day and in his effort to correct the morals he realizes he will cause pain:

The nation's morals are like its teeth: the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them. Prevent dentists and dramatists from giving pain, and not only will our morals become as carious as our teeth, but toothache and the plagues that follow neglected morality will presently cause more agony than all the dentists and dramatists at their worst have caused since the world began. (2)

Shaw has disturbed many people with his views of life, its meaning and purpose, but this has not caused him to waver in his devotion to them nor in his frank and fearless presentation of them.

- (1) Shaw. The Sanity of Art. pp. 50-52
- (2) Shaw. Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" p. 436

Politics..

The third phase of Bernard Shaw's message, namely Politics, follows naturally from the first two, Socialism and Creative Evolution, and is dependent on them. From the time of the publication of the Apple Cart (1929), Shaw has written principally of the futility of the present world system particularly with respect to government, although this subject had not passed unmentioned before:

Lady Chavender. But you don't govern the country, Arthur. The country isn't governed: it just slumocks along anyhow.

Sir Arthur. I have to govern the country within Democratic limits. I cannot go faster than our voters will let me.

Lady Chavender. Oh, your voters! What do they know about government? Football, prizefighting, war: that is what they like. (1)

As Bernard Shaw does not express himself on a subject until he has given it due study and thought, it is a considered opinion that he offers when he pronounces Democracy, as a means of government, a failure.

(2) In the Preface to "The Apple Cart" (1929) he examines Abraham Lincoln's conception of Democracy, supposedly delivered on the battlefield of Gettysburg.

Democracy is defined as government of

(1) Shaw. "On the Rocks." p. 1185.

(2) Shaw. Preface to "Too True to Be Good" p. 350.

the people, for the people, by the people.

(1)

Shaw agrees that the first is increasingly necessary as our civilization becomes more complex, and the second is very important, but he thinks the third impossible since the masses are quite incapable of making their own laws, selecting the right leaders or governing themselves. Indeed it is largely because democracy tries to carry out this third point that Shaw sees it as a failure. Under it, the vote is extended to all adults to use to prevent their leaders from tyrannizing over them. Only it achieves this result so well that it prevents its leaders doing anything and leaves room for plutocracy to ^tstep in and assume command for its own profit. This is what Shaw shows as having happened in "The Apple Cart" (1929). Previous to this, in the Preface of "Back to Methuselah" (1921), Shaw made the same point: the country is being governed by opportunists who have discovered that the British public is so ignorant and incapable that anything can be imposed on it. Shaw feels that government by consent of the governed might be fairly satisfactory but no country has yet achieved that for the people do not really want to be governed. They grumble at every tax no matter how worthy the purpose

(1) Shaw. Preface to "The Apple Cart" p. 330

for which it may be levied.

In "On the Rocks" (1933) both the Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Chavender, and Old Hipney, on the delegation from the Isle of Cats, see through the pretence of democracy as government by the people and realize that what the people need is a leadership that will tell them what to do and see that they do it. (1)

Then the question is how to select the right people to govern and how to control them once they are in power. Shaw does not think the present method of campaign and election is any help in selecting the right people for parliament for the electors cannot believe the literature nor the speeches and the meetings are shocking exhibitions of lack of self-control. They cannot be sure they are not voting for an ignoramus. (2) Perhaps no one running is competent for it is not always possible to persuade the best and most capable people to run for office. And doubtless those who do not get elected would give much the same government as those who are returned.

The other point at which Shaw is impatient with

(1) Shaw. "On the Rocks" pp. 1208, 1213.

(2) Begonia Brown, with no knowledge of politics, accepts the Conservative Nomination for Camberwell and is confident of being elected because she has been a lot in the papers recently and lots of people in Camberwell think as she does. (Shaw. Geneva p. 48)

current democracy is the slowness with which the machinery of Parliament is set in motion. As he mentions in the Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" (1909), Dickens long ago pointed out the evasiveness of party parliamentarians who, when an abuse became oppressive enough that something had to be done, set to work to find out "How Not to Do It". (1) Shaw thinks the British House is pretty much at that stage still. The members do nothing officially but talk; consequently it takes them years to complete a piece of work that a borough council could accomplish at one meeting. (2) This waste of time and effort appalls Shaw.

Shaw bases his suggested solution of the first two points of Lincoln's definition of democracy--government of the people, for the people--and of the question of parliamentary dilatoriness, on his Socialistic principles.

Government of the people will mean that the government must see to two things: that the people

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" p. 400.
- (2) Glenmorison in "On the Rocks" consoles the other Members with the suggestion that they have nothing to worry about in Sir Arthur's having become a Socialist for it will take fifty years to get all the bills necessary for the introduction of Socialism passed through the two Houses. (p. 1210)

behave properly and work productively. This latter means, as has been discussed in some detail in this thesis under nationalization and equal income,(1) that every person must work enough to pay his way in the world.

Government for the people will mean a decided reversal in governmental policy. At present the government sanctions the amassing of fortunes by a few individuals at the evident expense of the majority and there is no possible way for anyone of these rich men--supposing he should want to--to follow his Christian principles and divide his wealth with the poor except through the action of parliament. For if he tried to sell his stocks and bonds, some other capitalist would buy them and the working class see no appreciable difference in the world. If all capitalists tried to sell in order to give to the poor, the markets would drop and the stock be worthless. If he did try to dispense his own wealth it probably wouldn't reach the right people. If he used it to effect public improvements, e.g. a public park, the worker wouldn't have time to enjoy it and the surrounding property would so rise in value that the poor would be unable to pay the rent and have to move away. But under Socialism the nationalization of land and industry will deflect the profits made thereon from the pockets of the idle rich to the

(1) pp. 25-38

pockets of every individual. Also, since laws will no longer be framed by the rich for their own benefit, but by the government for the benefit of all, there will be fewer abuses. And finally, with the extension of borough councils and centralized control under Socialism, the business of the country will be handled with much greater alacrity.

But government by the people has left, and will leave, the world in a hopeless plight, for the majority of people are no more capable of governing than they are of becoming skilled surgeons or of painting masterpieces. Government, to be successful, must be by those capable of governing, by those who will make it their vocation because they are adapted for it, interested in it, and willing to give time and effort to it. (1) With equal income this will be possible as there will be no inducement to enter politics other than interest in the work. On this basis Shaw suggests that qualified people be formed into panels according to their ability to do certain types of political work--international, national, municipal--and that the voters select their rulers from these panels. In this way they will at least be assured (they are not at present) that it is no incompetent, dishonest self-seeker they are returning to parliament. As well as an interest in the work, politicians need a religion to have convictions

- (1) "A vocation for politics, though essentially a religious vocation, must be on the same footing as a vocation for music or mathematics or cooking--or farming or any other born aptitude." (Shaw. Preface to "Too True To Be Good" p. 351)

on which to act--there has been too much indifference and drifting along the path of least resistance--for in the final analysis the people have to depend on the consciences of the men elected and trust them to support movements which will lead to the improvement of the common weal. (1)

Even granted that these panels might by some means be set up, (Shaw admits he has found no infallible test for political capacity) there is still the so far insurmountable difficulty that

the selection and election are of the superior by the inferior (2)

This indicates why Shaw talks of the political need for Supermen, the race which the Life Force is in the process of evolving from man. Since one Superman will not do, for democracy cannot rise above the level of the masses, Shaw thinks the present race of humans must assist Creative Evolution and he thinks Socialism is the only possible way to do it.

We must either breed political capacity or be ruined by Democracy which was forced on us by the failure of the older alternatives. Yet if Despotism failed only for want of a capable benevolent despot, what chance has Democracy, which requires a whole population of capable voters---Being cowards, we defeat natural selection under cover of philanthropy: being slug-

- (1) "all this country or any country has to stand between it and blue hell is the consciences of them that are capable of governing it." (Shaw. "On the Rocks" p. 1214.)
- (2) Shaw. Preface to "Saint Joan" p. 623

gards, we neglect artificial selection under cover of delicacy and morality. (1)

Man is a failure as a political animal. The creative forces which produce him must produce something better. (2)

There is one other thing, besides selective breeding, that Shaw considers could be done under Socialism to help the political situation and that is the education of each child to be a better citizen; to understand, appreciate and become accustomed to freedom and responsibility from infancy instead of expecting him to use them wisely when he suddenly falls heir to them at twenty-one after an upbringing and education based on subjection to authority. Children must be taught that they are in the world, not for what they can get out of it for themselves but to make it a better place for everybody to live in. (3)

To achieve this better world, Shaw is convinced that we must first plan it and then will it.

This summing up of the body of Shaw's message on Socialism, Religion and Politics has been necessarily lengthy because of the vast amount of preaching he has done on each of these subjects, and because of the variety and richness of his ideas.

- (1) Shaw. Epistle Dedicatory to "Man and Superman" p. 159
- (2) Shaw. Geneva p. 102
- (3) Shaw. "On the Rocks." p. 1210.

Method

In addition to this great message for his age, and greatly enhancing it, is Shaw's method of presentation which is at once arresting and compelling.

Similar to that of the Medieval Church is Shaw's practice of putting his message into more than one form. The miracle plays and the formal sermons of the Church of the Middle ages went hand in hand to furnish religious instruction and edification for the people. The plays were an offshoot of the church's liturgy which lent itself admirably to simple dialogues. These left on the minds of the parishioners a vivid impression of some desirable fact of church or Biblical history or some moral quality which was later expounded and intensified by the sermon. This is what Shaw does, centuries later. To attract the public and interest it if possible, he writes a play containing some central idea which he wishes to portray. Then, because he cannot say in a play all he wishes to on the subject, he writes a preface to clarify and elaborate his idea. The preface is Mr. Shaw's sermon.

A prominent feature of these early church plays was the comedy introduced. No one considered that this affected the dignity of the play nor weakened the medieval

man's faith in his church.

No man with any faith worth respecting in any religion worth holding ever dreams that it can be shaken by a joke....The truth is, humor is one of the great purifiers of religion. (1)

Later, in the seventeenth century, there is the example of Thomas Fuller who made jokes do duty for sighs and turned pathos to mirth. This playful spirit, in an age predominantly "other-worldly", brought considerable criticism on Fuller's head. Some of the very serious considered it out of place in such a subject as Church History; but Fuller intended no irreverence, it was just his manner and could not be separated from his work. It is a truism that a merry laugh is no more necessarily synonymous with irreverence than solemnity and a long face are with reverence.

It is equally true that Shaw's comedy is not intended to impair any ideas or beliefs that he thinks worth holding; but it is used for a very definite reason. Shaw had seen Samuel Butler present his ideas only to be misunderstood and to have his ideas ignored. As Shaw did not propose to have this happen to himself or to his ideas, he decided to popularize them to gain a hearing for them. He knew that this had been done through the ages by clothing ideas in a pretended lightness of tone, before sending them forth to face the multitude, to insure them against demolition by an angry public afraid for its established con-

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Immaturity" p. 668

ventions and proprieties.

From Molière to Oscar Wilde we had a line of comedic playwrights who were chastening morals by ridicule and clearing our minds of cant, and thereby shewing an uneasiness in the presence of error which is the surest symptom of intellectual vitality. (1)

Henderson quotes Shaw as saying,

Waggery as a medium is invaluable. My case is really the case of Rabelais over again. When I first began to promulgate my opinions, I found that they appeared extravagant and even insane. In order to get a hearing, it was necessary for me to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic, with the license of a jester. Fortunately the matter was very easy. I found that I had only to say with perfect simplicity what I seriously meant just as it struck me, to make everybody laugh. My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say and then say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest. (2)

While admitting that Shaw finds sheer joy just in preaching, the basic fact to hold is that he has always been a preacher fired with a purpose, in deadly earnest over the state in which he finds the world and over the remedy he offers. For this reason his art has been deliberately didactic. The idea of art for art's sake and laughter as an end in itself, he has never countenanced. (3)

- (1) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah" p. 543
- (2) Quoted by Henderson. Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet p. 295 from Clarence Rook. "George Bernard Shaw" in The Chap-Book Nov. 1, 1896, p. 539
- (3) "No doubt I must recognize, as even the Ancient Mariner did, that I must tell my story entertainingly if I am to hold the wedding guest spellbound in spite of the siren sounds of the loud bassoon. But "for art's sake" alone I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." (Shaw. Epistle Dedicatory to "Man and Superman" p. 165

If I were prevented from producing immoral and heretical plays, I should cease to write for the theatre and propagate my views from the platform and through books. (1)

Consequently, although first attracted by the poetic qualities of Ibsen's plays, it was the didactic character of them that made Shaw Ibsen's champion in England.

If a Puritan may be defined as one who rebels against traditional and formal usages and is determined to make people think that they, too, may rebel, then Bernard Shaw is distinctly a Puritan. His means of getting people to think has been the same as the means used by Swift, Butler and Ibsen. Swift grasped his age's illusions concerning science, learning, law and war; turned them inside out and called on people to look and see for themselves how false the illusions were. Butler deliberately shocked the prejudices of the nineteenth century. On the original title page of his manuscript of The Way of All Flesh appeared the French proverb,

Quand on fait des omelettes il faut croquer des oeufs.

Ibsen taught Shaw that plays could be used to unmask the false ideals to which people cling. Since that time, Shaw has become known as the world's champion unmasker, an iconoclast, who disturbs and irritates all who hear him, and forces them to think, by showing the contrast between the gilded exterior and the reality beneath; by

(1) Shaw. Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" p. 411.

sloughing off the romantic ideals accumulated through the years about an unlovely nucleus which people have forgotten exists or to which they deliberately blind themselves. It is this knack of Shaw's of seeing two aspects of a question and of drawing attention to the one commonly overlooked, the less pleasant one, that annoys his public so. The people are happier for the moment in their ignorance and don't want to be perturbed. Thomas T. Champion, Canadian Press Staff Writer, has called Shaw,

The tonic of his time, very bitter to the taste, but stimulating.

Perhaps it is because of this irritating quality that Shaw has so frequently been accused of being destructive but rarely constructive in his ideas. This must surely be a superficial, ill-considered opinion. He has been destructive, certainly, for he could not introduce new ideas until he had made room for them by clearing men's minds of some of the old ones. But he goes further, he does more than Bunyan suggests as possible:

For a man can do no more in this matter than to detect and condemn the wickedness, warn the evil doer of the judgment and fly therefrom himself. But O that I might not only deliver myself! O that many would hear and turn at this my cry from sin! (1)

Shaw offers constructive ideas of what they may turn to. It does not seem possible that anyone who has studied the entirety of Shaw's works and distilled from them his

(1) Bunyan. Introduction "Author to Reader" in Life and Death of Mr. Badman p. 146

serious, consistent message, could doubt that Shaw has offered positive suggestions as well as negative ones.

Agreement with Shaw's views and suggestions in all particulars is no more probable than agreement with all that is said by preachers in church pulpits, but it is not necessary to agree with them to learn from them. Even though not always convinced, the stimulus to thinking necessary to bring forward counter arguments will open a person's eyes to the folly and evil about him and set him on the road that Shaw desires that he travel: namely, toward a better world. It is true that Shaw has not worked out in complete detail all of his constructive suggestions, for he has encountered the same difficulty which every reformer finds: that of the willingness of human beings to submit to social convention, no matter how unpleasant and injurious, rather than admit that they are victims. Shaw knows that a detailed plan is of no use until the people come to desire something better. Then they will find a way for themselves, so Shaw concentrates on inspiring them with an urge toward perfection and in giving them a lead toward the solution of their problems.

In the Preface to "Three Plays by Brieux" (1909), Shaw discusses the difference in the way Ibsen and Brieux end their plays. Ibsen adds the catastrophe which follows a poor, mean, useless life but Brieux simply shows the

bit of life, then leaves the play-goers with the conclusion to draw and an uneasy feeling that they themselves are implicated, so must find a solution to the problem.

This latter is Shaw's way. He does not hamper his art by pointing a definite moral, as was the custom with many seventeenth century preachers; he shows in his plays the evils of society and the failings of man and leaves the denunciation to the reader.

The reason why Shaw wrote for the theatre is probably the same as why Bunyan told stories. Each had ideas that he was anxious to spread but knew that people do not like preaching. Also, Shaw knew that most men don't form their own opinions but depend on getting them ready-made from somewhere. Since acceptance of church doctrines has gone out of fashion, there is left the press and the stage. (1) Both in the play "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets" (1910), (which was written to help raise funds to establish a National Theatre as a memorial to Shakespeare) and in the preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" (1909), Shaw

- (1) "This little play is really a religious tract in dramatic form. If our silly censorship would permit its performance...it might possibly help to set right-side-up the perverted conscience and re-invigorate the starved self-respect of our considerable class of loose-lived playgoers whose point of honor is to deride all official and conventional sermons." (Shaw. Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" p. 400)

urges

the immense importance of the theatre as a most powerful instrument for teaching the nation how and what to think and feel. (1)

(1) Shaw. Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet" p. 416.

VI

Effectiveness

As Preacher

That Shaw has been successful in drawing an audience to see his plays and getting people to read his books, cannot be gainsaid, for his plays have been presented in almost every country in the world--indeed they were played and appreciated in Germany and America equally as soon as in England--and his printed works have run through edition after edition. Just how great an effect Shaw's socialistic, religious and political beliefs have had on the world, on the formation of its thought and the influencing of its action, would require the scope of another thesis to ascertain. A few changes, which have already been accomplished, have been mentioned previously. (1) But it is evident that Shaw's role as a preacher-reformer has been that of a fore-runner to action. He has been effective in rousing people from their complacency, disturbing their thoughts, angering them at times by his presentation of life as he saw it being lived. He has stimulated them, made them conscious that all is not right with the world. Any preacher desires to influence his

(1) Thesis p. 42.

hearers and since many of Shaw's ideas do not appear so strange to the present generation as they did to Shaw's own, it must mean that the present generation has come to think as he does. And thought is a prelude to action. The very fact that some of his plays have "dated" is a measure of his effectiveness as a preacher if not as an artist.

Considering the wealth of suggestion which Shaw has been pouring out for sixty years for all who had ears to hear; and considering the fundamental common sense of the greater proportion of what he has said; it seems incredible that so many people have not yet discovered the greatness of the man and his work but think of him only as a good entertainer, a fool in motley. That there have not been more tangible results from his preaching, and that there is this limited view of the man, is due in part to Shaw himself, to his overplaying his role as clown and in consequence not being taken seriously enough. It has already been stated that Bernard Shaw deliberately chose the medium of waggery to ensure a hearing for his thought-provoking ideas and to protect them against fierce protest. Unfortunately this medium has protected them all too well. While it has permitted Shaw to do and say what he pleases as though he were disguised in a magic cloak, it has defeated its own ends, for few believe that the plays have anything to do

with the social reconstruction of the world. In this way Shaw's comedy is misleading: the audience laughs when it should reflect and search for a hidden truth.

Shaw's very cleverness, which is so applauded, has done much to lessen the effectiveness of his preaching, for the human species does not appreciate the feeling of inferiority which comes with hearing some one else point out the flaws in a situation which it has been too blindly complacent to see. To have it done with such consummate skill is the crowning blow. Then, too, people generally resent having the institutions and ideals which they have considered sacred, held up to derision. That they have misunderstood Shaw's purpose, which has not been to deride institutions just for amusement but for the sake of improvement, they will not see. Again, skillful handling of situation and a tremendous power over words have given a brilliancy to his work that has so dazzled the eyes of the undiscerning that they have not searched beneath and so have been unaware of the coherent thought under the surface. This same cleverness has at times so highly decorated the theme, Shaw delighting in effects just for the sake of effects, that the instruction intended passes unnoticed and the defect has to be remedied by a lengthy, explanatory preface. Shaw himself recognizes the defect in his parable of Creative Evolution,

"Man and Superman" (1902-3):

But being then at the height of my invention and comedic talent, I decorated it too brilliantly and lavishly...Also I supplied the published work with imposing framework consisting of a preface, an appendix and a final display of aphoristic fireworks. The effect was so vertiginous, apparently, that nobody noticed the new religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool. (1)

Thomas Fuller, in the seventeenth century, had a similar difficulty. His giving music to the ear and pictures to the eye in his prose often meant that the moral and religious ideas so clothed were missed or soon forgotten.

As well as his apparently natural aptitude for clowning, which tends to dissipate the effect of Shaw's message, there are points in his doctrine itself which cannot be easily credited and thus detract from the whole. For instance: those who have had a different experience of home life from Shaw's, are not at all convinced by his statements that marriage is the most licentious of institutions or that the family is the worst means of bringing up children and that consequently they would be much better off if the State separated them from their parents at an early age and assumed the responsibility of rearing them.

Also, that woman is always the pursuer in marriage because Nature has entrusted her with the more serious business of sex, that of the reproduction of the race, is

(1) Shaw. Preface to "Back to Methuselah" pp. 545-546.

just as rash an overstatement as the one formerly made, that man is always the pursuer and woman the pursued; for some men have as great a desire for children as women have, and some women have as great a desire for companionship from marriage as men have. The failure to give place to romance, tenderness, and lofty sentiment in the relationship of men and women indicates in Shaw either a lack of understanding of human nature or a fear of these emotions.

Then, too, Shaw's contention that the schools have not changed since his boyhood is clearly not born out by statistics available, though few who know the system would dispute that there is still ample room for improvement.

Another major point at which Shaw differs in opinion from many of his readers, is in his religious beliefs. Having left the church before ten years of age, and having known only one very narrow sect of it even then, Shaw seems scarcely in a position to be a very competent judge. He advocates collective action in every other field of life yet he never experiences corporate worship--he only slips into a cathedral when it is empty to enjoy the beauty and quiet. There seems to be another point of inconsistency in Shaw. As a member of the Fabian society, although he did not approve of the political and economic organization of England, he did not advocate revolt and overthrow of Parliament but rather a persistent effort to remedy the

abuses by using Parliamentary means. Yet, when he did not approve of the doctrine of the church, he made no attempt to bring about any changes therein, but remained aloof from it and formulated a religion to satisfy his intellect. Wherein lies its advantage over Christianity is not easily determinable. His Life Force as something to be worshipped seems too cold and impersonal and has no outstanding attributes to compensate for this lack. It does not seem any easier to believe in and worship the Life Force than God the Spirit, about whom Jesus ^P preached.

A weak spot in Shaw's plans for reforming the world is his idealization of the average man and woman, his faith in the self-perfectibility of the human race. Because he himself is a man of high principles and can discipline himself more rigorously than convention can, he imputes this power to his fellow men. (1) e.g. Easy divorce as a solution to the marriage problem might work for normal, right-minded people with a high ideal of matrimony, such as Shaw himself, but what percentage of people could live up to it? Milton apparently labored under a similar delusion concerning the human race.

Milton, the impetuous idealist, scorning the immediate and real, building up a religion and a republic which might have existed only if all men had been like himself, cut to his measure. (2)

- (1) This suggests a kinship with Shelley's romanticism.
- (2) Legouis and Cazamian. History of English Literature. p. 533.

As Literary Artist

Despite these defects of concept and method, Bernard Shaw does keep the listener or reader aware of his counsels (1) through the hypnotic attraction of his manner of presentation. This remains to be examined. And since Shaw chose the medium of the theatre, it is necessary to examine the effectiveness of his presentation in it.

It is the function of the preacher to confront the world with ^{ru}ccial issues. In the theatre the accepted way of doing this has been through tragedy which indicates great waste, and great loss which in turn imply that there has been something of value to lose. Shaw certainly portrays vital questions for consideration: waste of human power through poor economic arrangements, futility of the world order for want of a religion; but he deliberately avoids the opportunity of pushing them to the tragic view; he doesn't carry through to a catastrophe; he doesn't inspire mingled feelings of pity and awe. Just why he avoids presentation of his ideas through tragedy, it is difficult to say. A most telling cartoon shows Shaw standing in front of a mirror, dressed in motley and wearing on his head a fool's cap and bells. Below is the caption, "Why did I put it on?"

- (1) "Fuller often sacrifices complete accuracy to pointedness, but in this he has, after all, no other object than to keep the reader alertly attentive to his wise and humane counsels on morality". Legouis and Cazamian. History of English Literature. p. 534.

Whatever the reason, comedy has been the means by which Shaw has placed these crucial issues before his audience. He inspires in its members a self-analytic spirit, starts them probing into a subject, is an intellectual rather than an emotional force. It is often supposed that Shaw is not an emotional force because he is incapable of emotion himself. The reason for this view, that Shaw is unemotional, is due possibly to his not giving place to a wide range of strong feelings and to his not being emotional and passionate about the same things over which average human beings display intense feeling. His passion is for social betterment, his indignation and hatred for the shams of life, his antipathy displayed toward many existing institutions. This aroused feeling concerning human beings and their activities has a tendency to cloud the artistic effect of the plays, but Shaw believes so intensely in his ideas that he cannot avoid this. He shows his passion in withering scorn, in satire; that is, in the intellectual way. Since nothing is more devastating than laughter, Shaw gives occasion to his readers to laugh at the vice or folly, tradition or ideal he wants to expose and destroy. He illuminates his ideas from Socialism and Creative Evolution with humor, making them incandescent.

So consistently has satire been Shaw's means to his end that it is impossible here to review all instances of

it. But there are many subjects about which it is not possible ever again to feel quite the same once they have been ridiculed by Mr. Shaw.

In "John Bull's Other Island" (1904), the Irish National question receives enlightenment through ridicule. It is made clear that Ireland is going to have to stand on her own feet, find her own solution, by showing the ridiculousness of a bumptious, overbearing, conceited windbag, Tom Broadbent, an Englishman, electing to go to Ireland to reform it because he is desirous of doing something for humanity. Once in Rosscullen he is shown as completely misunderstanding the Irish view point, feeling flattered when no flattery is intended, not knowing when the men are laughing at him over the episode of the pig, callously ignoring the feelings of Nora, being very pleased with himself and confident he has won a following which will elect him to Parliament. The romantic bubble of Broadbent's plans to open a big hotel, with golf links, and make the district prosperous is pricked by Keegan, the dispossessed priest, who knows what the true consequences will be--evil ones. The case for Irish Home Rule is also given, from an English point of view. Hodson, Broadbent's valet says,

Oi'm a Own Ruler, Oi am. Do you know why? It's because Oi want a little attention paid to my aown cantry; and thet'll never be as long as your cheps are ollerin at Westminster as if nowbody mattered

but your own bloomin selves. Send im beck to
ell or O'naught, as good aowl English Cram-
well said. I'm jast sick of Awrland. Let
it go. Cat the caible. Mike it a present
to Germany to keep the aowl Kyzer busy for
a wawl; and give poor aowl England a
chawnce: thets wot Oi sy. (1)

"The Doctor's Dilemma" (1905) opens with a most a-
musing satire on Doctors rushing in to congratulate Sir
Colenso Ridgeon who has just received his knighthood for
a medical discovery. As well as congratulating Ridgeon,
each discloses through his conversation his own medical
practices, the secret of his success or failure, as :
Consultation Free, Cure Guaranteed, a pound of ripe
greengages every day half an hour before lunch. Emy
reveals the doctor as having time for his friends but not
for his patients, and Sir Patrick laughs at progress in
science, for Ridgeon's famous discovery is the same as
one Sir Patrick's father made over forty years earlier.
Of course there is some exaggeration in this scene, but
Shaw frequently uses overemphasis for the sake of making
his point. In the next act, on the terrace after the
Dubedat's have left the dinner party, when the doctors
begin to discover what a scoundrel Dubedat is, the revela-
tion of how each has been caught by the same story is a-
musing. But it is intended to open to our minds the
question of how far an artist is to be allowed to tres-
pass on the world as a conscienceless man for the sake
of his art. Unnecessary to the action of the play, but

(1) Shaw. "John Bull's Other Island." p. 435

good as an additional point of satire, is the introduction at the death scene in Act IV of a newspaper man who is ignorant and misunderstands everything that is said to him.

The troubles of the rich, the futility of a religionless existence, and the army are all satirized in "Too True To Be Good" (1931). The play opens with a touch of broad farce in the introduction of a Monster, the measles microbe. The Mother, unduly agitated over her sick daughter, is ridiculous; so is the Nurse, as a nurse, for she is indifferent, rough and full of her own plans. The Patient is a surprise to everyone, belying her mother's anxiety, when she makes a leap from her sick bed and overcomes both the Nurse and her accomplice, the Burglar. The scene closes with the apparently preposterous suggestion of the Burglar that the Patient steal her own pearls, share the spoil with he and the Nurse, and leave home to have some fun. When the curtain rises again, Sweetie is passing for a Countess and the Patient for her native servant who repeats the rhyme "Mary had a little lamb" backwards for a dialect. Their imposture is successful but they are no happier for it. The army takes its drubbing in one man, Private Keek, being able to give the orders and do efficiently all the jobs for the contingent.

In the process of creating a legend for the Bible of the new religion, "Back to Methuselah" (1921), Shaw introduces some satire and some mirth provoking situations.

Part II is political satire with the principals thinly disguised by their names. These political leaders are shown to have no thought of working together as a united national government for the good of the country, but only of working in parties to gain more personal glory and benefit for themselves. Part III is still political. The departments of government in the future are shown as run by Chinese and a Negress since only strangers can give impartial justice and since the English don't mature early enough to govern themselves. They die when they are just coming to an age of some intellect and capacity for government. In this future state there is a tremendous advance in material comforts but still none in man himself--he has not learned to outlive his taste for cigars and golf.

Another play which has high entertainment value, while it satirizes conventions of society, respectability, and the class caste-system, is "Pygmalion" (1912). The first scene with a flower girl selling her wares on the street, introduces the humor of dialect and of the fear through misunderstanding on the part of the ignorant. When Eliza later calls at Professor Higgin's home for lessons, she gives herself the airs she supposes correct for a lady in society. Her father, though he only appears twice in the play, amuses with his original ideas on morality. And the scene where Eliza is first introduced into polite society is riotous fun.

Shaw has been effective not only in presenting plays on the stage but also in creating in the general public an interest in play reading. This he has done in several ways. First, he has deleted the traditional abbreviations and contractions concerning stage setting and movement of actors, and has written them up in a delightfully descriptive manner for each act. Instead of using Mrs. H., Miss T., etc. for the actor's parts, he has had the names printed in full: Captain Shotover, Orinthia, Mrs. Hushabye, which is easier of comprehension. Then he has written all the stage directions and the text of the play itself in simple, lucid style which makes it easy to read and follow without the pictorial presentation of the stage proper. Add to these the fact that Shaw has managed these technical details and presented his convictions in a highly enjoyable fashion, (and) it is clear that he has made of play-writing and play-preaching a literary force.

Shaw has never consciously aimed at creating for himself any definite style but rather has said what he felt on a subject in a direct manner, as entertainingly as possible and let the style come of itself.

Effectiveness of assertion is the alpha and omega of style. He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none; he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him. Disprove his assertion after it is made, yet its style remains. (1)

(1) Shaw. Epistle Dedicatory to "Man and Superman" p. 165

But one influence on his style which can be quite definitely traced is that of his practice as a public speaker and debater in the 1880's and 90's. At that time he had to accustom himself to meet any type of audience and to shift his point of attack to suit its moods. Consequently there is delightful variety of approach in the plays and there are long, passionate, oratorical speeches incorporated into the plays. Of course the prefaces do serve as a better vehicle for his debating skill, but even in the plays there is the debater's technique of scoring every possible point, using overemphasis for the sake of effect, and passing over the weak spots in his case as adroitly and unnoticeably as possible.

Shaw's skill manifests itself in many more ways which are now to be discussed. He gives credit for it thus:

I attribute my skill in writing to perfectly straightforward drudgery beginning in the ineptest novel writing juvenility, and persevered in every day for twenty-five years. Nothing is more mischievous than the notion that my works are the mere play of a delightfully clever and whimsical hero of the salons. (1)

One of the first manifestations of this skill, one most readily recognized, is skill in stage effects and in handling situations at which Shaw is a master. These attract the playgoer who cares nothing for Shaw's ideas and who refuses to think at the theatre. He is enthralled by the tricks

(1) Quoted by Henderson, Introduction to Bernard Shaw
Playboy and Prophet, p. XXIV, from a letter written to
him by Bernard Shaw, June 30, 1904)

which make Shaw's plays good theatre, heedless of the fact that to Shaw himself they are incidental to the underlying theme. From among the many good scenes it is difficult to choose examples for illustration of this point. Perhaps the following will suffice.

The second act curtain of "Arms and the Man" (1894) is splendid fun and adroit manipulation of actors and dialogue. Captain Bluntschli, of the Serbian army, comes to return the coat belonging to Major Petkoff which had been loaned to him to assist him to escape from Petkoff's army. The Major's wife, Catherine, does not wish it known that she and her daughter, Raina, aided an enemy to escape, so she tries to hurry him off before anyone is aware of his presence. Since peace has now been declared, and since Bluntschli is a clever army man, Petkoff wants his assistance and intercepts him at the moment of his departure. Raina complicates matters by exclaiming "oh, the chocolate cream soldier" when she first sees Bluntschli on the terrace, thus making her father and her betrothed suspicious that she has met Bluntschli before. She tries to cover her blunder with a story about an ice pudding which only serves to implicate and confuse Nicola, the butler. The curtain descends on a tangle of misunderstandings, half-truths, and tension, on Catherine's part, for fear all will be discovered by Sergius.

The final curtain of "Man and Superman" (1902-03) is equally good. Ann, prompted by the Life Force, has just tricked Tanner into becoming engaged to her. He realizes that it is a trick and chooses to improve the occasion with a speech on renouncing happiness, furnishing a home to suit themselves, selling unwanted wedding gifts, and even outlines the details of the wedding plans--without consulting Ann--when he is interrupted by Violet.

Violet (with intense conviction) You are a brute, Jack.

Ann (looking at him with fond pride and carressing his arm) Never mind her, dear. Go on talking. Tanner. Talking! (Universal laughter.)

Of quite a different quality is the scene in "Candida" (1894) where Morell, because of suspicions and jealousies roused in him by what Marchbanks has said, calls upon his wife, Candida, to choose to which one she will belong, to him or to the poet. Candida, annoyed at such a way of putting the matter, appalled that her husband should be so blind that he cannot see that the marriage ceremony does not make a wife belong to her husband as though she were a piece of property, yet acquiesces and asks what each bids. The feeling of suspense is well sustained throughout. Morell offers his strength, honesty, ability, and position; Marchbanks his weakness, desolation, and heart's need. Candida gives herself to the weaker of the two, which is Morell, the strong man.

Bernard Shaw enjoys dressing up a scene to do more than merely carry his message, and in his plays are any number of spectacular scenes: the execution in "The Devil's Disciple" (1896-7), the séance in "Getting Married" (1908), the arena scene in "Androcles and the Lion" (1911-12), the fancy dress ball in "You Never Can Tell," (1895-7), the trial in Geneva (1938). Sometimes there is an extravagance sweeping through a whole play, as in "Caesar and Cleopatra" (1898), or in the assumption of the impossible e.g. Don Juan in Hell in "Man and Superman" (1902-3) and the angel arriving to announce the Day of Judgment in "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" (1935). In some scenes the spectacle is assisted by comedy which descends to absurdity and broad farce; as for instance, Androcles dance with the lion, the finale of the masked ball, the Nazi guard "heiling" Hitler, the costumes worn by Hitler and Mussolini, and Hitler weeping for his little dog. In this latter play, Geneva (1938), the trial scene mentioned is most colorful and spectacular. The clash inherent in confronting the three archfiends of Europe with one another and with members of other states, arouses the expectation of the audience and it is not disappointed in entertainment value though the outcome may not be seen as satisfactory.

Another important point in play writing technique, to which Shaw's temperament easily adapted itself and which

he uses with superb aplomb and telling effect, is what is referred to as the surprise attack. Thomas Fuller, prior to this time, had been a preacher with a similar feeling for the possibilities of this method. E.K. Broadus says of him,

A relish for the unexpected, the sudden sally, the delightful irrelevance is a matter of temperament. (1)

One instance of the use of this surprise attack in Shaw's work is in the play, "Getting Married" (1908). Shaw has the argument against marriage and its present laws come, not from the younger generation nor the divorced couple, but from the Bishop. Then, it is the very religious mother, Mrs. Knox, in "Fanny's First Play" (1910), who makes the most drastic statement against religion. King Magnus in "The Apple Cart" (1929) defeats the purpose of the Prime Minister to silence him, make him an india-rubber stamp, not by giving in but by threatening to abdicate and go to the poles to take his rosy chance of being the next popularly elected Prime Minister.

But one of the best examples of the surprise attack is in "St Joan" (1923). In this play Shaw justifies the judges at Joan's trial instead of condemning them, which is usual, and proves that the Church gave Joan as fair a trial as was to be expected from a body that depended on its authority over the people and so could not afford

(1) Broadus. Introduction to Thomas Fuller p. VIII

to be flouted by a mere girl having the presumption to set herself up against the judgment of the Church and to act on her interpretation of God's will, not the Church's. This theme Shaw handles in all seriousness and develops after the best tradition of dramatic structure. First the play is given a mediaeval atmosphere through a scene showing belief in miracles. Captain Robert de Baudricourt browbeats a steward because there have been no eggs. The steward pleads that the hens are not laying because the Captain refuses to see the Maid. No sooner has he consented to the interview and granted Joan's requests, than the hens begin to lay like mad and Robert is convinced that she did come from God. Joan's swift rise to power and fame is indicated in the following scenes; one very colorful one is the Court scene in which the pitiful weakness of the Dauphin is indicated, there is a moment of farce in Bluebeard posing as king, and Joan seizes the psychological moment to sway the crowd in her own favor by flashing out her sword and crying,

Who is for God and His Maid? Who is for
Orleans with me? (1)

But Joan's self-confidence is leading her to destruction as is learned through the scenes in the English camp and in the cathedral after Charles is crowned. There is a sense of impending doom, a foreshadowing of the tragedy

(1) Shaw. "St. Joan" p. 976

of her trial and execution. Then the play ends with a glimpse into the future, twenty-five years later, to Joan's second trial when all blame and dishonor are heaped on her judges, she herself declared innocent and Charles sacredly crowned. The Church makes Joan a Saint, to her amusement, but no one wants her to return to earth. This play is a dramatic triumph.

In the matter of characterization, Shaw can be proved a success or a failure depending on what characters are chosen for examination. It is true that there is little character development within the limits of his plays. But it is to be expected from a playwright who believes in Creative Evolution and sees nineteen centuries as too short a span of time for any real development in man, that he will not show any change in the character of a man from one action to the next. What he does instead is to give in a flash a vivid presentation of human beings as they are, not as they have been imagined to be. This has caused consternation and repudiation of the characters and has set up the cry that Shaw can't create stage figures that are real and human. Shaw early discovered that the most faithful patrons of the theatre were from the lesser middle class and wanted to see on the stage life, not as it was actually lived at the thirty pound a week level (they would have been shocked, he thinks) but as they

imagined it to be lived. However, it was never Shaw's intention to feed the desire for romance as opposed to reality. His talent lay in drawing with a few sharp lines a figure more clearly defined than he would be in real life--that is the dramatists' business. Shaw does not write plays that are simply character studies, for his purpose is primarily to disseminate ideas, but this he does through the medium of his stage people. Herein lies the source of the criticism that Shaw's characters have no emotion, only intellect and tongues to quote Shaw. It is a plausible criticism in some instances: e.g. Ann Whitefield and John Tanner in "Man and Superman" (1902-3).

They are exponents and victims of the ^Life Force but they are not convincing as people. Ann is too forward, and objectionable in her chase, and Tanner makes no real attempt to combat the Force overwhelming him. In later plays there are more of these sketchy characterizations, but more frequently Shaw manages to skillfully combine in the characters the extolling of his ideas with real life of their own, at least while they are seen on the stage. Because of this two-fold role they remain with us even though upon analysis they are not all like people known in everyday life.

Shaw's representation of historical characters is in accordance with his theory of evolution which allows of no appreciable change in man in nineteen centuries. For this reason he makes them very like ourselves, acting from the same motives. Caesar is depicted after this fashion. He ceases to be a Roman, but he displays qualities which Shaw postulates as necessary to greatness. He has self-control and teaches Cleopatra that she must learn to rule herself before she can hope to rule her kingdom. He cares nothing for individuals--even Cleopatra--when the fulfillment of some purpose is pending. He has Shaw's ideas of justice: kill, not for punishment, hatred nor revenge but because it is expedient. He is an original genius, frank and generous, unaffected by convention, relentlessly pursuing his way toward world domination.

There is no failure on Shaw's part to handle the usual issues raised by character. In a very early play there is conflict of character and circumstance. Mrs. Warren was forced into prostitution because of drudgery and underpayment, yet at heart she is a conventional woman. Doolittle falls heir to a modest fortune which forces on him middle class habits and morality which he by nature disdains. And there is the beginning of a struggle between conscience and conduct in Dr. Harry Trench when he becomes aware of the source of his income. However, he turns out to be a weakling who acquiesces in the practice of society instead of making an attempt to change it.

A type of character in which Shaw delights is exemplified by Dick Dudgeon--a hero who acts from natural impulses fundamentally right and good. Dick sacrifices himself to save the Rev. Anderson, when rebel soldiers arrive, not from love of Judith but because he just could not put another man's neck in the noose.

It seems incredible to say that Shaw is incapable of creating characters who can come alive off the stage and take their places in the world, when one remembers Candida, Lady Cicely, Broadbent, Nora, Dubedat, Professor Higgins, Doelittle and others.

Candida is splendid as the clergyman's wife: busy, and careful about the household, as their income is doubtless small; keeping the petty worries and unpleasantnesses from her husband's ears; being wife, mother and sisters to him in bolstering up his self-confidence and continually encouraging and praising him. Her attitude toward the young poet, Eugene, has been called in question by Shaw himself, as that of an unprincipled woman who leads Eugene on to make love to her as far as it suits her purpose and then drops him to return to her husband. The view that she is mothering Eugene, too, and piloting him through the flowering of his passion of love for womanhood, seems more acceptable. Candida's quiet but capable handling of the clash between the two men, and her

stand for freedom and complete trust in marriage are indications of her strength; while her failing to understand the poet's secret, as he rushes out into the night, only makes her the more nearly akin to average humanity.

Professor Higgins is too familiar ^{a figure} in the world to be denied a place in the gallery of real life figures. He is the man who is so absorbed in his own work and personal interests that he is callous to the feelings and desires of anyone else. He is persistent, untiring in his efforts and ruthlessly sweeps aside whatever might hinder him in reaching his goal. Once a desired end is attained, he drops the subject abruptly with no sentimental dwelling on his achievement. This is Professor Higgins as he is revealed through the action of "Pygmalion" (1912) in his training of Eliza, a common flower girl, to the point where she can pass as a duchess.

Instances of clever character drawing could be multiplied but the same conclusion would be reached: that while all of Shaw's stage people do not attain a peak of perfection, there are those among them that will endure.

The last great skill in play-writing is in the handling of dialogue. To illustrate Shaw's clever use of dialogue it is only necessary to pick up any one of the plays to find him saying things in a most unusual way, giving them a twist unthought of before which immediately

reveals a whole situation. In addition to the many apt quotations already used, the following serve as proof of Shaw's skill:

Higgins. I suppose we must give him a fiver.
 Pickering. He'll make bad use of it, I'm afraid.
 Doolittle. Not me, Governor, so help me I won't.
 Don't you be afraid that I'll save it and spare it and live idle on it. There won't be a penny of it left by Monday. I'll have to go to work same as if I'd never had it. It won't pauperize me, you bet. Just one good spree for myself and the missus, giving pleasure to ourselves and employment to others, and satisfaction to you to think it's not been thrown away. You couldn't spend it better.
 (1)

Craven. There's a lot of rot about modern science. Between ourselves, you know, it's horribly cruel: you must admit that it's a deuced nasty thing to go ripping up and crucifying camels and monkeys. It must blunt all the finer feelings sooner or later.

Paramore. (turning on him) How many camels and horses and men were ripped up in that Soudan campaign where you won your Victoria Cross, Colonel Craven?

Craven (firing up) That was fair fighting: a very different thing, Paramore.

Paramore. Yes: Martinis and machine guns against naked spearmen.

Craven (hotly) Naked spearmen can kill, Paramore. I risked my life: don't forget that.

Paramore (with equal spirit) And I have risked mine, as all doctors do, oftener than any soldier. (2)

Price. Your elth, Miss Mitchens.

Rummy (correcting him) Missis Mitchins.

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!

(1) Shaw. "Pygmalion" p. 730.

(2) Shaw. "The Philanderer" p. 49.

Mummy. 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? theyre worn to rags by their work. (1)

Battler. Out of the ragbag of stale journalism and Kikkeronian Latin--

Sir Orpheus. I protest. I beg. I ask the court to protect me.

The Judge. What is the matter? Protect you from what?

Sir Orpheus. From these abominable modern mispronunciations. Kikkeronian is an insult to my old school. I insaist on Sisseronian.

The Betrothed. Hear, hear!

Bombardone. Take care, Ernest. This is part of the British technique. You were talking of something really important. That is dangerous. He switches you off to something of no importance whatever. (2)

The first and last of these quotations are examples of Shaw's peculiar use of dialogue, not so much to advance action as sufficient in itself to give delight, and existing solely for that purpose.

While at all times Shaw's dialogue is of a high literary excellence, it rises to really poetic heights in a number of instances; e.g. Larry's speech on the dreaming and imagination which makes the Irish useless, (3) Keegan's on a united Church and State; (4) the poet's speeches in "Candida"; Mrs. George's message on love while

(1) Shaw. "Major Barbara" p. 471.

(2) Shaw. Geneva p. 69.

(3) Shaw. "John Bull's Other Island" p. 411.

(4) Ibid. p. 452.

she is in a trance; (1) Joan's answer to the Inquisition's sentence of perpetual imprisonment; (2) and Caesar's, claiming kinship with the Sphinx, which ends:

These starry lamps of yours I have seen from afar in Gaul, in Britain, in Spain, in Thessaly, signalling great secrets to some eternal sentinel below, whose past I never could find. And here at last is their sentinel--an image of the constant and immortal part of my life, silent, full of thoughts, alone in the silver desert. Sphinx, Sphinx: I have climbed mountains at night to hear in the distance the stealthy footfall of the winds that chase your sands in forbidden play--our invisible children, O Sphinx, laughing in whispers. My way hither was the way of destiny; for I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part god--nothing of man in me at all. Have I read your riddle, Sphinx? (3)

There is no doubt that Shaw has been effective in his manner of presenting his ideas in the theatre, but no analysis, however comprehensive, of satire, outstanding scenes, good curtains, characterization and dialogue, can quite catch that elusive something about Shaw's plays that raises them high above the common level. Whatever it is of spirit or atmosphere is undefinable, but there is an energizing power to his creative imagination which opens up vistas of delight at the same time that it conveys ideas inherent in his doctrine of social justice. This power, partly inborn, is also partly acquired and springs from

- (1) Shaw. "Getting Married" p. 583.
- (2) Shaw. "St. Joan" p. 1000.
- (3) Shaw. "Caesar and Cleopatra" p. 257.

such sources as: a wealth of knowledge; (1) active participation in solving everyday municipal problems; formulation of and adherence to convictions and high resolves; a lengthy apprenticeship, as novelist and journalist, in the rudiments of effective writing. These give authority to Shaw's message and accord him the right to preach. The power of creative imagination generated from these sources is manifest in his keen insight into social and political problems, his genius for analyzing them and drawing conclusions. While others are still struggling with the opening phases of a problem, Shaw's active Irish brain has formulated his opinion, somewhat startling at first glance but amazingly sound and right when examined. Not only has he formed opinions, but he has expressed them, according to his Irish temperament, with such force, such ingenuity, such inspiration, that he has made whole nations listen to him. Shaw has been a tremendous power for good through his chosen medium, the theatre.

No preacher of any century, whatever his medium, has done more than this.

- (1) Just as the imagination which so distinguished Jeremy Taylor's sermons was "fed by copious reading and extensive classical culture", (Legouis and Cazamian. History of English Literature. p.527) so was Shaw's.

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