BERNARD SHAW

SOCIALIST, REFORMER AND CREATIVE EVOLUTIONIST

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CHAPTER I

BOY AND YOUNG MAN

Bernard Shaw was twenty-six before he turned his thoughts towards political and economic science and his energies towards social reform. "The importance of the economic basis," as he has called it, first dawned on him at a lecture given by Henry George before the Land Nationalization Society in London in 1882. Nevertheless, during his boyhood and youth in Dublin, influences were at work which help to explain his later career. The boy's father, George Carr Shaw, was an Irish Protestant who fought a losing battle to maintain his position in upper middle-class society. He was a timid, inefficient man holding first a minor post in the Dublin Courts of Justice and later becoming an unsuccessful wholesale dealer in corn. What Shaw believes was the worst crime his father ever committed happened when young Bernard was playing in the street with a school fellow. The father called his son inside, questioned him and learned that the playmate was the son of a prosperous ironmonger. In the course of his lecture Mr. Shaw made it clear that Bernard's honour, self-respect and human dignity would be lost if he associated with lads whose fathers were engaged in retail trade. While professing to be a teetotaller, George Carr Shaw was, in fact, a furtive drunkard. For the family this meant a degree of ostracism. The sight of their father in his cups at a dinner or party became so embarrassing for the Shaws that as a family group they discontinued their social activities. At home, however, Mr. Shaw's drunkenness was a joke and no doubt a contributing cause in developing in his son an attitude of irreverence towards any form of filial respect.

With all his faults, the father was an amiable man with a lively sense of fun. On one occasion when young Shaw had scoffed at the Bible his father rebuked him by saying that the Bible was a literary and historical masterpiece. Immediately, however, beginning to chuckle and wrinkling up his eyes he assured his son that "even the worst enemy of religion could say no worse of the Bible than that it was the damndest parcel of lies ever written." It is dangerous to read into a man's youth too clean-cut an explanation of his later career; indeed, Henderson has stated that "the only trait of the father which was reproduced in his son, his antithesis in almost every other respect, was a sense of humour, an appreciation of the comic force of anti-climax."[1] Shaw's own Prefaces would indicate that his father's influence was all of a negative kind. When he realized his father's inefficiency, Shaw was ambitious to become competent, his father's drinking turned him against alcohol and his father's snobbery gave him a dislike of middle-class pretensions. The sum total of the attitudes Shaw held towards his father may serve to explain his later opinions concerning parents and children expressed particularly in the Preface to Misalliance.

Shaw's mother, the former Elizabeth Gurly, well remembered her own unhappy childhood under the strict training of an elderly aunt and resolved never to impose a similar experience on her own children. Consequently, there was little discipline in the Shaw home. In permitting a laissez-faire atmosphere in her home Mrs. Shaw was by no means a failure as a mother. She was an "advanced" woman but without "views," a woman unconsciously ahead of her time, who acted on her own judgment and remained indifferent to the prejudices of middle-class

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1 Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw A Critical Biography. Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd Company, 1911, p. 6.

society. "As to the ordinary domestic mothering and wifing, she was utterly unfit for the sentiment of it," Shaw admits, but her educative influence was nevertheless powerful. She provided her son with an example of how an energetic and persevering person can overcome difficulty and disappointment. Twenty years younger than her husband, it was not until after marriage that she realized George Carr Shaw's obvious shortcomings. In her disappointment she turned to music, not only as a solace but as an outlet for her talent and intelligence. She felt that in music, and not in a purely domestic career, was there a chance of happiness.

In order to develop her musical talent Mrs. Shaw studied under George Vandaleur Lee, an innovator and heretic in his teaching methods. What Shaw has called "the Method" was a means of producing vocal tones scientifically which Lee had learned by studying the anatomy of the human throat. During Lee's stay in the Shaw home Shaw was able to listen to music day and night and he picked up an extraordinary knowledge of vocal and instrumental selections, opera particularly. Lee did more than contribute to Shaw's background of musical knowledge; the boy Shaw was inspired by the example of a man who, although held in contempt, even hatred, by the Dublin professors of music nevertheless retained confidence in his own ability. Many times in later years Shaw the playwright found himself in situations which demanded a similar confidence.

At school, Shaw insists that he learned nothing. The masters of the four schools he attended showed little interest in him beyond the point of drilling him in Latin and Greek. What he did learn, as he says in the Preface to Misalliance, was "lying, dishonourable submission to tyranny, dirty stories, a blasphemous habit of treating love and maternity as obscene jokes, hopeless-

ness, evasion, derision, cowardice, and all the blackguard's shifts by which the coward intimidates other cowards." It was at home and at the Dublin National Gallery that Shaw educated himself during his boyhood and youth. One of the memorable events of his boyhood was the discovery of Pilgrim's Progress and The Arabian Knights, and he says that he was saturated with the Bible and Shakespeare before he was ten years old. At the National Gallery he spent many hours; indeed he maintains that he was the only Irishman, except the officials, who had ever been there. (Now, of course, with Rodin's bust of Shaw on display the Gallery is much more frequently visited.) So eagerly did he study the masters that at the age of fifteen he could recognize immediately the work of the important Italian and Flemish painters.

It was, then, an unusual environment in which Shaw grew up. He learned more when left to his own devices than when coerced by bad teaching methods. He came to know operas by heart, enjoyed reading the masterpieces of literature and studied great works of art, but he could not, or would not, read school books. He was kept in social isolation partly through his father's inebriety, partly because he was forbidden to play with children on a lower social level. The atmosphere of his home was invigorating, for Lee and Mrs. Shaw were both excellent performers and keen critics of music. As a boy Shaw was not moulded like a piece of clay, rather was he exposed to a variety of influences and as he responded, he grew. Chief among these influences were irreverence and freedom; irreverence towards his father, and freedom from the restraint of parental supervision.

In 1871, at the age of fifteen, Shaw entered the office of an Irish land agent, Charles Townsend, and remained there for more than four years. First a clerk, later a cashier, he carried on a sort of banking business for the

clients, and recorded payments of rent, interest and insurance. He did his job well but disliked it intensely. He objected to the class feeling which accompanied such positions in the Dublin business world. It was not that his was an inferior position, in fact it carried a good deal of responsibility, but he believed that land agency was too respectable for him. There grew within him a dislike of Dublin society partly conditioned by his opinions of Irish Protestantism. He was later to observe:

> Protestantism in Ireland is not a religion; it is a side in political faction, a class prejudice, a conviction that Roman Catholics are socially inferior persons, who will go to hell when they die, and leave Heaven in the exclusive possession of ladies and gentlemen....In England the clergy go among the poor, and sometimes do try desperately to get them to come to church. In Ireland the poor are Catholics - 'Papists,' as my Orange grandfather called them. The Protestant Church has nothing to do with them. Its snobbery is quite unmitigated. I cannot say that in Ireland every man is the worse for what he calls his religion. I can only say that all the people I knew were. 2

When the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey, came to Dublin Shaw attended their meeting, but was unmoved by their eloquence. He wrote a letter to Public Opinion - his first appearance in print - in which he stated that if the demonstration he had seen was Religion, then he was, on the whole, an Atheist. Any reverence Shaw may have had in his boyhood for religious symbols was dispelled by his Uncle Walter, a surgeon on one of the Atlantic ships. This gentleman, a brother of Mrs. Shaw, paid frequent visits to the Dublin home and entertained his nephew with "obscene anecdotes, unprintable limericks and fantastic profanity." He seems to have been a Rabelaisian story-teller who chose his blasphemies with deliberate and loving care. In the Preface to Immaturity Shaw gives his Uncle Walter the credit for destroying

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2 George Bernard Shaw, "In the Days of My Youth," Mainly About People. London: September 17, 1898.

all his "inculcated childish reverence for the verbiage of religion, for its legends and personifications and parables."

At the age of twenty Shaw saw before him the grim prospect of a respectable business career in a Dublin office. He knew that the only social circles open to him were those of the Irish Protestants whose class feeling he loathed and whose religion he mocked. His mother and Lee were now in London and he missed both their music and the stimulation which came from living with them. He knew that in joining them the feeling of futility in both his life and work would disappear. There was, too, growing in him a desire to write. There is no great evidence of this in any published works of that period, but he had carried on a tremendous correspondence for five years with a school fellow, Edward McNulty, which no doubt served as a means of working off his literary energies. In 1876 Shaw may have been less sure of his reasons for leaving Dublin than the confidence expressed in the Immaturity Preface would indicate: "My business in life could not be transacted in Dublin out of an experience confined to Ireland. I had to go to London just as my father had to go to the Corn Exchange. London was the literary centre for the English language, and for such artistic culture as the realm of the English language (in which I proposed to be king) could afford."

In April, then, Bernard Shaw packed a carpet bag, boarded the North Wall boat and arrived at Euston Station the next morning.

For the better part of nine years - his literary apprenticeship - Shaw's mother supported him. She taught singing in a girls' school and earned a reputation for independence and out-spokenness among the school authorities.

Determination and a firm grip on practical affairs were the outstanding traits shown by Mrs. Shaw in those early years in London. Her son once said, "From my mother I derive my brains and character which do her credit." When she was asked for an explanation of her son's success in letters she replied, "Oh, the answer is quite simple. Of course he owes it all to me."

After another short fling in the business world, this time with the Edison Telephone Company, Shaw gave up all attempts to earn a living and resolved to become a writer. He staked everything on his brain and character believing that they constituted all his riches. "I have been blamed," he writes, "for not having helped my mother, but for having lived at her expense. It is true that my mother worked for me instead of telling me to work for her. This was a good thing, for it rendered it possible for me to make a man of myself instead of remaining a slave."

In those early years few days went by that Shaw did not read at the British Museum. At the galleries in Trafalgar Square and at Hampton Court he continued his studies begun in the Dublin National Gallery, particularly in Italian art. He tried his hand at music criticism, verse, essays and novels, but seldom did he find a publisher. He received his largest fee - five pounds - for a patent medicine advertisement. In the nine years, 1876-1885, Shaw earned but six pounds by his pen. He was desperately poor, as his appearance would testify. A decaying hat, a black coat greening with age and his trouser cuffs trimmed to the quick was his day attire. He was proud of an evening dress suit. Studying and writing in the daytime and occasionally attending evening musicals he worked hard but his efforts were known to few.

An important step in Shaw's development came in 1879 when he joined the Zetetical Society in which there were free discussions on political, religious

and sexual topics. The members were advanced thinkers and many of them had atheistic and Darwinian leanings. Women were admitted and took a prominent part in the debates, particularly those which concerned their own rights and welfare. Ironically enough, this first club that Shaw joined regarded Socialism as an exploded fallacy. The chief values the Society had for Shaw were two: he received valuable training as a speaker and debater, and he met Sidney Webb. It was only through sustained and determined efforts that Shaw acquired poise and confidence on the lecture platform. As some of his most important work as a social reformer has been done by way of lecture and debate it is interesting to know that his early attempts were rather unhappy. He has described, no doubt with exaggeration, his first experiences at the Zetetical Society meetings.

> I started up and said something in the debate, and then felt that I had made such a fool of myself (mere vanity: for I had probably done nothing in the least noteworthy) that I vowed I would join the Society; go every week, speak every week; and become a speaker or perish in the attempt. And I carried out this resolution. I suffered agonies that no one suspected. During the speech of the debater I resolved to follow, my heart used to beat as painfully as a recruit's going under fire for the first time. I could not use notes; when I looked at the paper in my hand I could not collect myself enough to decipher a word. And of the four or five wretched points that were my pretext for this ghastly practice of mine, I invariably forgot three - the best three.

A few weeks after joining the Zetetical Shaw became keenly interested in a speaker taking part in one of the debates. This young man was about twenty-one, yet he impressed Shaw as man who had read everything that had ever been written on the subject and able to remember all the important facts. He was Sidney Webb whose career was later to be linked so closely with Shaw's in the Fabian Society. "Quite the cleverest thing I ever did

in my life," says Shaw, "was to force my friendship on Webb, to extort his, and keep it."

Other friendships which Shaw made during his apprenticeship left their marks on his career. In 1882 he met James Leigh Joynes and Henry Salt, two former Eton masters. On visits to the Salt cottage at Tilford Shaw found opportunities for playing piano duets with Mrs. Salt and engaging her husband and Joynes in discussion. These two were vegetarians, humanitarians and Shelleyans. From Shelley there had come Shaw's first interest in vegetarianism and now he found two of his friends supporting the poet's views. When inexpensive vegetarian restaurants opened in London in the early eighties, a happy event for Shaw's thin purse, he had reasons enough for giving up the eating habits of a "Cannibal."

Joynes was joint editor of a Socialist magazine called To-Day, and he probably was in part responsible for accepting Shaw's fifth novel The Unsocial Socialist for publication in instalments. Shaw had started to write novels in 1879 and thereafter turned out one each year. Two of these, The Irrational Knot and The Unsocial Socialist, clearly reveal their author's social consciousness. When he wrote The Irrational Knot Shaw's experience among English fashionable society was limited to his attendance at Lee's soirees musicales. In the Preface, written twenty-five years after the novel, he admits its shortcomings. "Conceive of me then at the writing of The Irrational Knot as a person neither belonging to the world I describe nor wholly ignorant of it, and on certain points quite incapable of conceiving it intuitively." Shaw portrays accurately only one of the characters, Conolly, the Irish-American electrical engineer. When he worked for the Edison Telephone Company Shaw had met men of the Conolly type, skilful and energetic young engineers who were resolved "to

assert their manhood by taking no orders from a tall-hatted Englishman." The other figures in the book often become caricatures of the English upper classes due, no doubt, to the author's desire to emphasize his own views of social morality. Another fault is the stilted diction which the characters are made to speak. Says their creator, "I had....the classical tradition which makes all the persons in a novel....utter themselves in the formal phrases and studied syntax of eighteenth century rhetoric. In short, I wrote in the style of Scott and Dickens; and as fashionable society then spoke and behaved, as it still does, in no style at all, my transcriptions of Oxford and Mayfair may nowadays suggest an unacceptable and ludicrous ignorance of a very superficial and accesible code of manners." The theme of the novel is the failure of a marriage between members of different social classes. Marian, a blueblooded aristocrat and a thoroughly "nice" woman (as nice as Shaw could make her) marries Conolly, a model of sound sense, and a believer in submitting all problems to the cold test of reason. He is the forerunner of the Shavian males, blunt and tactless in manner and aloof in his self-sufficiency. The marriage is incompatible because Conolly stands for literal truth and open dealing while his wife cannot free herself from her duty to fashionable society, her family, her position and principles. She finally elopes with a "gentleman" lover who lacks all the hard-headedness of Conolly. When the run-away lovers have tired of each other Marian meets her husband again and he tells her that her flight was the first sensible action of her whole life, the first vigorous assertion of her will in the face of social convention. He respects her the more for it. But the threads cannot be taken up again; their last words indicate the failure of their union.

"'You are too wise, Ned, she says,' suffering him to replace her gently in the chair.

'It is impossible to be too wise, Dearest,' he replies, and unhesitatingly

Shaw's purpose in this, his second novel, was to illustrate the folly and waste of a social morality which seeks to make intelligence subservient to aristocratic prestige.

When he wrote The Unsocial Socialist in 1883 Shaw was a thoroughgoing Marxist. He had read Capital, an experience which he later declared had "made a man of him," and was consequently in full revolt against bourgeois morals. His original purpose was to produce a novel which would be "a gigantic grapple with the whole social problem." After writing two long chapters he broke down "in sheer ignorance and incapacity." These two chapters were published as The Unsocial Socialist. The framework of the plot is scarcely strong enough to support the socialist theories of Trefusis, the son of a Manchester cotton magnate. Early in the story Trefusis deserts his wife, Henrietta, because he finds that marriage involves the triumph of passion over reason. He is a confirmed Socialist, and in the disguise of a labourer calling himself Smilash he hides away in a remote chalet where he can promote an international association of working men pledged to share justly the world's work and wealth. At a nearby girls' school he philanders with the affections of the young ladies until one, Agatha, believes that she has fallen in love with him. Henrietta, on learning of the Agatha relationship, makes a journey in cold weather to her husband's chalet, catches cold and dies within a week. In the second half of the novel Trefusis has shed his disguise but is still spreading the Socialist gospel. He even inveigles one of the gentry, Sir Charles Brandon, to sign a Socialist petition. Trefusis ends by marrying Agatha; it is not a love match but he persuades her that they will live more satisfactorily together without the discomforts of love, relying on sense rather than the senses to guide their lives.

The atmosphere of the boarding school is ably suggested and the conversations of adolescent girls revealing their sentiments and sentimentalities illustrate Shaw's early ability as a realist. But in the Brandon country home it is again quite clear that at twenty-seven Shaw did not know the English upper classes. He seems to dehumanize them and arrange them as targets at which Trefusis can hurl his Socialist shafts. The most significant of these is directed towards Brandon, the wealthy landowner, and it gives an indication of Shaw's own views at the time.

> Sir Charles does not want to minister to poverty, but to abolish it. No matter how much you give to the poor, everything but a bare subsistence wage will be taken away from them again by force. All talk of practising Christianity, or even bare justice, is at present mere waste of words. How can you justly reward the labourer when you cannot ascertain the value of what he makes, owing to the prevailing custom of stealing it?...The principle on which we farm out our national industry to private marauders, who recompense themselves by blackmail, so corrupts and paralyses us that we cannot be honest even when we want to. And the reason we bear it so calmly is that very few of us really want to.

The Unsocial Socialist was Shaw's last novel. For five years he had been writing five quarto sheets a day, one novel a year, and had rejection slips for all of them. During this apprenticeship he had written much and studied hard in literature, music and art. Occasionally he mingled in society but preferred books to people and was ill at ease in a drawing room. Towards the close of the period he was stimulated by Henry George to read into politics and economics, and as a result he emerged as a Socialist. The new mistress, Socialism, was to demand of him a new kind of writing and to insist that he exchange the study for the soap box and lecture platform. It is a new phase in the life of Bernard Shaw.

CHAPTER TWO

SHAVIAN SOCIALISM

On the evening of September 5, 1882, Bernard Shaw found himself a member of a working men's audience in Memorial Hall, London, listening to Henry George, author of Progress and Poverty and advocate of a single tax on land. He has described the fire which George kindled in his soul.

> Now at that time I was a young man not much past twenty-five, of a very revolutionary and contradictory temperament, full of Darwin and Tyndall, of Shelley and De Quincey, of Michael Angelo and Beethoven, and never in my life having studied social questions from the economic point of view, except that I had once, in my boyhood, read a pamphlet by John Stuart Mill on the Irish Land Question. The result of my hearing the speech, and buying...a copy of Progress and Poverty for sixpence (Heaven only knows where I got that sixpence!) was that I plunged into a course of economic study, and at a very early stage of it became a Socialist and spoke from that very platform on the same great subject, and from hundreds of others as well, sometimes addressing distinguished assemblies in a formal manner, sometimes standing on a borrowed chair at a street corner, or simply on the kerbstone. 1

Soon after reading Progress and Poverty Shaw attended a meeting of the Democratic Federation which had been recently organized (1881) and was the first definitely Socialist organization in England. At one point in the discussion when he rose to press Henry George's theory of Land Nationalization he received the curt reply, "Read Marx's Capital, young man." The only volume of Marx then accessible to Shaw was the French version in the British Museum. William Archer, the drama critic and translator of Ibsen, saw Shaw for the first time in the Museum Library, "a young man of tawny complexion and attire," studying alternately Capital and an orchestral score of Tristan

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1 A Letter by Shaw to Hamlin Garland, Chairman of the Committee, the Progress and Poverty Dinner, New York City, January 24, 1905.

and Isolde. What he was later to find in Ibsen, Shaw now found in Marx - a kindred spirit. Like Marx his early years had bred in him a defiance of middle-class respectability, and a desire to revolt against its paralyzing influence.

> Not only did Marx's jeremiad against the bourgeoisie awaken instant response in Shaw: it changed the whole tenor of his life. No single book - not the Bible of orthodoxy and respectability, certainly - has influenced Shaw so much as the "bible of the working classes." 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. He became the most determined, most restless 2 and often most dangerous of men to deal with, a man with a mission.

A novelist by day and a political agitator by night describes Shaw's life in the years 1883-84. Previously, his speaking activity had been confined to debating societies, but now he was about to face the public. In 1883 he addressed a workmen's club at Woolwich on the subject "Thieves." His thesis, one which recurs in later speeches, was that the proprietor of an unearned income inflicts on the community exactly the same injury as a burglar. He spoke for an hour that evening, using only a few notes, and won his battle over nervousness. Henceforth, the lecture platform had no more terror for him.

Meanwhile in another part of London, a group of young people were planning meetings to discuss the ideas of Thomas Davidson, an American lecturer, founder of ethical societies and editor of a paper called "The New Life." The group formed itself into "The Fellowship of the New Life" and took for its purpose "the reconstruction of society in accordance with the highest moral principles." Before long, however, a rift appeared among the members. Those

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2 Henderson, Archibald, Bernard Shaw A Critical Biography. Cincinnati: 1911, p. 98.

faithful to Davidson wanted to make the object of the group "the cultivation of a perfect character in each and all...and the subordination of material things to spiritual." Others, more interested in social and economic reform, modestly felt, to use Shaw's phrase, that "the revolution would have to wait an unreasonably long time if postponed until they reasonably had attained perfection." They brought in a resolution: "The members of the Society assert that the competitive system assures the happiness and comfort of the few at the expense of the suffering of the many and that Society must be reconstituted in such a manner as to secure the general welfare and happiness." Those subscribing to the resolution split off from the Fellowship and in January, 1884, formed the Fabian Society. The motto of the group became, "For the right moment you must wait as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays: but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did or your waiting will be in vain, and fruitless." The first members were educated persons of the professional and higher official classes, including civil servants, stock brokers, journalists and the propertied bourgeoisie, all under the age of thirty with their careers still before them. Each member signed a declaration that he was a Socialist and accepted the Basis, a document stating the aims of the Society as "the reorganization of society by the emancipation of land and industrial capital from individual ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit." Among the early measures adopted was Resolution IV which stated the kind of activities the Society would undertake:

(a) Hold meetings for discussion, the reading of papers, hearing of reports, etc.
(b) Delegate some of its members to attend meetings on social subjects, debates at Workmen's Clubs, etc.
(c) Take measures in other ways, as, for example, by the collection of articles from current literature, to obtain information on all contemporary social movements and social needs.

The first Fabian Tract carried the title Why are the Many Poor? and was drafted by W. L. Phillips, a housepainter and at that time the only "genuine working man" in the membership. A copy of this tract fell into Shaw's hands and he was at once struck both with the objectives and the original name of the Society. A meeting in May, 1884, was "made memorable by the first appearance of Bernard Shaw"[3] and in September he became a member. From that time forward until his resignation in 1911 Shaw's work as a social, political and economic reformer was closely linked with the activities of the Society. It is only by following the history of the Fabian Society that Shaw's work as a Socialist can be examined.

Two weeks after joining the Fabian Society Shaw submitted his first contribution which was published as Tract 2, A Manifesto, sections of which illustrate a refreshing style for pamphlets in political economy.

> That the most striking result of our present system of farming out the land and capital to private persons has been the division of Society into hostile classes, with large appetites and no dinners at one extreme and large dinners and no appetites at the other.
>
> That the State should compete with private individuals especially in providing happy homes for children, so that every child may have a refuge from the tyranny or neglect of its natural custodians.
>
> That Men no longer need special political privileges to protect them against Women, and that the sexes should henceforth enjoy equal political rights.

The members of the Society were not long in recognizing Shaw's value to them as a writer and lecturer and within five months they elected him a member of the Executive Committee. The same year the Society appointed Shaw as a delegate to the Industrial Remuneration Conference. Previously the Fabian had been an obscure and small meeting-group with a definite Marxist and Anarchist point of view. It was at this conference that "the Society emerged

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[3] Shaw's own phrase inserted in the minutes of the meeting.

for the first time from its drawing-room obscurity,"[4] and that Shaw spoke for the first time before an audience of more than local importance. He may have used part of his speech, "Thieves," mentioned above, as the Report of the Conference contains this interpretation of the address:

> It was the desire of the President that nothing should be said that might give pain to particular classes. He was about to refer to a modern class, the burglars, but if there was a burglar present he begged him to believe that he cast no reflection upon his profession, and that he was not unmindful of his great skill and enterprise: his risks - so much greater than those of the most speculative capitalist, extending as they did to risk of liberty and life - his abstinence; or finally of the greater number of people to whom he gave employment, turnkeys, builders of gaols, and it might be the hangman. He did not wish to hurt the feelings of the shareholders... or the landlords...any more than he wished to pain burglars. He would merely point out that all three inflicted on the community an injury of precisely the same nature.

This tone of levity was a distinguishing characteristic not only of Shaw but of the Society in its early days. The members talked revolution and assumed that once their campaigning had brought about a smash-up in existing society, Socialism would immediately be instituted. But they campaigned in a lighter mood than the other Socialist Societies.

> It was at this period that we contracted the invaluable habit of freely laughing at ourselves which has always distinguished us...Our preference for practical suggestions and criticisms, and our impatience of all general expressions of working-class aspirations, not to mention our way of chaffing our opponents...repelled us from some warm-hearted and eloquent Socialists, to whom it seemed callous and cynical to be even commonly self-possessed in the presence of the sufferings upon which Socialists make war. But there was far too much equality and personal intimacy among the Fabians to allow of any member presuming to get up and preach at the rest in the fashion which the working-classes still tolerate submissively from their leaders. 5

For reasons such as these the Fabian Society kept its identity as a middle-class group while the Social Democratic Federation became identified with the

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4 Pease, E. R., The History of the Fabian Society. London: A. C. Fifield, 1916, p. 45.

5 Shaw, G. B., Fabian Tract No. 41: The Fabian Society:Its Early History.

proletarian Socialist movement. The two organizations split irrevocably in 1885 when the S.D.F., during the General Election, ran two candidates in London, but made it no secret that their election expenses were paid by the Conservative Party. Many people, including the Conservatives, who believed that the Socialists had a significant voting strength, were surprised, and probably relieved, when one of the candidates polled 32 votes, the other, 27. In the light of these results the Fabians passed a resolution regarding the "Tory money job."

> That the conduct of the council of the Social Democratic Federation in accepting money from the Tory party in payment of the election expenses of Socialist candidates is calculated to disgrace the Socialist Movement in England.

It was at this time that Sidney Webb joined the Society and his wealth of information, his memory for details and his ability as a debater were soon to influence Fabian Tracts and lectures. Shaw, who has described himself as one who picks other men's brains, found in Webb an extended assignment. Sydney Olivier and Graham Wallas, two other new members, had known each other at Oxford. At the time of entering the Society Olivier was a clerk in the Colonial Office; Wallas was an assistant master in a suburban school. These four men formed an intellectual partnership which later became the Hampstead Historic Society and did much to settle the Fabian attitude towards Marxian economics. Once a fortnight, dressed carelessly in Bohemian clothes, Shaw would walk with Webb and Olivier to Hampstead Heath, meet Wallas there, and discuss Marx and Proudhon. It was really a systematic history class in which each student took his turn at being professor. These meetings were important for Shaw and he pays a warm tribute to his three friends: "They knocked a tremendous lot of ignorance, nonsense and vulgarity out of me for we were on

quite ruthless terms with one another". It was this group of four young intellectuals, above average in vigour and ability, who after examining Capital, rejected both Marx's theory of surplus value and his advocacy of revolutionary methods. They agreed to work by more constitutional means, a policy which later found full expression in Fabian Essays.

These last years of the eighties were busy ones for Shaw. He was art critic for the World under Edmund Yates, and later music critic for T. P. O'Connor's Star, signing his articles "Corno di Bassetto." All his spare moments were devoted to Fabian activities. In Tract No. 7 he formulated a "True Radical Programme" advocating adult suffrage, payment of members of Parliament, taxation of unearned incomes, nationalization of railways, and the eight-hour day. In this Tract he is much less abstract, more practical, and closer to the unions and workers than he was in Tract 2, the Manifesto of 1884. When not writing he spent much of his free time on the lecture platform.

> Every Sunday I lectured on some subject I wanted to teach to myself; and it was not until I had come to the point of being able to deliver separate lectures, without notes, on Rent, Interest, Profits, Wages, Toryism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade-Unionism, Co-operation, Democracy, the Division of Society into Classes, and the Suitability of Human Nature to Systems of Just Distribution, that I was able to handle Social-Democracy as it must be handled before it can be preached in such a way as to present it to every sort of man from his own particular point of view. In old lecture lists of the Society you will find my name down for twelve different lectures or so. Nowadays (1892) I have only one, for which the Secretary is good enough to invent four or five different names."[6]

The Annual Report of the Society presented in April, 1889, reveals that although there were fewer than 150 members enrolled, a group of 31 of them gave 721 lectures during the year. Shaw was "probably the most active of the

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6 Shaw, G. B., Ibid.

group because the least fettered by his occupation."[7]

Another leader was Mrs. Annie Besant who had published Shaw's novels in her magazine, Our Corner. She was a free-thinker, and a powerful orator who enjoyed debating on such subjects as, "Resolved that the existence of classes who live upon unearned incomes is detrimental to the welfare of the community, and ought to be put an end to by legislation." Hubert Bland, an original member of the Society and another of the leaders, invariably wore a frock-coat, tall hat and a monocle which contrasted oddly with the hole-in-elbow carelessness of Shaw, Olivier, Wallas and Webb. To complete the group of seven Essayists who wrote and published Fabian Essays in Socialism in 1889 was William Clarke, lecturer and journalist, whose effectiveness as a speaker earned Shaw's comment: "Every sentence (is) an ultimatum." The Fabian Essays marked the final rejection of Marxism. They show that the entry of the State into productive industry is not untried and dangerous but a fact already accomplished and in successful operation. A sudden change from Capitalism to Socialism by the physical force of an insurrection is ridiculed and dismissed as "catastrophic Socialism." The transition from Capitalism to Socialism is dealt with as a part of the ordinary constitutional evolution of society. The Essays build up Socialism on the foundations of existing political and social institutions and present it as a creed of a constitutional party which any man might support without sacrificing his respectability. Shaw wrote two of the Essays and edited the others.[8]

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[7] Pease, E. R., op. cit., p. 77.

[8] Under the caption "The Basis of Socialism" appeared the chapters: "Economic," by G. Bernard Shaw; "Historic," by Sidney Webb; "Industrial," by William Clarke; "Moral," by Sidney Olivier. Under the caption "The Organization of Society" appeared the chapters: "Property under Socialism," by Graham Wallas; "Industry under Socialism" by Annie Besant; "Transition," by G. Bernard Shaw; and "The Outlook," by Hubert Bland.

"The high literary value of the Essays was due to the fact that he edited all the writers' work with care and precision."[9] By 1931 over seventy thousand copies of Fabian Essays had been sold and special editions had appeared in the United States, Germany, and Norway. By many, this book is still regarded as the standard text in English for Socialist lecturers and propagandists.

No longer able to look forward to a Revolution the Fabians formed within the Society a Parliamentary League which had a clearly stated policy:

> The League will take active part in all general and local elections. Until a fitting opportunity arises for putting forward Socialist candidates to form the nucleus of a Socialist Party in Parliament, it will confine itself to supporting those candidates who will go farthest in the direction of Socialism.

Thus began the policy of permeation which the Society first carried out successfully in the municipal politics of London. In 1888 under the Local Government Act the London County Council came into being and the Fabian Society soon began to circulate leaflets, under the title, "Questions for County Councillors." No mention was made of Socialism but candidates were invited to pledge themselves to reforms involving various trends towards municipal enterprise and were asked to indicate their willingness to institute minimum wage scales and to abolish "sweating." Many candidates had no traditional policy to fall back on and grasped the programs adroitly suggested by the Fabians. This program of Progressivism was denounced by the other Socialist groups, the Social Democratic Federation for one, as "Gas and Water Socialism." But it was successful at the polls (six Fabians including Webb were themselves elected to the L.C.C. in 1892) and it "retained its hold on London until the turn of the century."[10]

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[9] Pease, E. R., op. cit., p. 86.

[10] Shaw, G. B., "The Fabian Society," Chambers Encyclopaedia, New Edition 1924, Vol. IV, p. 540.

Flushed with their success in imposing a program on the London County Council the Fabians decided to try their permeation methods on the House of Commons. Their object was to force on the Liberal Party a policy of constructive social reform. The Society's members joined every body in which they could gain admission, particularly Liberal Associations where they did not find it difficult to get their resolutions accepted. Sidney Webb drew up a pamphlet, "Wanted a Programme: an Appeal to the Liberal Party," and sent it to the Liberal leaders. Two newspapers, the Star and the Daily Chronicle were "collared" and they printed the Appeal. Finally, in 1891, the National Liberal Federation found itself committed to a series of the most unusual resolutions. By a slim margin the Liberals won the election of 1892 but on taking office the Party leaders began to give much more attention to the Home Rule Bill than to the Fabian-inspired reforms. Before long, Shaw and Webb decided the time had come for an attack on Liberalism and in the Fortnightly Review for November, 1893, there appeared their article "To Your Tents O Israel." It combined a slashing attack on Government policy with a detailed examination of the shortcomings of each Department of State. The long list of administrative reforms which had been promised and Campbell-Bannerman's pledge that the Government would show itself to be "the best employers of labour in the country" were recalled. What had been done, with rare exceptions, was nothing. The writers called on the working classes to abandon Liberalism, to form a Trade Union Party of their own, to raise £30,000 and to finance fifty candidates for Parliament. The permeation boom was over, for now the Liberals could see they had little in common with the Fabians who had taken off the masks and revealed their true characteristics. The time had come for a new departure which Shaw had previously suggested to the Society at its Annual Meeting of 1891.

> We now feel that we have brought up all the political laggards and pushed their parties as far as they can be pushed, and that we have therefore cleared the way to the beginning of the special work of the Socialist - that of forming a Collectivist party of those who have more to gain than to lose by Collectivism, solidly arrayed against those who have more to lose than to gain by it. 11

In the General Election of 1895 the Liberals lost their slim majority to the Conservatives who continued to govern England for eleven years. During this period the Fabians saw no possibility and, indeed, had no desire to permeate Conservative policy. They had other work to do, much of it educational.

Shaw was busier than ever. Before the turn of the century he had written ten plays; for three years, 1895-98, he was drama critic for Frank Harris's Saturday Review and, beginning in 1897, he served for six years as vestryman and borough councillor for St. Pancras. In June 1898, he married Charlotte Payne-Townsend,,the green-eyed "comrade" whose company he had enjoyed at a Fabian house party two years before. Nevertheless, he continued his Fabian activities particularly the campaign for a separate Labour Party. The policy of permeation had been an opportunist measure, not a long term program. Even during the years when permeation seemed successful Shaw, in an Election Manifesto, Tract No. 40, urged the need of an Independent Labour Party. In 1893 the Trade Unionists did form the I. L. P. but not as a Collectivist Party to oppose the Liberals and Conservatives but as another Socialist Society. Shaw continued to battle for a Labour Party which would contest seats in Parliament and he set forth his opinions in another Tract, A Plan of Campaign for Labour. But the workmen's groups did not take up his suggestions because they did not understand the new Fabian tactics. They saw the Fabians, at one time friendly towards the Liberal Party but now attacking it, and inferred that "those who

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11 Shaw, G. B., Fabian Tract No. 41.

attacked the Liberals must do so in the interest of the Tories, probably under the influence of bribes."[12] Nevertheless the Fabian Society was asked to appoint delegates to a conference called in 1900 by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. The reason for holding the conference was "to devise ways and means for securing an increased number of Labour members in the next Parliament." Shaw and E. R. Pease attended as representatives of the Fabian. Out of the conference grew the Labour Representative Committee which, before long, transformed itself into the Labour Party and in the Election of 1906 put fifty candidates in the field, twenty-nine of whom were elected. Although not officially linked to the Labour Party the Fabian Society, in the years before the Great War, continued to give its strong support to that Party and to help increase Socialist representation in Parliament.

It is evident from the tables given in the Appendix that the Society was growing rapidly. Following the Election of 1906 there was a sharp increase in the numbers joining the Society. There was a sudden outburst of interest in Socialism and a growing recognition that it was a political force supported by the great organizations of Labour throughout the country. It was at this time of Fabian expansion that H. G. Wells tossed his bombshell in the Society and precipitated the Wells-Shaw controversy. Wells had become a member in 1903 but had not impressed the Society with his first contribution, "The Question of Scientific Administrative Areas in Relation to Municipal Undertakings,"[13] a technical paper which he read in a low, monotonous voice. In February, 1906, however, he presented, "Faults of the Fabian," in which he

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12 Shaw, G. B., "The Fabian Society," Chambers Encyclopaedia, New Edition 1924, Vol. IV, p. 541.

13 Pease, E. R., op. cit., p. 156.

ruthlessly criticized the Society and its leaders. It was "still half a drawing-room Society," lodged in "an underground apartment" with one secretary and one assistant. "The first of the faults of the Fabian, then, is that it is small, and the second that strikes me is that, even for its smallness, it is needlessly poor". The task undertaken by the Fabians, "is nothing less than the alteration of the economic basis of society," He complained that the Society did not advertise itself and made the election of new members difficult. "Make Socialists and you will achieve Socialism; there is no other plan." To effect the desired expansion he proposed to raise an income of £1000 a year, to increase the staff, and to prepare literature for the conversion of unbelievers. He was confident that his program would carry the members "up towards ten thousand within a year or so of its commencement." In short, Wells was challenging the rule of the Executive Committee, the "Old Gang" whom he characterized as liars, tricksters, intriguers, Die-Hard reactionaries and enemies of the Socialist species generally. True to form, the Fabians did not seize each others' throats but formed committees instead. These submitted their reports but the issue finally boiled down to one point: Was the Society going to be controlled by those who made it or was it to be handed over to Mr. Wells? Shaw forced himself into the position of spokesman for the Executive Committee and on December 7, 1906 the controversy narrowed down to a personal combat. Wells spoke for an hour and a quarter during which he challenged the Society to discard the Old Gang and enter into a new career under his guidance. He moved an amendment to the Special Committee's report which asked "the outgoing Executive to make the earliest possible arrangements for the election of a new Executive..." One week later Shaw replied. He first pledged the Executive Committee to accept the decision of the Society on future policy and

extorted a pledge from Wells to do the same. He pointed out that Wells's amendment was not concerned with policy but with the personal characters of the Executive. Then, with staggering audacity he brushed aside the notion that this was an issue in which there could be majorities or minorities and declared that if the amendment received one single vote beyond those of its mover and seconder, he and his colleagues would walk out and start a new Society in which such an opinion of them would find no support. This coup succeeded and Wells withdrew the amendment knowing that the members of the Society would crush it rather than cast out their leaders. In less than two years he had resigned from the Fabian.

Shaw was now spending more and more of his time on his plays and prefaces and in the years 1900-1910 eleven plays were written. But his other work did not decrease. During those years there appeared in the London Times more than ninety of Shaw's letters or articles and reports of his speeches. He wrote well over a score of articles for the better known periodicals ranging in subject matter from "An Opposition to Vaccination" to "The Unmentionable Case for Woman's Suffrage." For thirty years Shaw had been interested in the subject of equal political rights for women. The debates in the old Zetetical Society had often centred on this topic, and in his first contribution to the Fabian Society he advocated woman suffrage. Again in his True Radical Programme of 1887 he demanded that the Liberal-Radical programme be changed to include political equality. As a drama critic he found an excellent opportunity of indicating his attitude towards the status of women in society. After a performance of Ibsen's A Doll's House he wrote:

> The woman's eyes are opened; and instantly her doll's dress is thrown off and her husband left staring at her, helpless, bound thenceforth to do without her (an alternative which makes short work of his fancied independence) or else treat her as a human being like himself, fully recognizing that he is not a creature of one superior species, Man, living with a creature of another and inferior species, Woman, but that Mankind is male and female, like other kinds, and that the inequality of the sexes is literally a cock and bull story, certain to end as that which our own suburban King Arthurs suffer at the hands of Ibsen. 14

In 1900 in Fabian Tract No. 93 he had sufficient confidence in the ability of women to strongly urge their election to the London County Council. He knew that they would insist on better working conditions for their sex, and they would have practical advice to offer in housing projects. In 1909 there were 788 women in the Fabian Society. Two years before they had succeeded in making an alteration in the final paragraph of the Basis. The words in italics were the ones added.

> For the attainment of these ends the Fabian Society looks to the spread of Socialist opinions, and the social and political changes consequent thereon, including the establishment of equal citizenship for men and women. It seeks to achieve these ends by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and Society in its economic, ethical and political aspects.

The Women's Group was founded within the Society and one of its chief interests was in furthering the program of the Women's Suffrage Movement. "The early Suffrage Movement was mainly Socialist in origin: most of the first leaders of the Women's Social and Political Union were or had been members of the Fabian Society or the I. L. P., and it may almost be said that all the women of the Society joined one or more of the Suffrage Societies

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14 Shaw, G. B., Dramatic Opinions and Essays. (Brentano's, New York, 1928) Vol. II, p. 259.

which for the next seven years (1907-1914) played so large a part in national politics."[15] Mrs. Shaw was a member of the Women's Group and took a prominent part in dealing with such problems as wages, the condition of women's labour and the treatment of women by Insurance and Factory Acts, but it is doubtful if she ever fitted someone's description of a suffragette: "One who has forgotten she is a lady but has not yet quite become a gentleman." The Group, besides taking an active part in political movements concerning women, compiled five of the Tracts and also published "The Women's Group Series" thus making a valuable contribution to the literature of the Society.

In 1911, in the belief that the Fabian needed new leaders, Shaw resigned. He was now fifty-five and ready to hand over the controls to the new generation, represented in the 2000 new members who had joined in the last six years. His contribution had not been a small one. He had written fourteen of the Society's Tracts, spoken innumerable times to all manner of audiences and been a member of the Executive Committee for twenty-six years. Under the guidance of the Old Gang the Society broke the spell of Marxism in England by showing that Socialism was a living principle which could be applied to existing conditions without an insurrection. During the period of Permeation the Fabian influenced both municipal and national politics and later advocated the formation of a Labour Party. During Shaw's last years as a member, the Society stood for a Fair Wages Policy, the reform of the Poor Law, and, through the work of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, presented a comprehensive scheme for the prevention of unemployment under existing conditions.[16]

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15 Pease, E. R., op. cit., p. 156.

16 The Remedy for Unemployment Part I of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, 1909. By Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Published by the Fabian Society.

While Shaw has truthfully said that the Society's work was "far reaching in its effect both on the Socialist movement and political thought generally out of all proportion to its numbers and apparent resources," yet the Fabian has made little progress along the main road of Socialism. By means of the lecture platform, the series of Tracts, a lending library and summer schools, the members of the Fabian changed the political outlook of large numbers of men and women in all classes. But they did not achieve sufficient power to abolish private capital and put state control of industry in its place.

Since Shaw's resignation the Society has continued to give leadership in English political life. On the accession to office of the Labour Party in 1924, Ramsay Macdonald, Prime Minister, Sidney Webb, Minister of Labour, and Sydney Olivier, Secretary of State for India, were all Fabians. Again in 1929 the Labour Party and Mr. Macdonald returned to office with twenty members of the Fabian holding posts in the government, eight of them as members of the Cabinet. The Annual Report of the Society presented in March, 1941 revealed that in that year fifteen members of the House of Lords, sixty-nine members of the House of Commons, and six ministers of Winston Churchill's Government were Fabians. The total membership was 2,070 and the total number of Tracts now exceeded 250. Under the chairmanship of G. D. H. Cole the Society appears to be growing in numbers and strength. What Shaw said of it in 1924 might well be said today.

> The number of persons distinguished in the literary and political world who have at one time or another been members of the Society is considerable; and though some of them may now regard the experience as the sowing of their political wild oats, the share taken by the Fabians in the education of the generation which followed that to which the leaders belonged has left its mark on political history, and will probably continue to influence it more or less until the Collectivist reaction against the Manchester School is consummated or exhausted. 17

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17 Shaw, G. B., Chambers Encyclopaedia, 1924 Edition, Vol. IV, p. 543.

In the years following 1911 Shaw continued to keep in touch with Fabian activities, taking part in public debates and lecturing at the Annual Meetings, but he spoke for himself alone. In one of his public appearances he addressed the National Liberal Club at its Annual Dinner in 1913 speaking on "The Case for Equality." It was probably the first public presentation of his theory of equal incomes for all, but as early as 1884 he had maintained that "a life interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birthright of every individual born within its confines and that access to this birthright should not depend upon the will of any private person other than the person seeking it."[18] In a series of six lectures under the general title, "The Redistribution of Income," organized in 1914 by the Fabian Society at Kingsway Hall, Shaw developed his thesis.

> I...delivered my final conclusion that equal distribution is the only solution that will realize the ideals of Socialism. This is not fully accepted as yet in the movement, in which there is still a strong leaven of the old craving for an easy-going system which, beginning with the 'socialization of the means of production, distribution and exchange,' will then work out automatically without interference with the citizen's private affairs." 19

The Fabian Society did not publish either "The Case for Equality" or "The Redistribution of Income" and has never endorsed the views they express. Shaw's insistence on an absolute equality of income is not acceptable to the majority of Socialists. They prefer the ideal of "each according to his need."

The complete exposition of Shavian Socialism is contained in The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism published in 1928. This volume, which some critics considered to be Shaw's "last will and testament", ranges in its discussion from stockbroking to birth control, from the Shop Hours Act

18 Fabian Tract No 2.

19 Shaw, G. B., Appendix I to Pease, E. R., op. cit.

to drug smuggling, yet it is always lucid and fresh. It is, in contrast to the heaviness of Marx's Capital, to use Rebecca West's phrase, as cool and crisp as a good salad. Throughout the book Shaw talks to his woman reader, flatters her, emphasizes the fact that he understands her and indicates that he is anxious for her approval of his theories. He knows, of course, that all his readers will not be women, and in the Foreword to the American Edition he pretends to reveal a secret. "By this book I shall get at the American men through the American women. In America...every male citizen...is ashamed to expose the depths of his ignorance by asking elementary questions; and I dare not insult him by volunteering the missing information. But he has no objection to my talking to his wife as one who knows nothing of these matters: quite the contrary. And if he should chance to overhear - !!!"

Early in the Guide Shaw examines six plans for the distribution of wealth. The first is to "let every person have that part of the wealth of the country which she has produced by her work (the feminine pronoun here includes the masculine)." This he rejects because "when we try to put it into practice we discover first, that it is quite impossible to find out how much each person has produced, and second, that a great deal of the world's work is neither producing material things nor altering the things that Nature produces, but doing services of one sort or another."[20]

Another plan would be to give to each person what she deserves; but, "How are you going to measure anyone's merit in money? Choose any pair of human beings you like, male or female, and see whether you can decide how much each of them should have on his or her merits."[21]

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20 Shaw, G. B., The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism. (New York: Garden City Publishing Co. 1928), Chapter 8.

21 Ibid., Chapter 9.

The third plan would allow everyone to have what she can lay her hands on. But this plan would never do "in a world where there are children and old people and invalids, and where all able-bodied adults of the same age and strength vary in greediness and wickedness..."[22]

Or we could continue the plan operating today which Shaw calls Oligarchy. "(It) is to take one person in every ten (say) and make her rich without working by making the other nine work hard and long every day, giving these only enough of what they make to keep them alive and bring up families to continue their slavery when they grow old and die."[23] This plan is unsound because, having chosen the few, that is the English gentry, "we should have no guarantee that they would do any of the things we intended them to do and paid them to do. With the best intentions the gentry govern the country very badly because they are so far removed from the common people that they do not understand their needs."[24]

The fifth plan would divide society into as many classes as there are different sorts of work with each class receiving different payment for its work. But, says Shaw, "You must get rid of the notion (if you have it: if not forgive me for suspecting you of it) 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...It may be asked, why do we give some men more than they need and some less? The answer is that for the most part we do not give it to them: they get it because we have not arranged what anyone shall get, but have left it to chance and grab."[25]

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22 Ibid., Chapter 10.

23 Ibid., Chapter 11.

24 Loc. cit.

25 Shaw, The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism, Chapter 12.

And finally, Shaw disposes of the policy of leaving things just as they are. He contends that it is just as foolish to imagine that things will not change if one refuses to meddle with them as it is "to give up dusting your rooms and expect to find them this time next year just as they are now." Within the last hundred and fifty years "astounding changes have taken place in this very business that we are dealing with (the production and distribution of the national income) just because what was everybody's business was nobody's business, and it was let run wild...Politics will not stand still any more than industry merely because millions of timid old-fashioned people vote at every election for what they call Conservatism: that is, for shutting our eyes and opening our mouths."[26]

Shaw's solution is equality of income. "What the Socialists[27] say is that none of these plans will work well, and that the only satisfactory plan is to give everybody an equal share no matter what sort of person she is, or how old she is, or what sort of work she does, or who or what her father was."[28] Under such a scheme many evils in our national life would be eradicated, particularly poverty.

> Such poverty as we have today in our great cities degrades the poor, and infects with its degradation the whole neighbourhood in which they live. And whatever can degrade a neighbourhood can degrade a country and a continent and finally the whole civilized world, which is only a large neighbourhood...It is perhaps the greatest folly of which a nation can be guilty to attempt to use poverty as a sort of punishment for offences that it does not send people to prison for. It is easy to say of a lazy man, "Oh, let him be poor:

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26 Ibid., Chapter 13.

27 By no means all of them.

28 Shaw, G. B., op. cit., chapter 7.

> it serves him right for being lazy: it will teach him a lesson." In saying so we are ourselves too lazy to think a little before we lay down the law. We cannot afford to have poor people anyhow, whether they be lazy or busy, drunken or sober, virtuous or vicious, thrifty or careless, wise or foolish. If they deserve to suffer let them be made to suffer in some other way; for mere poverty will not hurt them half as much as it will hurt their innocent neighbours. It is a public nuisance as well as a private misfortune. Its toleration is a national crime. 29

As Shaw knew that those who believed in his plan would meet many criticisms, he supplies them with the necessary arguments. Critics will immediately bring up the question of incentive. When incomes are equalized, will a woman continue to work with the same energy as she works now under the competitive system? To this question Shaw replies:

> One answer to this is that nobody wants her to work harder than another at the national task. On the contrary, it is desirable that the burden of work, without which there could be no income to divide, should be shared equally by the workers. If those who are never happy unless they are working insist on putting in extra work to please themselves they must not pretend that this is a painful sacrifice for which they should be paid; and anyhow, they can always work off their superflous energy on their hobbies. 30

Those who dislike work and desire to escape it by taking less money would not be tolerated. The Weary Willies will have to submit, not to compulsory poverty as at present, but to compulsory well being.

If everyone is paid the same income who will do the dirty work? Will not all the boys of this brave new world aspire to be air pilots and the girls film stars and who will there be to dig a sewer or scrub floors? Shaw believes that one thing all people desire is freedom, that is, "freedom from any obligation to do anything except just what we like, without a thoughtof tomorrow's dinner or any other of the necessities that make slaves of us." We are free only as long as we can say, 'My time is my own.' Workers will prefer rough,

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29 Ibid., Chapter 14.

30 Ibid., Chapter 23.

dirty, even strict employments which leave them some time to themselves, to much more pleasant situations in which they are never free. Therefore, "Give more leisure, earlier retirement into the superannuated class, more holidays, in the less agreeable employments, and they will be as much sought after as the more agreeable ones with less leisure."[31]

To conceive of a bureaucratic system honest, intelligent and omniscient enough to control the nation's wealth and distribute it evenly is rather difficult. It would need to direct national production and individual consumption. This could only be done by a greatly increased Civil Service, one of the developments among the evolutionary methods by which Shaw would keep repairing the garment of Capitalism until the patches make an entirely new coat - Socialism. There is nothing which sanctions violent revolution in this plan but neither will peacefully accepted parliamentary reforms by themselves create Socialism.

> What it proposes is not a destruction of the material utilities inherited from Capitalism, but a new way of managing them and distributing the wealth they produce. Before the ideal of equal incomes for all can be realized we shall have not only to pass hundreds of new Acts of Parliament and repeal hundreds of old ones, but to invent and organize new Government departments; train and employ no end of women and men as public servants; educate children to look at their country's affairs in a new way; and struggle at every step with the opposition of ignorance, stupidity, custom and prejudice and the vested interests of the rich. 32

The evolutionary development towards Socialism implies the gradual nationalization of the country's resources. Rather than set itself in competition with private enterprise ("the competitive system is an extremely wasteful one") the Government will gradually take over all industry and land. In so doing it will "always pay the full market price or more to the proprietors for every scrap of property nationalized." Of course, the Government

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31 Ibid., Chapter 23.

32 Ibid., Chapter 27.

will obtain the money to be used for compensation by taxing all capitalists' incomes. Heavier taxes on large incomes will enable the State to collect sufficient money from a number of capitalists to buy out one of themselves. "The so-called compensation is only an adjustment by which the loss is shared by the whole capitalist class instead of being borne wholly by a particular member of it whose piece of land or bank shares or other property the Government happens to want."[33]

Another objection which might be raised to Shavian Socialism is whether the amount of wealth which has been created and maintained upon one system would continue to exist and be available for division under another. Shaw's answer is that "the money with which the rich give the wrong sort of employment would give the right sort of employment if it were equally distributed, for then there would be no money offered for motor cars and diamonds until everyone was fed, clothed and lodged, nor any wages offered to men and women to leave useful employments and become servants to idlers. There would be less ostentation, less idleness, less wastefulness, less uselessness; but there would be more food, more clothing, better houses, more security, more health, more virtue: in a word, more real prosperity."[34]

Not only does Shaw anticipate all the probable criticisms to his economic and political theories but he makes Socialism both attractive and respectable to his women readers. "Should you become a convert to Socialism you will not be committed to any change in your private life, nor indeed will you find yourself able to make any change that would be of the smallest use in that direction...You may agitate and vote for all the steps by which equalization will be

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33 Ibid., Chapter 57.

34 Ibid., Chapter 15.

will be reached; but in your private life you cannot do otherwise than you have to do at present: that is, keep your social rank (know your place, as it is called), paying or receiving the usual wages, investing your money to the best advantage, and so forth."[35]

But at this point - the possibility of retaining present attitudes and motives - Shavian Socialism may be criticized. His first tenet is equality of income. There can be no such equality until a Government controls the entire national income which in turn means a control of all production. And prior to this, all private land owners and capitalists must have been bought off. During this process of nationalization another very important change, a psychological one, has to take place. Under Capitalism the profit motive is so thoroughly interwoven with other motives for doing work that it is almost impossible to separate or analyze it. The desire for security and power, and the natural wish to excel one's fellows are all strong and fundamental forces acting on an individual, and in a capitalistic society they are not separable from the profit motive. To expect that under a Socialist economy those forces would continue to operate when the profit motive has been removed implies that somewhere along the way human nature will change, and power, security and leadership will be desired and won, not by increasing one's wealth, but through service to and co-operation with the community. Unless this psychological change does take place before the actual time comes (a point on which Shaw is vague) for the issuing of equal incomes, the system would go to pieces. Only if a great deal of social education takes place will his ideal of human nature be realized: "For then the base woman will be she who takes from her country

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35 Ibid., Chapter 27.

more than she gives to it; the common person will be she who does no more than replace what she takes; and the lady will be she who, generously over-earning her income, leaves the nation in her debt and the world a better world than she found it."[36]

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36 Ibid., Chapter 84.

CHAPTER III

SHAW AND SOME PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY

In his Plays and Prefaces Shaw has urged social reform quite as vigorously as in his Socialist tracts and platform speeches. He believes that the theatre of today is as important as the Church was in the Middle Ages and asserts that "the apostolic succession from Eschylus to G.B.S. was as serious and continuously inspired as the younger institution, the apostolic succession of the Christian Church." When he began his playwriting career (Widowers' Houses, his first play, was completed in 1892) Shaw found that the theatre was "a place of shallow amusement; that people go there to be soothed after the enormous intellectual strain of a day in the city: in short, that a playwright is a person whose business it is to make unwholesome confectionery out of cheap emotions."[1] In opposition to this view he believed that the theatre should consider itself as "a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armory against despair and dulness, and a temple of the ascent of Man."[2] With such a conception of the importance of the theatre clearly in his mind Shaw, as the dramatic critic of the Saturday Review from 1895-98, championed Ibsen and did his best to drive the melodramas, the farces and the French adaptations away to the music halls. The theatre could not carry out its true function, Shaw realized, if it continued to present the traditional "well-made play," that is, a play that told a story in a particular way, leading the audience up to "the situation" at the end of the

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1 Preface to Back to Methusaleh.

2 Shaw, G. B., "Author's Apology," Dramatic Opinions and Essays, New York, 1928.

second act and cleaning up the mess it had made in the third and last. Scribe, followed by Sardou, was the great master of the trick drama in France; Pinero, in England. Shaw, unlike his contemporaries, was intensely interested in the pressure of economic, political and religious institutions on his characters, finding it rich in dramatic situations and conflicts.

Major Barbara is a sermon with a text taken from Samuel Butler: "The want of money is the root of all evil." Shaw relates in the Preface, "In the millionaire Undershaft I have represented a man who has become intellectually and spiritually as well as practically conscious of the irresistable natural truth which we all abhor and repudiate: to wit, that the greatest of our crimes is poverty, and that our first duty, to which every other consideration should be sacrificed, is not to be poor." Once he had grasped the fact that poverty is a crime Undershaft, who as a boy step-danced for pennies in the street, determined to leave the slums. But society had only one appalling alternative to offer him. If he refused to accept the infamy of poverty there was no middle way leading towards humble virtue. He could only travel the high road where, by using his ability and energetic enterprise, he became a munitions maker carrying on a lucrative trade in death and destruction. Society gave him no other choice. It had to be, for a man of his talents, either grim poverty or great wealth. Shavian irony is evident at the close of the play when Undershaft wins over both Barbara and her fiancé, Cusins. After he has shown Barbara the nursing home, the libraries and schools of his planned community, Undershaft says persuasively, "I see no darkness here, no dreadfulness. In your Salvation

shelter I saw poverty, misery, cold, and hunger. You gave them bread and treacle and dreams of heaven. I give them thirty shillings a week to twelve thousand a year. They find their own dreams; but I look after the drainage." What Undershaft does not say, of course, is that all his plans for improved living are based on an industry of destruction. How sound is a model community financed by a private manufacturer whose trade is war? That false security, implies Shaw, is all that modern capitalistic society can offer.

His long term solution for the evil is clearcut and simple. It is the first tenet of his Socialism; "to give every man enough to live well on so as to guarantee the community against the possibility of a case of the malignant disease of poverty, and then (necessarily) to see that he earned it." But, as we have seen, Shavian Socialism implies gradual change and the Peter Shirleys and Bill Walkers of Major Barbara will have some time to wait before equality of income is instituted. In the meantime there are several means of trying to alleviate their condition. One of these is the Salvation Army. Contrary to the opinion of many playgoers who see Major Barbara, Shaw does not mock the Salvation Army, rather does he show the economic deadlock in which it stands. Bodger, the distiller, and Undershaft contribute large sums to the Army's work. If it accepts the money it will, in effect, sanction the very forces it should be criticising most - those which help to create poverty, yet in spite of the danger of reducing itself to absurdity or hypocrisy the Army takes the money. As one of its officers once said, "We would welcome the money from the devil himself and be only too glad to get it out of his hands and into God's." Furthermore, it cannot exist without money and there is no other money to be had. This is another of Shaw's points: practically all the spare money in a country is tainted. It consists

of "a mass of rent, interest and profit, every penny of which is bound up with crime, drink, prostitution, disease, and all the evil fruits of poverty, as inextricably as with enterprise, wealth, commercial probity, and national prosperity."[3] And it is this fact that Barbara Undershaft has to face: she realizes that she is her father's accomplice and the Salvation Army is the accomplice of the distiller and the munitions maker. Her stop-gap efforts to bring salvation to those in the slums can be of little avail for, says Shaw, there can be no real salvation for either the Walkers, Shirleys, or Undershafts except through the redemption of the whole nation from "its vicious, lazy, competitive anarchy."

Yet in spite of its dilemma Shaw believes that the Army will not only pray at the devil but will fight him once they have learned his correct address. He confesses that while he and other reformers from Voltaire to Ruskin have known very well what the evil is, their methods of destroying it have been of little avail. But there is still hope if the poor will repudiate their poverty and the Salvation Army with its emblem of blood and fire may be among those who will lead the way. At least the Army is able to inspire vitality in its members, to conquer fear and to gain by prayer the strength to fight. With their reliance on color and music and their readiness to suffer abuse and ill-usage they can instil a much-needed spirit, not of submissiveness but of hope, in those who are poor.

The theme of tainted money underlies Widowers' Houses and when the play was first produced by J. T. Grein and the Independent Theatre Shaw drew this comment from the Athanaeum: "He aims to show with Zolaesque exactitude that middle-class life is foul and leprous. The play means that the middle class

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3 Preface to Major Barbara.

even to its womanhood is brutal at heart, or it means nothing." This is, of course, precisely Shaw's intention as he states it in the Preface: "In Widowers' Houses I have shewn middle-class respectability and younger son gentility fattening on the poverty of the slum as flies fatten on filth. This is not a pleasant theme." Harry Trench and Blanche Sartorius meet on the Continent and on their return to England are anxious to marry. Trench learns that Blanche's father derives his wealth from the slum poverty of London and refuses to accept any part of it. But Blanche refuses to marry Trench on his present income. It is at this point that Shaw indicts our present economic system. Sartorius reasons with Trench and shows him the reality of the situation. If slum property were improved, he argues, the tenants would only wreck it. Why repair broken staircases when every stick of new timber would be stolen within three days and used for firewood? Furthermore, Sartorius continues, Trench is not the one to raise objections to landlordism, and he shows Harry that his own income is derived from a mortgage on the very property under discussion. At this point all Trench can say is, "Do you mean to say that I am just as bad as you are?" At the close of the play Trench is persuaded to take part in another means of making money from slum property - buying blocks of slums which are likely to come under improvement schemes and then gain handsome profits by way of compensation. With his acquiescence in the scheme comes reconciliation with Blanche. The characters in Widowers' Houses appear to the playgoer as depraved creatures; Sartorius extorts his rent pitilessly and Blanche beats her maid, Lickcheese becomes wealthy on graft and Harry Trench weakly falls in with him. But Shaw's intention is to portray these characters as typical people who act on the stage as the audience do every day of their own lives. A member of the audience will say that he does not own slum property, but Shaw

will reply, "All I want to see is the label on his matchbox, or his last week's washing-bill, to judge for myself whether he really ever gives a second thought to Sartorius's tenants who make his matchboxes and wash his stockings so cheaply." The purpose of the play is to show how middle-class people are in the grip of a system; they are the tools of a world-wide net work of economic jobbery and blood sucking. It is their duty to attack the system and to overthrow it; to withdraw from its most evident evils is only escaping from one part of the net to another.

Barbara Undershaft found herself an unwilling but inevitable accomplice of her father, Harry Trench could not escape the pervasive evil of slum landlordism, and in Mrs. Warren's Profession (1894) Vivie Warren discovers that she has been educated and made comfortable from the profits of prostitution. On learning these facts her first impulse was to condemn her mother who managed a chain of European brothels but Mrs. Warren, not by justifying her profession but by explaining the causes of it, gives Vivie a new understanding. The root-cause is economic as Shaw states in the Preface: "Mrs. Warren's Profession was written to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together...No normal woman would be a professional prostitute if she could better herself by being respectable, nor marry for money if she could afford to marry for love." He argues again in the Preface to Getting Married that while a girl may say that she became a prostitute because she wanted excitement or fine clothes or more pleasure, what she really means is that she wants more money because she lacked what no woman with plenty of money need lack. In short, whatever the scientific experts or the girls themselves say prostitution is "not a vocation but a slavery to which women are driven by the miseries of honest poverty. When

every young woman has an honourable and comfortable livelihood open to her on reasonable terms, the streets will make no more recruits."

Prostitution is not an isolated or individual enterprise carried on in the lodgings of solitary women. It is a well-managed business, organized on an international scale and returning high profits not only to its capitalist managers but to great estates, often church estates, through the rents of the houses in which it is practised. Shaw has typified the shareholder of Mrs. Warren's enterprise in Sir George Crofts who boasts of receiving 35 per cent. on his investment. But when Vivie calls him a scoundrel he reveals her own position:

> Crofts: Do you remember your Crofts scholarship at Newnham? Well, that was founded by my brother the M.P. He gets 22 per cent. out of a factory with 600 girls in it, and not one of them getting wages enough to live on.

At first, like Harry Trench all Vivie can say is, "I believe I am just as bad as you," but before long she lashes out at Crofts:

> Vivie: ... When I think of the society that tolerates you and the laws that protect you! when I think of how helpless nine out of ten young girls would be in the hands of you and my mother! the unmentionable woman and her capitalist bully -
>
> Crofts (livid) Damn you!
>
> Vivie: You need not. I feel among the damned already.

As Vivie points out, Society must shoulder the blame for prostitution. Mrs. Warren is not alone guilty as she explains to Vivie in relating the story of her life. Mrs. Warren was one of three sisters brought up in a fried-fish shop. She worked for a time as a barmaid but was induced by her sister to go into partnership in taking over a house in Brussels - "a real high-class place where the girls were much better treated than they would

have been in a factory or a bar." The enterprise prospered although at first all Mrs. Warren had was "a turn for pleasing men." She answers Vivie's question of whether she was not ashamed by saying, "What's the use for such hypocrisy? If people arrange the world that way for women, there's no good pretending it's arranged the other way. No: I never was a bit ashamed really. I consider I had a right to be proud of how we managed everything so respectably, and never had a word against us, and how the girls were so well taken care of. Some of them did very well: one of them married an ambassador." Society offered to Mrs. Warren two alternatives as it did to Andrew Undershaft. She could either continue to wash glasses for fourteen hours a day for four shillings a week and her board and become a worn-out drudge at forty or, by using her energy and initiative, become a wealthy manager of a chain of brothels. Like Undershaft, Mrs. Warren refused to remain poor, but having made that decision her only way out was by way of the profession she accepted. It was not her preference but it was all Society could offer her. "It's not work (she says) that any woman would do for pleasure, goodness knows; though to hear the pious people talk, you would suppose it was a bed of roses...Of course it's worth while to a poor girl, if she can resist temptation and is good looking and well-conducted and sensible. It's far better than any employment open to her. I always thought that oughtn't to be. It can't be right, Vivie, that there shouldn't be better opportunities for women. I stick to that: it's wrong. But it's so, right or wrong; and a poor girl must make the best of it. But, of course, it's not worthwhile for a lady. If you took to it you'd be a fool; but I should have been a fool if I'd taken to anything else." The evils of underpaid virtue and overpaid vice are by no means a thing of

the past, but Mrs. Warren's statement that the only way a woman can live decently is "to be good to some man who can afford to be good to her," is now scarcely tenable. A woman does not need to turn to prostitution, or marriage either, to escape drudgery. Since 1894 the ways by which a woman can earn a comfortable living have multiplied, and today Mrs. Warren would not be faced with poorly paid slavery should she want to keep her virtue.

In the Major Barbara Preface Shaw writes: "Nobody demands or expects the millenium. But there are two things which must be set right, or we shall perish, like Rome, of soul atrophy disguised as empire." The first of these, as we have seen, is to provide more equal distribution of wealth. The second is that "the deliberate infliction of malicious injuries which now goes on under the name of punishment be abandoned; so that the thief, the ruffian, the gambler and the beggar may without inhumanity be handed over to the law, and made to understand that a State which is too humane to punish will also be too thrifty to waste the life of honest men in watching or restraining dishonest ones." In short, we must reform the laws and practices of punishment and imprisonment. At the end of the first World War Shaw became a member of a committee to investigate the conditions of English prisons. For the report of that committee he wrote a lengthy preface containing his views on imprisonment but due to a difference of opinion among other committee members Shaw transferred the essay to Sidney and Beatrice Webb's English Prisons under Local Government. In this and other prefaces he not only condemns English prisons but examines with keen insight the whole question of punishment. From the official list of results aimed at by the Prison Commissioners Shaw learned, first, that imprisonment must be retributory;

second, that it must be deterrent; third, it must be reformative. After analyzing these three aims he observed that to punish a man you must injure him, yet to reform him you must improve him. And men are not improved by injuries. The Prison Commissioners may have in mind the reformation of the prisoner yet "the destruction of his self-respect by systematic humiliation is deliberately ordered and practised." In reality, the prison manufactures the criminal type of person. Through silence, separation and solitide a man becomes more, not less, depraved. John Howard warned us that "absolute solitude is no more than nature can bear without the hazard of distraction and despair." On the other hand, if prisoners are allowed to associate with one another the chances are that the older and more expert criminals will teach the younger ones the science of crime and the best known methods of escaping detection. Shaw points out that to punish a man by imprisonment implies two things: in the first place, Society inflicts pain and suffering on one of its guilty members; it takes legalized revenge. Secondly, from the criminal's point of view, punishment is expiation. If he serves the sentence and settles his account with the world he will then be ready to begin again with a clean slate. But, says Shaw, no atonement the thief or murderer can make in suffering can make him any less a thief or murderer. That is, he cannot wash out his crime by merely serving a sentence. A man who steals must remain a thief until he becomes another man, no matter what expiation he may make. To injure him will not change him. This is the fallacy of retributive imprisonment. If a man commits a crime against society and it retaliates by taking legal vengeance on him the result is not a reformed citizen. Two blacks do not make a white.

In Major Barbara and its Preface Shaw illustrates his point. Bill Walker has assaulted Jenny Hill, the Salvation Army lass. Under the skilled treatment of Barbara he finds himself overwhelmed with an intolerable conviction of sin. He tries first to "deruffianize" his deed by getting punished for it in kind - "Aw trawd to get me aown jaw broke to settisfaw you." When that relief is denied him he fines himself a pound to compensate the girl. Both methods fail with the inexorable Army. It will not punish him, and it will not take his money: it leaves him no means of salvation except ceasing to be a ruffian. In doing this, Shaw notes, "the Salvation Army instinctively grasps the central truth of Christianity and discards its central superstition: that central truth being the vanity of revenge and punishment, and that central superstition the salvation of the world by the gibbet."

Having demonstrated the fallacy of retribution as one of the official aims of prison administrators Shaw goes on to examine the deterrent value of imprisonment. Deterrence has much more to be said for it than retribution. At least it is not directly wicked. The crude basis of most of our discipline in home, school, army and prison is that of forcing those who break the rules to suffer so severely that others will become afraid to break them. Consequently, those who do not understand the necessity of discipline and those without strength enough to discipline themselves are kept in check. In judging the value of deterrent or terrorist system the victim is usually not considered. But what can be said for a method which may deter others but will probably lead a released prisoner straight back into crime? "The statistics of recidivism show that the criminal, far from being deterred from a crime, is forced into it; and the citizen whom his punishment was meant to protect suffers from his depradations." One of the established rules of criminology is that it is not

the severity of punishment that deters, but its certainty. The flaw, however, lies in the fact that it is impossible to obtain enough certainty to deter. Clever criminals are always sure that they can 'get away with it.' And many do, for the police confess each year in their statistics that they can by no means match the number of crimes with an equal number of convictions. And the number of reported crimes form only a percentage of the crimes actually committed as it is often less trouble and expense for a person who has been robbed to just forget about it than to call the police. The burglar in Heartbreak House knows this and makes his living by breaking into people's houses and then blackmailing them by threatening to give himself up to the police, thus putting them to the expense and discomfort of attending his trial and giving evidence after enduring all the worry of police enquiries. It is a Shavian paradox: "Detection is so uncertain that its consequences have no really effective deterrence for the potential offender, while the unpleasant and expensive consequences of prosecution, being absolutely certain, have a strong deterrent effect on the prosecutor ."[4]

In his proposed reforms regarding imprisonment and punishment the charge of inconsistency cannot be made against Bernard Shaw. In 1933 in the Preface to On the Rocks he was advocating substantially the same methods as he put forward in Imprisonment, 1922 and the Major Barbara Preface, 1905. He would attempt to distinguish three kinds of persons who commit offences against society: those who are incorrigible monsters, those who are not capable of going straight unless their lives are ordered for them, and those normal people who have trespassed in some way during a lapse in self-discipline.

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[4] Imprisonment (English Local Government, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb).

The first group is small and in it Shaw would include all hopeless defectives from idiot children to the worst kind of homicidal maniacs. The means of dealing with them is easy; you kill or cage them. He makes clear, however, the types of criminals he would remove from society. These are the "negatively" bad specimens who have no conscience, who beg, borrow, steal, defraud and seduce almost by reflex action. They are indulged and spared to the extreme limit of endurance; but in the end they have to be deprived of their liberty in some way. The "positively" bad specimens are incurably ferocious and unless they are physically restrained they break people's bones, knock out their eyes, rupture their organs, or kill them. Shaw doubts if these people can be reformed with our present knowledge of the reasons for human behaviour although as early as 1922 he gives credit to psycho-analysis as a means of curing sadism. He is only half in jest when he instances a man who was cured of wife-beating by being allowed to beat the drum in a village band. But there is the problem of what to do with the man who supports himself by gaining the confidence and affection of lonely women, and after seducing them and spending all their money, burns them in a stove or drowns them in a bath; or the married couple who reportedly amuse themselves by tying their children to the bedstead, then thrashing them with straps and branding them with red hot pokers. At present we imprison this couple for a fixed period, torment them, and set them free to resume their cruelty. Releasing them is like releasing the tigers from the zoo to find their meal in the nearest children's playground. A more sensible way would be to treat these incorrigibles as we treat mad dogs and adders without malice or cruelty - by quietly exterminating them. This would, of course, only be

done when reform was considered hopeless and punishment would have no deterrent value. But can we be sure that such psychopathic cases are beyond cure? Modern advances in psychiatry would make one hesitant in sanctioning the death sentence for even the most vicious criminal. There is one other objection to Shaw's suggestion and, as usual, he anticipates it. Obviously, it would be important who decided whether a man was an irreclaimable scoundrel and should be put to death. Shaw rightly believes that the power to exterminate "is too grave to be left in any hands but those of a ... government responsible to the whole community." That is, extermination must be a "humane science" used, not for political ends, but for the improvement of the race by the removal of those elements that hold it back.

The second class of persons who commit offences are those who are too good to be killed or caged, and not good enough for normal liberty. Their treatment offers more of a problem. They are the men who cannot go straight "except in leading strings," and who are unfit for full moral responsibility. In peacetime many of this group join the Army or Navy because they prefer to have their lives ordered for them rather than face the effort of ordering it themselves. Shaw would place this group under discipline and tutelage with their board and lodging provided for them. This tutelage would be compulsory until a man was fit for freedom, but in the meantime he would not be kept in the kind of prison now existent. The new prisons would be made reasonably happy places, thrown open to volunteers (unless they became overcrowded) and designed to turn unproductive, wretched people into good citizens.

Their labour must be organized and used productively either by the state in building, for example, Government dock yards and municipal industries or by private employers who obtain labor service from the prison authorities. This would, of course, be a costly scheme but certainly less costly than the present system which wastes the labor power of able-bodied men and women by imprisoning them. From a long range view the scheme would probably not cost the nation anything at all; it would enrich it. If the tutelage were made humane and productive the criminal, instead of demanding his discharge, would probably threaten to repeat his crime if the authorities showed signs of turning him out-of-doors. If he finds himself more comfortable and safe under this kind of discipline he should be allowed to stay. On the other hand, those who can satisfy the authorities that they are fit for self-responsibility should be released at once.

The third group are normal persons who have fallen into the hands of the police after one of those lapses in conduct which Shaw believes are "as common as colds." They should never be imprisoned but should be required to compensate the victims of their misdeeds. Until they have done this, they will have to make frequent appearances in court and perhaps be placed under the threat of being consigned to the second class as defectives. In short, it is not difficult to make carelessness or petty violence and dishonesty unremunerative without resorting to imprisonment. If a citizen has fallen into bad habits and company the most stupid course is to cast him into the centre of the worst of company and habits - the prison.

In this program of prison reform which Shaw sets forth it is evident that he is no sentimentalist or impossibilist reformer. He combines a high

ideal of social responsibility with a realistic view of human behaviour. Crime cannot be cured by kindness, he acknowledges, but "no beneficial reform of our treatment of criminals is possible unless and until this superstition of expiation and this essentially sentimental vice of vengeance are unconditionally eradicated."[5] The aim of the modern prison should be to prepare prisoners for life outside prison, that is, to give the prisoner the right to live.

There is another kind of prison which Shaw would reform - the school. Probably because of his own unhappy school experience Shaw has this opinion of the average English school:

> To begin with it is a prison. But it is in some respects more cruel than a prison....In a prison they may torture your body but they do not torture your brains, and they protect you against violence and outrage from your fellow prisoners. In a school you have none of these advantages. With the world's bookshelves loaded with fascinating and inspired books, the very manna sent down from heaven to feed your souls, you are forced to read a hideous imposture called a school book, written by a man who cannot write: a book from which no human being can learn anything....With millions of acres of words and valleys and hills and wind and air and buds and streams and fishes and all sorts of instructive and healthy things easily accessible, or with streets and shop windows and crowds and vehicles and all sorts of city delights at the door, you are forced to sit not in a room with some human grace and comfort of furniture and decoration but in a stalled pound with other children, beaten if you talk, beaten if you move, beaten if you cannot prove by answering idiotic questions that even when you escaped from the pound and from the eye of the gaoler you were still agonizing over his detestable sham books instead of daring to live....It is a ghastly business, quite beyond words, this schooling. [6]

In spite of improvements in the philosophy and practices of education Shaw was still speaking in 1928 of the "sadists, female and male, who now

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5 Ibid.

6 Preface to Misalliance (1910)

get the children into their power so as to be able to torture them with impunity."[7] Obviously, there is a good deal of caricature in these outbursts and the recent reforms in education have made the Shavian epigram - He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches - lose some of its point. Yet by no means all of the evils in the English educational system have been removed. Teachers are better trained and the school curriculum has been revised, but class barriers were still around the English Public Schools at the outbreak of the second World War. To a very considerable extent higher education in England has been the privilege of the middle and upper classes. Educators are now beginning to realize the importance of equal educational opportunity for all children. R. A. Butler, President of the British Board of Education has said, "I should like to feel that after the war a child over eleven could have the choice of going to a senior or modern school, a secondary or technical school, or to a boarding school. I do not think the choice should be by examination alone, but rather by record and character. If Britain is to face with calm and equanimity the struggles which lie ahead, we should look after our young blood."[8] But Shaw maintains that equality in education will be possible only when the State assumes full control of all schools. That is, he bases his suggestions for educational reform on Socialism for he is convinced that any real progress in education is prevented by "our ridiculous misdistribution of the national income, with its accompanying class distinctions and imposition of snobbery on children as a necessary part of their social training."[9]

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7 The Intelligent Woman's Guide.

8 New York Times Magazine, April 11, 1942.

9 The Intelligent Woman's Guide.

He does not hesitate, however, to suggest educational reform which need not wait for the economic reorganization of society. He is among those who wish children to be educated in the facts of sex and believes that co-education throughout primary and secondary schools would be a powerful, although intangible factor in teaching sex education. It is a task for the schools, not the home and "in refusing to allow the child to be taught by qualified, unrelated elders (the parents shrink from the lesson, even when they are otherwise qualified, because their own relationship to the child makes the subject impossible between them) we are virtually arranging to have our children taught by other children in guilty secrets and unclean jests."[10] The point is debatable. Children vary in the age at which they grow curious about sex and it is folly to assume that in a class of thirty children all are ready for sex instruction. To thrust upon a child revelations he has not asked for may be harmful. There is no need to forewarn or shelter a child, but when his curiosity is aroused he should have a confidant, someone whom he trusts and respects. This is a role for the parent, not the teacher because a child's curiosity will express itself more freely at home than in school. A child's spontaneity and naturalness in inquiring about such matters would be destroyed if classroom instruction were given him before he was ready for it. With adolescents, however, Shaw is probably right in believing that the relationship between parents and sons or daughters often makes the subject impossible. Whereas a child may be openly curious, a youth will probably demand secrecy as his natural right. The adolescent confides much less frequently in his parents but often develops a strong

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10 Preface to Misalliance.

loyalty for some "unrelated elder." It will be to this person that he will go with his questions and if it is a qualified teacher, so much the better.

Another contribution Shaw makes is his insistence on the importance of art in education. He is anxious that many more people than at present come into living contact with all forms of art, for he is convinced of its beneficial effects on human life and happiness. We all grow up stupid and mad to just the extent to which we have not been artistically educated, hence "every device of art should be brought to bear on the young, so that they may discover some form of it that delights them naturally; for there will come to all of them that period between dawning adolescence and full maturity when the pleasures and emotions of art will have to satisfy cravings which, if starved or insulted, may become morbid, or seek disgraceful satisfactions."[11] Among the artistic influences he would incorporate into education are the Authorized Version of the Bible and great music ("There is nothing in the Bible greater in inspiration than Beethoven's Ninth Symphony"). For those who have no ear for music or literature, other art forms including architecture, pictures, statues, costumes, and the arts of the theatre are available and no child need be neglected. Shaw makes it clear that he does not advocate that school time be devoted to "the teaching of art." He doubts whether a schoolmaster is educating a boy in the history of Venetian painting by asking him the date of Tintoretto's birth and beating him when he cannot give the correct answer. A full and rich understanding of art, Shaw believes, can be acquired through looking at pictures and listening to music. Teaching is unnecessary. No doubt he remembers his own early visits to the Dublin

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11 Ibid.

gallery and the musical evenings when Lee played and his mother sang, but children of average ability need an artistic education which entails more than mere watching and listening. Sound, imaginative instruction in art forms can turn acquaintanceship into understanding and appreciation.

Although he has admitted that he "must not pretend to have a system ready to replace all other systems," he does proceed in The W. E. A. Education Yearbook for 1918 and The Intelligent Woman's Guide to lay down the broad outlines of his educational policy. Some such new policy is necessary, he feels, for "neither Secondary nor Elementary education as provided at present bears the slightest resemblance to education in any real sense." He finds that those who have received the most expensive educations, the products of Eton and Harrow, are void of intellectual interests, use the public school code as a substitute for reason, and are mainly interested in frequenting the hunt, the shoot and the dance. Education is to be divided, under the Shavian plan, into three branches - technical, civic and liberal. The first two comprise what we call 'primary' education; the third will be the new 'secondary' education. Technical education includes those subjects required for living in a civilized society and making use of its facilities. Children will be taught enough reading, writing and arithmetic to enable them to get about in a civilized world; a minimum of law, constitutional history and economics to enable them to vote; the main facts of physics; and the socially necessary commandments about murder and theft. "You are not fit for life in a modern city unless you know the multiplication table, and agree that you must not take the law into your own hands."[12]

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12 The Intelligent Woman's Guide. Chapter 81.

Civic (which includes religious) education is strictly a part of technical education, and like it, will be compulsory. Children will not be compelled to accept any political or religious doctrine. The treatment of subjects will be controversial and advocates of opposing systems will be allowed to present their sides, and the issues will be threshed out in free discussion. While any particular set of political beliefs should not be imposed on a child, nevertheless, a social consciousness must be developed in him. "The social creed must be imposed on us when we are children; for it is like riding, or reading music at sight: it can never become a second nature to those who try to learn it as adults; and the social creed to be really effective, must be a second nature to us...Children will not be taught to ask God to bless the squire and his relations and keep us in our proper stations, nor will they be brought up in such a way that it will seem natural to them to praise God because he makes them eat whilst others starve, and sing while others do lament."[13] The church catechism will be taught as a curious historical document the truth of which the child may accept if he wishes when he has reached the age of consent. The Bible will be introduced into schools as "a collection of old chronicles, poems, oracles and fulminations." Teachers will be sacked if they spread the doctrine that our life in this world is only a brief preliminary episode in preparation for an all-important life to come, and that it does not matter how poor or miserable or plague-ridden we are in this world as we shall be gloriously compensated in the next if we suffer patiently. "Civic education does not mean education in blind obedience to authority, but education in controversy, in liberty, in manners and courage, in scepticism, in discontent and betterment..."[14]

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13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

Liberal education - the study of the arts - would be voluntary and accessible to every member of the community. Children, as well as adults, would have opportunities of attending lectures, classes, study circles, plays, concerts, recitals, readings, tours around galleries, and the use of libraries. The opportunity of seeking inspiration from natural scenery would be an important feature of the new curriculum. But no one would be compelled to take part in these educational activities.

> When the child has learnt his social creed and catechism and can read, write, reckon, and use its hands: in short, when it is qualified to make its way about in modern cities and do ordinary useful work, it had better be left to find out for itself what is good for it in the direction of higher cultivation. If it is a Newton or a Shakespeare it will learn the calculus or the art of the theatre without having them shoved down its throat: all that is necessary is that it should have access to books, teachers and theatres. If its mind does not want to be highly cultivated, its mind should be left alone on the ground that its mind knows best what is good for it. Mentally, fallow is as important as seed-time. Even bodies can be exhausted by overcultivation. Trying to make people champion athletes indiscriminately is as idiotic as trying to make them Ireland Scholars indiscriminately. There is no reason to expect that Socialist rule will be more idiotic than the rule which has produced Eton and Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge, and Squeers. 15

Thus does Shaw point to some of the sores of our civilization - poverty, slum landlordism, prostitution, imprisonment and unsound education. He is able to suggest ways and means of removing these but he believes that only when Socialism has replaced our present economic system will real reform be possible. First, he says, restore health to the whole body of society by injections of Socialism, and then it will be possible to cure the outward festerings.

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15 Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

In the early years of the present century the drama critic of the London Times was A. B. Walkley who refused to take Shaw's plays seriously and reviewed them in witty, bantering feuilletons. At one point he was mischievous enough to request that Shaw, the Irish Puritan, write a Don Juan play. Walkley's challenge was a poser to Shaw who had repeatedly criticised the plays which dealt with sex as "senseless evasions" of the real sex problem. Both as dramatic critic and playwright Shaw had been the foe of romance and had repeatedly expressed his distaste for the "mephitic atmosphere" of love and sex. For Shaw, it was out of the question to present the traditional Don Juan; there remained only possibility: to present him in the philosophic sense, imbued with all of Shaw's own ideas and "concerned for the future of the race instead of for the freedom of his own instincts." Man and Superman was Shaw's reply to Walkley.

To Shaw, love is devoid of romance. It is neither mysterious nor divine, and it certainly affords no basis for a worship of woman by man. He regards love, philosophically, as a blind force, a biological mechanism for race propagation, and he believes that the initiative in matters of sex is taken by women. Of course, men have set up a feeble romantic convention that the initiative comes from them and woman's instinctive cunning allows man to glorify her, but in reality "woman is the pursuer and the contriver, man the pursued and the disposed of." In the Preface to Man and

Superman Shaw gives the psychological bases of his theory:

> The whole world is strewn with snares, traps, gins and pitfalls for the capture of men by women...Woman must marry because the race must perish without her travail: if the risk of death and the certainty of pain, danger and unutterable discomforts cannot deter her, slavery and swaddled ankles will not. And yet we assume that the force that carries women through all these perils and hardships, stops abashed before the primnesses of our behaviour for young ladies. It is assumed that woman must wait motionless, until she is wooed. Nay, she often does wait motionless. That is how the spider spins her web. And if the fly, like my hero, shews a strength that promises to extricate him, how swiftly does she abandon her pretence of passiveness, and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured for ever!

In the play, John Tanner is the victim and Ann Whitefield is the embodiment of the spider-female. One interpretation of the title of the play suggests that Ann, who is Everywoman - the huntress, is herself the Superman. The title then becomes "Man and - Woman". It is in the final scene that the spider-fly relationship is consummated and, as it is presented with force and originality, it is convincing and not a mere caricature. A closer look at the play reveals that the behaviour of Ann and Tanner is not as remarkable as it would appear at first sight. They are friends of long standing, indeed one suspects, lovers since childhood. Furthermore, Ann is a "genius in vitality," and therefore her behaviour may vary somewhat from the normal woman. In Tanner, the 'victim' idea is presented with force, yet playfully, and within the bounds of probability. On the whole, the scene combines comedy with dramatic inevitability and succeeds in carrying conviction.

It was not the first time that Shaw had used woman as the pursuer. In the novels Love Among the Artists and An Unsocial Socialist the idea appears, and Blanche Sartorius in Widowers' Houses is an intentionally crude embodiment of the theory. She gradually brings Harry Trench to the point of their

relationship, then finding him vague, reminds him that he hasn't said anything definite, and at last asks bluntly, "When shall we be married?" Grace Tranfield in The Philanderer is more dainty in her love-making. "At no time," says Charteris, "have I taken the initiative and persecuted women with my advances as women have persecuted me. Never, except, of course, in your case." "Oh, you need not make any exceptions," Grace replies, "I had a good deal of trouble to induce you to come and see us. You were very coy." In Misalliance, Hypatia Tarleton is a variation on the same theme. If Ann Whitefield believes in tracking down her victim and wearing him out, Hypatia, a glorious brute, is more a tigress who pounces on her prey, Joey Percival, and carries him off. Woman, the huntress, Shaw believes, is the agent of the breeding instinct of human kind. "Sexually, Woman is Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its highest achievement. Man is woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way," says Don Juan in Act III of Man and Superman. This is an oversimplified theory of sex. Reduced to everyday terms it means that to become a mother is woman's intense, continuous, and practically universal desire, and that the fundamental need of a woman is to excite sex impulses in a man.

Shaw's presentation of woman as predominantly maternal may, to a considerable extent, be attributed to his and other sociologists' concern over Britain's falling birth rate. His outlook toward love being what it is, it is not surprising that he view marriage primarily as a means of maintaining the population. Don Juan remarks that the real purpose of marriage is to secure the greatest number of children and the closest care of them. Yet modern marriage is not performing this function to the extent that Shaw

believes it should. In the Preface to Getting Married (1910) he refers to "the plain fact that marriage is now beginning to depopulate the country with alarming rapidity." The reason is that married people, instead of wanting to improve and increase the race, have come to regard marriage as a means of justifying "a life of perpetual, intense, unhealthy and unnatural sex pleasure." Among the middle classes intemperance characterizes marriage, and the wedding ceremony is regarded as a rite which absolves them from the laws of temperance and health and inaugurates a life-long honeymoon. As a result both the vitality and the mentality of the race are being steadily sapped. Shaw's portrait of the average among married men is not flattering:

> They had as much health as they wanted: that is they did not feel the need of a doctor. They enjoyed their smokes, their meals, their respectable clothes, their affectionate games with their children, their prospects of larger profits or higher salaries, their Saturday half holidays and Sunday walks, and the rest of it. They did less than two hours work a day and took from seven to nine office hours to do it in. And they were no good for any mortal purpose than to go on doing it. They were respectable only by the standard they themselves had set. Considered seriously as electors governing an empire through their votes and choosing and maintaining its religious and moral institutions by their powers of social persecution, they were a black-coated army of calamity. 1

Throughout the novels and plays Shaw shows us only one marriage that seems to be successful - the Bishop and Mrs. Bridgnorth in Getting Married, and he implies that no marriage is likely to be permanently happy. He used the title of one of the novels to suggest that marriage is more of an irrational knot than an inextricable one. Conally and Marian had chosen each other on grounds of strong mutual liking, admiration and attraction, yet in less than two years the relationship had become almost unbearable

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1 Preface to Getting Married.

on both sides. The Cramptons in You Never Can Tell are admirable as individuals but completely unsuited as marriage partners. In Candida the discrepancy between Morell and Candida is more subtle. She realizes the futility of Morell's preaching and his Sunday-School morality, and there exists a more natural attraction between herself and Marchbanks. Although Candida realizes this incompatibility with her husband she does not take Nora's example in A Doll's House but stays with Morell and makes a success of it. Instances need not be multiplied: incompatibility of one sort or another is a permanent feature of the marriage relation as shown by Shaw. He suggests that we must not abolish, but reform marriage. "We may take it then that when a joint domestic establishment, involving questions of children or property, is contemplated, marriage is in effect compulsory upon all normal people; and until the law is altered there is nothing for us but to make the best of it as it stands. Even when no such establishment is desired, clandestine irregularities are negligible as an alternative to marriage...They are neither dignified nor safe and comfortable, which at once rules them out for normal decent people. Marriage remains practically inevitable; and the sooner we acknowledge this, the sooner we shall set to work to make it decent and reasonable."[2] Before suggesting ways and means of improving marriage Shaw attacks the institution as it now exists; he is distinctly opposed to indissoluble marriage. The marriage ceremony, he believes, is not a magic spell which can, in an instant, change the nature of the relations of two human beings to one another. "...There is no hocus

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2 Ibid.

pocus that can possibly be devised with rings and veils and vows and benedictions that can fix either a man's or woman's affection for twenty minutes, much less twenty years...A person proposing or accepting a contract not only to do something but to like doing it would be certified as mad. Yet popular superstition credits the wedding rite with the power of fixing our fancies or affections for life even under the most unnatural conditions."[3] He instances as an unnatural condition the case of a person who commits murder and is put in prison for twenty years. Under the then existing laws the wife or husband of that murderer had to remain bound by the marriage. Similarly if one of the marriage partners became incurably insane there would be no relief for the other as the only grounds for divorce in 1910 were adultery. A control for better or for worse should, therefore, not be tolerated. There is nothing inviolable in the legal relations of domesticity although some confused churchmen do not realize that 'God' in the phrase "Whom God hath joined" may quite possibly mean only the district registrar or the Reverend John Smith.

The most disastrous marriages, Shaw feels, are those based entirely on the sexual relationship, and the most successful are those in which it is least considered and in which the decisive considerations have to do with liking, money, congeniality of tastes, similarity of habits and suitability of class. He is in favour of teaching young people that what they call love is "an appetite which, like all other appetites, is destroyed by its gratification." Those who sell themselves into sexual slavery, that is, get married under the delusion of this most transient of passions, are committing an act of blasphemy. They are turning to account a great natural purpose by exacting a personal return for its gratification. The other kind of slavery connected

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[3] Ibid.

with marriage is economic slavery. "To a woman without property or marketable talent a husband is more necessary than a master is to a dog."[4] Before 1914 marriage was the only means of livelihood for many women and the wretched practice of husband hunting began early in the life of a young lady. Her mother acted as campaign manager as Don Juan tells Ann: "When your sainted mother, by dint of scoldings and punishments, forced you to learn how to play half a dozen pieces on the spinet - which she hated as much as you did - had she any other purpose than to delude your suitors into the belief that your husband would have in his home an angel who would fill it with melody, or at least play him to sleep after dinner?" Shaw sees little hope that family life will ever be decent, much less ennobling until "this central horror of the dependence of women is done away with. At present it reduces the difference between marriage and prostitution to the difference between Trade Unionism and unorganized casual labor: a huge difference, no doubt, as to order and comfort, but not a difference in kind."[5]

Shaw's indictment of modern marriage is extended to the family and the home. If marriage undermines the human constitution, physical, mental and moral, many homes continue the deadly work. He labels the sentimental convention of family affection as a superstition, disproved by even a casual observation of the facts. The general belief that it is natural conduct to love all members of one's family shows that the indissolubility of marriage "creates such intolerable situations that only by be-glamoring the human imagination with a hypnotic suggestion of wholly unnatural feelings can it be made to keep up appearances."[6] Far too many sentimental parents play on

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

the affections of their children prematurely. In small families particularly, there is a danger of bringing up children in an atmosphere of love, instituting a system of endearments, exchanges of presents and studied acts of artificial kindness. Children of large families will probably rebel and escape from this enervating atmosphere of love created by such women as Collins' wife in Getting Married: "She was a regular old hen," says Collins, "a born wife and mother: that's why my children ran away from home." The family as a social unit can be too narrow and confined. Shaw would substitute the narrowing influence of the home by wider social contacts. For adequate social training "a household of twenty surpasses a household of five as an Oxford College surpasses an eight-roomed house in a cheap street."[7] In middle classes "where the segregation of the artifically limited family in its little brick box is horribly complete, bad manners, ugly dresses, awkwardness, cowardice, peevishness and all the petty vices of unsociability flourish like mushrooms in a cellar."[8] This is no gentle attack which Shaw makes on the home, and it is possible that some of the bitterness is a carry-over from his own boyhood experiences of segregation. In the thirty years since Shaw wrote the Preface to Getting Married home and family life have changed and, to a considerable extent, in the direction he advocates. Family ties are much more loose and today's children do not feel the cramping effects of segregation. Indeed the urban middle-class family unit seldom meets in the home. The boundaries of social intercourse have widened to such an extent that to young people, particularly, the home is a place in which to sleep and change one's clothes. But Shaw over-states his case against home and family. The

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

doting parent is, of course, a menace, but a child needs a good share of love and affection, otherwise he will soon begin to feel that he is not wanted in the home. The fact is that children readily and naturally respond to a warmth of feeling.

(Shaw's own home and married felicity were described by Henderson in 1932. It is a marriage which has lasted for more than forty-five years and is seemingly indissoluble. The home life of the Shaws is one of "perfected domesticity and quiet congeniality, early Victorian in naturalness and simplicity. Mrs. Shaw is the perfect wife for the spectacular celebrity - a woman of pronounced views, yet calm and unobtrusive under all circumstances."[9] Prior to the present war she managed two establishments and supervised a cuisine which always required both a vegetarian and a normal set of meals. The Shaws share not only intellectual and social interests but are keen on travel, a luxury which early poverty prevented Shaw from enjoying. Until recent years one of his favourite sports was sea-bathing, often at Antibes, and in this his almost daily companion was his wife whom he taught to swim.)

Having outlined the evils of modern marriage, family life and the home, Shaw prescribes a remedy. Unlike some reformers he does not seek to improve matters by making marriage more difficult and preventing obviously unsuited couples from rushing into wedlock; such a program would contradict his belief in the primary reason for marriage - a plentiful next generation. He is quite willing to see young people marry in haste, provided they are physically sound, but he demands that if they find they have made a mistake they should not be bound to each other for ever. His cure for the ills of marriage is easy divorce.

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9 Henderson, Archibald, Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1932, p. 787.

The need for simplifying divorce procedure is one of the matters discussed in Getting Married which is more of a debate than a play. Reginald and Leo Bridgnorth are not an unusual couple. She is restless, alert, vivacious, but not a deep thinker. He is slow-witted by comparison. The match is not an impossible one but no better than endurable. If it cannot be broken each of them will lose his individuality and level down to a state of "putting up with each other." Leo states her grievance tersely: she has "exhausted her husband's conversation" - no trivial objection except to the unimaginative. She wants a divorce and Reginald, who is a gentleman, cannot refuse her request for freedom. The law being what is it, he takes the "honourable" way. After "assaulting" his wife by pretending to knock her down and push her into a flowerbed, he goes off to Brighton with a "poor creature" he has never seen before. Leo is then able to begin divorce proceedings during which Reginald will be charged with cruelty and adultery. The divorce, however, takes so long and wearisome a time to be effected that Reginald and Leo discover, or think they discover, that they are really too fond of each other to part, and they cancel the negotiations. This would seem to be a good argument in favour of the present law but Shaw implies that it is only a temporary reconciliation and fundamentally Leo and Reginald are incompatible. They will realize again before long that divorce is necessary and there will be the same expensive and ridiculous procedure to go through again.

When Getting Married was written, a husband, but not a wife, could be granted a divorce on the grounds of adultery. The underlying reason for this law, Shaw believes, was man's desire to protect his property. He wanted a guarantee that all his wife's children be his because he had to find the money to support them. The power of divorcing a woman for adultery is this

guarantee, a guarantee that she obviously does not need as a protection against a similar imposture on his part. The fact is that "in the eye of the law, adultery without consequences is merely a sentimental grievance, whereas the planting on one man of another man's offspring is a substantial one."[10] The law assumes that a woman is less to a man than his dog; it is a morality based on the tenth commandment in which a woman is classed with a man's house, his ox, and his ass, as one of his purchased chattels. Pressing as the need was to give a woman equal grounds for divorce,"[11] Shaw believed that divorce should be granted on other and "far more important grounds."

> If we take a document from Pepys' Diary, we learn that a woman may have an incorrigibly unfaithful husband, and yet be much better off than if she had an ill-tempered, peevish, maliciously sarcastic one, or was chained for life to a criminal, a drunkard, a lunatic, an idle vagrant or a person whose religious faith was contrary to her own. Imagine being married to a liar, a borrower, a mischief maker, a teaser or tormentor of children and animals, or even simply to a bore...What woman would not rather marry ten Pepyses? what man a dozen Nell Gwynnes? Adultery, far from being the first and only ground for divorce might reasonably be made the last, or wholly excluded. 12

He suggests that there be no publication of the grounds on which a divorce is sought or granted and "the sole and sufficient reason why people should be granted a divorce is because they want one." Newspaper reports of divorce cases, letters read in court and the washing of household linen in public are evils which should be abolished. "The one question that should never be put to a petitioner for divorce is 'Why?'" A man whose life has

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10 Preface to Getting Married.

11 By the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923 adultery by the husband was made a sufficient ground for divorce.

12 Preface to Getting Married.

been threatened is not asked by a magistrate, to whom he appeals for protection, why he desires to live, as it is assumed in our society that every man has a natural right to live, to enjoy liberty and to pursue happiness. Similarly with marriage, argues Shaw. If we grant that a man need not be asked why he wants to live, we must also grant that no questions should be asked of parties who desire to dissolve an intolerable marriage. If the two parties do not agree that a divorce is necessary, Shaw would grant it on the desire of one of them. It would, no doubt, be a hardship for the other but the same hardship arises whenever a man in love proposes marriage to a woman and is refused. The refusal is painful in the extreme but we expect him to face his ill-luck and we do not force the woman to accept him. His case is the same as that of the husband whose wife has ceased to care for him and desires the marriage to be dissolved. Only the superstitious will say that the cases are not similar - that marriage makes a difference. "There is nothing magic in marriage. If there were, married couples would never desire to separate. But they do. And when they do, it is simple slavery to compel them to remain together."[13]

In advocating that divorce be made as easy, as cheap and as private as marriage Shaw was taking a look into the future. He knew that, in time, women would win their economic independence and would not be forced to marry as a means of gaining a livelihood. When that time arrived he believed that many women would refuse to marry because of the risks and obligations it involved. Furthermore, the unhappy, childless marriages already in existence

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13 Ibid.

would be broken up by wives who knew they could support themselves. Freer forms of union would become popular and marriage might easily fall into disuse. "In short, once set women free from their economic slavery, and you will find that unless divorce is made as easy as the dissolution of a business partnership, the practice of dispensing with marriage will presently become so common that conventional couples will be ashamed to get married."[14] But on this point Shaw has been a poor prophet. A great many women, while not gaining complete equality, have won their economic freedom. Yet woman's ability to support herself has not brought any great decrease in the number of marriages. Women seem quite ready to take a chance on domestic happiness in spite of the "risks and obligations" it involves. There still exists a need to widen the grounds for divorce but Shaw has been proven wrong in his prediction that, unless we widen them to the point of granting a divorce at the request of either party, marriage will fall into disuse.

To those who ask what is to become of the children if divorce is made easier, Shaw replies that we would deal with the children just as we would deal with them if their homes were broken up by any other cause, such as the death or imprisonment of their parents. They will have to be cared for by the state - a good arrangement for children whose parents are unsuited to one another. Children should not provide an obstacle to divorce; indeed, it would often be in the best interests of a child if he were removed from quarrelsome parents. "An unhappy household is a bad nursery."

English divorce laws have moved but slowly in the direction Shaw suggests. The most general criticism of his reform measures is that to make "simple request' of one of the parties a sufficient ground for divorce would give too

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14 Ibid.

much license to sudden whim and passing fancy. People do not fall naturally into a satisfactory marriage relationship, but rather grow into it gradually. Minor shocks and irritations are almost inevitable in the first years and only in time are corners smoothed off and sympathies established. Marriage, one feels, should be given a period of trial. During this period divorce could be obtained only for clearly defined cases of incompatibility and all hearings would be private. Following that time request alone would be sufficient for securing a divorce. English laws are slowly moving in that direction,[15] but in this respect, as in others, England has not yet caught up with Mr. Shaw.

Marriage can be improved by other means than making its dissolution easier and more speedy. We have seen that Shaw believes marriage is primarily a means of maintaining the population, but he is vitally interested in the quality as well as the quantity of human kind. His proposals in the field of eugenics (written mainly before 1910) are not of immediate practical value but are constructive, and perhaps Utopian. He takes for granted what may be termed negative eugenics - sterilization of the dangerously unfit - and is more interested in the active improvement of the race, "the deliberate breeding of man." In spite of the clouds of doubt and ignorance which surround the subject at the present time, he advocates making a bold beginning in the experimental mating of certain types of men and women. A good deal of what Shaw has to say on this subject is found in the Man and Superman volume. Don Juan speaks of the time when the great central purpose of breeding and improv-

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15 A. P. Herbert's Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937 provided that a petition for divorce could be presented by the husband or wife on the grounds of adultery, desertion for three years, cruelty or insanity.

ing the human race will be taken out of the clouds of love, romance and prudery and placed on a rational, systematic basis. In "The Revolutionist's Handbook" Tanner proposes to replace "unconscious fertility" with "an intelligently controlled, conscious fertility." When it comes to ways and means Shaw admits that as yet little can be said except that where there's a will there's a way. He is, however, able to offer a few suggestions. If a woman can, by careful selection of a father for her child and care of herself, produce a citizen with efficient senses, sound organs, and a good digestion, she should clearly be secured a sufficient reward for that natural service to make her willing to undertake and repeat it."[16] A superior woman of the type of Lesbia Grantham in Getting Married should not be forced to marry a man as inferior as the General in order to exercise a woman's natural right of motherhood. "My own experience in discussing this question leads me to believe that the one point on which all women are in furious secret rebellion against the existing law is the saddling of the right to a child with the obligation to become the servant of a man."[17] Because it is so vitally necessary to the national welfare that these voluntary spinsters be allowed to have children, Shaw suggests two possible courses. One would be to legitimize the child of the unmarried woman, and to recognize fertile unions outside marriage. The other and more preferable way, as we have seen, is to reduce the risks and obligations of marriage by extending the grounds of divorce. If a match turned out to be satisfactory well and good, but if it were an incompatible union the

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16 "The Revolutionist's Handbook," one section of the Preface to Man and Superman.

17 Preface to Getting Married.

Lesbia Granthams would not be tied to a husband for ever. If women of independent means who want to become mothers were assured that an unhappy marriage could be dissolved they would not hesitate to marry as they do now and the race would reap the benefits.

Another proposal Shaw makes is to analyse marriage into conjugation and companionship, and to separate the two so that every man has two wives - one his eugenic complement, by union with whom he begets children; the other, his mate in domestic intimacies, with whom he lives. He observes: "The sex-connection authorized by marriage does not include or imply or induce the intimate, personal, high and permanent human relations necessary for successful marriage. Sexual attraction simply blinds people to the absence of all the other relations and correspondences. Its glorification and exaggeration are unwholesome and dangerous. There is need for it to be separated from more important, less instinctive things."[18] In the Man and Superman volume this theory of separation is given in more detail: "One fact must be faced resolutely, in spite of the shrieks of the romantic. There is no evidence that the best citizens are the offspring of congenial marriages, or that a conflict of temperament is not a highly important part of what breeders call crossing. On the contrary, it is quite sufficiently probable that good results may be obtained from parents who would be extremely unsuitable companions and partners...But mating such couples must clearly not involve marrying them. In conjugation two complementary persons may supply one another's deficiencies: in the domestic partnership of marriage they only feel them and suffer from them. Thus the son of a robust, cheerful, eupeptic British country squire, with all the tastes and range of his class, and of a clever, imaginative, intellectual,

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18 Ibid.

highly civilized Jewess, might be very superior to both his parents, but it is not likely that the Jewess would find the squire an interesting companion, or his habits, his friends, his place and mode of life congenial to her." The two functions of marriage, regulating conjugation and supplying domesticity, Shaw believes are quite separable. It is domesticity which is essential to the existence of marriage; conjugation without domesticity is not marriage at all. This suggestion will revolt those who believe that conjugation is one of the essential "higher intimacies" of domestic felicity. But Shaw views marriage from a different point of view. He is concerned with increasing the numbers and improving the quality of generations to come.

Eugenic marriage will operate best under Shavian Socialism, for only by equalizing incomes can there be the free inter-marriage of suitable mates.

> Unsuitable marriages, unhappy homes, ugly children are terribly common; because the young woman who ought to have all the unmarried young men in the country open to her choice...finds that in fact she has to choose between two or three in her own class, and has to allow herself to be much petted and tempted by physical endearments, or made desperate by neglect, before she can persuade herself that she really loves the one she dislikes least.
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> Under such circumstances we shall never get a well-bred race; and it is all the fault of inequality of income. If every family were brought up at the same cost, we should all have the same habits, manners, culture and refinement; and the dustman's daughter could marry the duke's son as easily as a stockbroker's son now marries a bank manager's daughter. Nobody would marry for money, because there would be no money to be gained or lost by marriage. No woman would have to turn her back on a man she loved because he was poor, or be herself passed by for the same reason...If the race did not improve under these circumstances, it must be unimprovable. And even if it be so, the gain in happiness by getting rid of the heartbreak that now makes the world, and especially its women, so miserable, would make the equalization of income worth-while even if all the other arguments for it did not exist. 19

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19 The Intelligent Woman's Guide.

If asked whether the removal of economic barriers alone will lead to successful marriages Shaw would probably point to other reforms which would be effected under Socialism. As we have seen, these will be in the fields of education, housing, abolition of poverty, the prison system, as well as a new outlook towards marriage. The gradual evolution towards Socialism will create a new society but this society will function only if man himself changes. The need is for a higher type of human being, a Superman, and the belief that he can be created is the Shavian religion of Creative Evolution.

CHAPTER V

CREATIVE EVOLUTION

In a program note for the guidance of the audience who saw Androcles and the Lion produced in New York in 1915 Shaw wrote: "The author tells you here, as so often before, that you must reform society before you can reform yourselves..." Yet in the Preface to Man and Superman he says: "Enough, then, of this goose-cackle about Progress; man, as he is, never will nor can add a cubit to his stature by any of its quackeries, political, scientific, educational, religious or artistic...Our only hope is in evolution. We must replace the man by the superman." These are not contradictory points of view on reform but an illustration of Shaw's belief in both approaches towards a better world. Shaw has no illusions about progress. He will agree with the Socialist view that the difference between Man as he is, and Man as he might become under ideal conditions of nutrition, environment and training, is enormous. Likewise, he believes that inequality and the iniquitous distribution of wealth have arisen through an unscientific economic system and that many of the most detestable human vices are "mere reactions of our institutions on our very virtues." There are great opportunities, certainly, for the reformer in leading Man up the various paths of Hill Difficulty but, unhappily, the hill will never be climbed by Man as we know him.

> It need not be denied that if we all struggled bravely to the end of the reformers' paths we should improve the world prodigiously. But there is no more hope in that If than in the equally plausible assurance that if the sky fall we shall all catch larks. We are not going to tread those paths: we have not sufficient energy. We do not

> desire the end enough: indeed in most cases we do not effectively desire it at all. 1

If Man as he exists is incapable of progress a new breed of men must be created. Shaw's views on the selective breeding of Man have been mentioned above but his religious beliefs which underlie all his evolutionary theories must be dealt with here.

On March 15, 1909, Shaw wrote to Henderson, "I have just finished a crude melodrama in one act - the crudity and melodrama both intentional." It was The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet which soon ran afoul of the Censor. In the Preface to the play Shaw states his purpose. "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 opinion in these matters." Shaw is at one with the Christian who is directly aware of mind, spirit, God moving through the universe, but he does not believe in a perfect, omniscient or complete God. In a letter to Tolstoy dated February 14, 1910 Shaw sums up his religion:

> ...You will see that my theology and my explanation of the existence of evil is expressed roughly by Blanco. To me God does not yet exist; but there is a creative force constantly struggling to evolve an executive organ of godlike knowledge and power: that is, to achieve omnipotence, and omniscience; and every man and woman born is a fresh attempt to achieve this object.
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> The current theory that God already exists in perfection involves the belief that God deliberately created something lower than Himself when he might just as easily have created something equally perfect. This is a horrible belief: it could only have arisen among people whose notion of greatness is to be surrounded by inferior beings - like a Russian nobleman - and to enjoy the sense of superiority to them.

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1 Preface to Man and Superman.

> To my mind, unless we conceive God as engaged in a continual struggle to surpass himself - as striving at every birth to make a better man than before - we are conceiving nothing better than an omnipotent snob.
>
> Also we are compelled by the theory of God's already achieved perfection to make Him a devil as well as a god, because of the existence of evil. The god of love, if omnipotent and omniscient must be the god of cancer and epilepsy as well....
>
> Whoever admits that anything living is evil must either believe that God is malignantly capable of creating evil, or else believe that God has made many mistakes in his attempts to make a perfect being. But if you believe, as I do, and as Blanco Posnet finally guesses, that the croup bacillus was an early attempt to create a higher being than anything achieved before that time, and that the only way to remedy the mistake was to create a still higher being, part of whose work must be the destruction of the bacillus, the existence of evil ceases to present any problem; and we come to understand that we are here to help God, to do his work, to remedy his old errors, to strive towards Godhead ourselves...2

In what Shaw imagines would be a westerner's dialect Blanco tells of his early days: "I had no use for Him - I lived my own life in my own way, and would have no truck with his 'Don't do this,' and 'You mustn't do that,' and 'You'll go to Hell if you do the other.' I gave Him the go-by and did without Him all these years. But he caught up with me at last. The laugh is with Him." When the child dies of croup thus making Blanco's one good act of no avail he is forced to face the inscrutable irony of life: "What about the croup? (he says). It was in the early days when He made the croup, I guess. It was the best He could think of then; but when it turned out wrong on His hands He made you and me to fight the croup for Him. 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

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2 Henderson, A., Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1932. p. 530.

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." Barbara Undershaft says, "there must be some truth or other behind all this frightful irony." To Shaw, the truth is in Creative Evolution. The problem of evil is the result of the imperfection of the striving and incomplete God. We are, as yet, only in the early stages of evolution, and we must expect blunders from a Life Force that is still only learning its way.

Several years before Blanco Posnet was written Shaw had set down his religious philosophy in the third act of Man and Superman but had surrounded it with three other acts of comedy. Tanner, motoring in the Sierra Nevada, is captured by brigands and, before Ann eventually hunts him down, he has a most remarkable dream. He dreams of being transformed into Don Juan, the famous libertine, who, on being sent to Hell, finds himself bored by its amusements. A lady resembling Ann Whitefield is ushered in - much to her indignation, as she had always been a pious daughter of the church. Her father, whom Juan had killed in a duel, and the Devil make up the other members of the quartette who proceed first, to point out the merits of heaven and hell, and then launch into a discussion of the Life Force. Shaw, speaking through Don Juan, conceives of the Life Force as Bergsonian, purposeful evolution. The Life Force has made many experiments in the effort to evolve from its own rawness into higher forms. Through the ages it has pressed persistently forward to its desired end. Man is not its final end but a complete and necessary stage, perhaps a half-way house.

> Don Juan. Are we agreed that Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organizing itself; that the mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the flies and fleas and the Fathers of the Church are all more or less successful attempts

to build up that raw force into higher and higher individuals, the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal completely, unilludedly self conscious; in short a god?

The Devil. I agree, for the sake of argument.

The Statue. I agree, for the sake of avoiding argument.

Ana. I most emphatically disagree as regards the Fathers of the Church; and I must beg you not to drag them into the argument.

Don Juan. I did so purely for the sake of alliteration...

The Life Force is often blind and stupid in its efforts. It knows only the painful process of trial and error as it fights madly upward. In this respect Shaw's theory would seem to relate to Hardy's conception of the "Great Foresightless," but Hardy refuses to see man as a deliberate achievement of evolution. He calls man's intelligence

> but an unreckoned incident
> Of the all-uring Will, raptly magnipotent.

Shaw, on the other hand, believes that in man the great blind body has at length evolved a brain and the huge waste of force, the cosmic cruelties, attendant upon the past operations of the Life Force need be no more. The Life Force must still furnish the vast creative energy, but it is man's part to make its workings conscious, intelligent and economical. As Don Juan expresses it:

> Just as Life, after ages of struggle, evolved that wonderful bodily organ the eye, so that the living organism could see where it was going and what was coming to help or threaten it, and thus avoiding a thousand dangers that formerly slew it, so it is evolving today a mind's eye that shall see, not the physical world but the purposes of Life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present.

In the Preface to Man and Superman appear some interesting applications of the theory of the Life Force to literary production. Shaw points to the fact that he wrote The Irrational Knot years before Ibsen came to his knowledge which proves that "the revolt of the Life Force against ready-made morality in the nineteenth century was not the work of a Norwegian microbe, but would have worked itself into expression in English literature had Norway never existed." And a little later: "I seriously suggest that The Irrational Knot may be regarded as an early attempt on the part of the Life Force to write A Doll's House in English by the instrumentality of a very immature writer aged 24. And though I say it that should not, the choice was not such a bad shot for a stupid instinctive force that has to work and become conscious of itself by means of human brains. If we could only realize that 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 own heads, the people of the earth would have some pity for their gods; and we should have a religion that would not be contradicted at every turn by the thing that is giving the lie to the thing that ought to be." In two ways the Life Force is particularly related to man. The first of these is in the matter of sex, indeed at times Shaw seems to identify the Life Force with the working of the sex-instinct. "Why are you trying to fascinate me, Jack, if you don't want to marry me?" asks Ann Whitefield. "The Life Force," exclaims Tanner, "I am in the grip of the Life Force." To which Ann replies, "I don't understand you in the least: it sounds like the Life Guards." The second point at which the Life Force becomes a specifically human function is when man, as a social and political unit, takes up the business of his own

systematic improvement. Both these themes, sex and eugenics, have been mentioned above.

Don Juan finally decides to leave Hell with its appeals to mere enjoyment and its pleasant illusions to face the realities of heaven. There he can watch the machinery of life and learn to take control. He has discovered the motive of evolution - the struggle to attain self-consciousness. The campaign between the forces of Life and those of Death and Degeneration must continue to hang doubtful, and progress will be painfully slow until man, the eye and the brain of the Life Force, takes definite control of operations. First came the eye, and now the mind's eye, to see and push forward the purpose of Life. Man must work for that purpose instead of for personal aims. Before leaving, Don Juan gives the essence of his (and Shaw's) religious philosophy:

"I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding. It was the supremacy of this purpose that reduced love for me to the mere pleasure of the moment, art for me to the mere schooling of my faculties, religion for me to a mere excuse for laziness, since it had set up a God who looked at the world and saw that it was good, against the instinct in me that looked through my eyes at the world and saw that it could be improved."

In a letter to Shaw acknowledging the gift of a copy of Man and Superman, Tolstoy points to what he believes are the merits and defects of that volume.

Dear Mr. Shaw:

...I particularly appreciate Don Juan's speeches in the interlude - the scene in Hell - (though it seems to me that the subject would have gained greatly by being treated more seriously than as a casual episode in a comedy); and in the Revolutionist's Handbook.

In the former I was able without any effort to agree fully with Don Juan's remark - that he is a hero 'who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world - and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means' - or, in my way of expressing it, "to recognize the will of God in one's self and do it.'

Secondly I am particularly pleased with your attitude towards civilization and progress and the very true reflection that however long the one and the other may continue they cannot improve the state of mankind unless men themselves alter...

In your book I detect a desire to surprise and astonish the readers by your great erudition, talent and cleverness. Yet all this is not merely unnecessary for the solution of the questions you dealt with but often distracts the readers' attention from the essence of the matter by attracting it to the brilliance of the exposition.

In any case, I think that this book of yours expresses your views not in their full and clear development, but only in an embryonic state. I think that these views, developing more and more, will arrive at the one truth we all seek and toward which we all gradually approach.

I hope you will forgive me if there is anything that displeases you in what I have said. I have said it only because I recognize your very great gifts, and for you personally have a most friendly feeling, and so I remain,

Leo Tolstoy [3]

Nearly twenty years later Shaw admitted that when he wrote Man and Superman he was at the height of his comedic talent and had decorated the Dream in Hell too brilliantly and lavishly.

When the play appeared in published form, included in the same volume were a preface, an appendix called "The Revolutionist's Handbook" and a set of verbal fireworks - "Maxims for Revolutionists." "The effect was so

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3 Aylmer, Maude, The Life of Tolstoy: Later Years. London: The World's Classics, 1930, Vol. II, pp. 461-462.

vertiginous, apparently, that nobody noticed the new religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool."[4] Tolstoy was right in his prediction that Shaw's religious views would develop and grow out of their "embryonic state." In the Preface to Back to Methuselah he writes: "I now find myself inspired to make a second legend of Creative Evolution without distractions and embellishments. My sands are running out; the exuberance of 1901 has aged into the garrulity of 1920, and the war has been a stern intimation that the matter is not one to be trifled with. I abandon the legend of Don Juan with its erotic associations, and go back to the legend of the Garden of Eden."

But prior to his return to the Garden of Eden Shaw had written Heartbreak House (published in 1919) which formed a prelude to Back to Methuselah. Heartbreak House, in Henderson's words, is "one of the most mystifying and incoherent of all Shaw's plays." In an English country house are gathered representatives of the human types which made up pre-war English society: financiers, government servants, 'idealists,' society men and women, burglars, domestics, typists, with an old sea-captain, only half civilized, as a chorus. Shaw emphasizes the blind and depraved quality of modern life, devoid of all purpose other than self-seeking. Hector Hushabye, immoral yet clear-visioned, realizes that the only thing that can decently happen to such a civilization is that it should be swept out of existence. But when the Zepplin bombs begin to fall, they destroy only the financier and the burglar, the most obviously futile and evil of the company. The others are spared and given another chance - a chance perhaps to read and profit by Back to Methuselah. Heartbreak House depicts the religionless society of a cultivated, leisured Europe before 1914. By 1920 Shaw was convinced

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4 Preface to Back to Methuselah.

that only by a return to religion could European civilization survive the catastrophe of the Great War. "The circumstances of the catastrophe, the boyish cinema-fed romanticism which made it possible to impose it on the people as a crusade, and especially the ignorance and errors of the victors of Western Europe when its violent phase had passed and the time for reconstruction arrived, confirmed a doubt which had grown steadily in my mind during my forty years' public work as a Socialist: namely, whether the human animal, as he exists at present is capable of solving the social problems raised by his own aggregation, or as he calls it, his civilization."[5] It is an echo of the doubt expressed in the Man and Superman volume. If Man cannot find the remedy, it does not mean that no remedy will be found. "The power that produced Man when the monkey was not up to the mark, can produce a higher creature than Man if Man does not come up to the mark."[6] That is, if Man is to be saved he must save himself. Nature holds no brief for the human experiment: it must stand or fall by its results. If Man will not serve, Nature will try another experiment.

In the Preface to Back to Methuselah Shaw reiterates the belief expressed in Man and Superman that he is an evolutionist but not a Neo-Darwinian. Neo-Darwinism holds out no hope for human improvement, says Shaw, for by it improvement can come only through some senseless accident which must, on the statistical average of accidents, be presently wiped out by some other equally senseless accident. The Shavian view, on the contrary, is that the impulse

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5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

which produces evolution is creative and that the will to do anything can, at a certain pitch of intensity set up by a conviction of its necessity, create and organize new tissue to do it with. "If the weight lifter, under the trivial stimulus of an athletic competition, can 'put up a muscle' it seems reasonable to believe that an equally earnest and convinced philosopher could 'put up a brain.' Both are directions of vitality to a certain end. Evolution shews us this direction of vitality doing all sorts of things: providing the centipede with a hundred legs, and ridding the fish of any legs at all; building lungs and arms for the land and gills and fins for the sea; enabling the mammal to gestate its young inside its body, and the fowl to incubate outside it; offering us, we may say, our choice of any sort of bodily contrivance to maintain our activity and increase our resources."[7]

Shaw's position as an evolutionist is Lamarckian. The fundamental proposition held by Lamarck was that living organisms changed because they wanted to. Interpreted by Shaw the evolutionary process is on these lines: "You are alive, and you want to be more alive. You want an extension of consciousness and of power. You want, consequently, additional organs, or additional uses of your existing organs: that is additional habits. You get them because you want them badly enough to keep on trying for them until they come. Nobody knows how: nobody knows why: all we know is that the thing actually takes place."[8] To contrast the Lamarckian and the Darwinian theories, consider the giraffe. How did he come by his long neck? Lamarck would have said, by wanting to get at the tender leaves high up on the tree, and trying until he suc-

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

ceeded in wishing the necessary length of neck into existence. Darwin pointed out that there was another explanation which involved neither will nor purpose nor design either in the animal or anyone else. "Suppose the average height of the foliage-eating animals is four feet, and that they increase in numbers until a time comes when all the trees are eaten away to within four feet of the ground. Then the animals who happen to be an inch or two short of the average will die of starvation. All the animals who happen to be an inch or so above the average will be better fed and stronger than the others. They will secure the strongest and tallest mates, and their progeny will survive whilst the average and sub-average ones will die out. This process, by which the species gains, say, an inch in reach, will repeat itself until the giraffe's neck is so long that he can always find food enough within his reach, at which point, of course, the selective process stops and the length of the giraffe's neck stops with it. Otherwise, he would grow until he could browse off the trees in the moon."[9] To Shaw this Darwinian process was a mere chapter of accidents compared to the open-eyed wanting and trying of Lamarck's theory. Natural Selection might more appropriately be called Accidental Selection as it has no moral significance, no purpose and no intelligence.

Having repudiated Darwinism Shaw pins his faith in Creative Evolution which is now "unmistakeably the religion of the twentieth century." But before it can become a popular religion it must have its own legends, parables and miracles and in creating these Shaw finds his task. Before man will accept a new religion he must have been told stories about it in his childhood and had before him all his life an elaborate iconography of it produced by writers, painters, sculptors and architects. This, indeed, is one of the chief functions

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9 Ibid.

of art, for art, says Shaw, "has never been great when it was not providing an iconography for a live religion." When he began his career as a playwright he found the English theatre far removed from religion. "The fashionable theatre prescribed one serious subject: clandestine adultery: the dullest of all subjects for a serious author." In contrast, Shaw chose to deal with a wide variety of subjects and in so doing he established himself as an iconoclast, but he was not satisfied as he says in describing his own development: "I tried slum-landlordism, doctrinaire Free Love (pseudo Ibsenism), prostitution, militarism, marriage, history, current politics, natural Christianity, national and individual character, paradoxes of conventional society, husband hunting, questions of conscience, professional delusions and impostures, all worked into a series of comedies of manners in the classic fashion, the mechanical tricks of Parisian "construction" being de rigeur in the theatre. But this, though it occupied me and established me professionally, did not constitute me as an iconographer of the religion of my time, and thus fulfil my natural function as an artist. I was quite conscious of this; for I had always known that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life or death; 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 religions that have ever taken hold of humanity: namely, that it must be, first and fundamentally, a science of metabiology."[10]

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10 Ibid.

His contribution to the new religion was Back to Methuselah, A Metabiological Pentateuch. This Bible of Creative Evolution contains five plays in one. "In the Beginning" shows Adam suffering under the burden of immortality. When, however, he and Eve learned from the Serpent that they can reproduce themselves they decide to die at the end of a thousand years, but before their time is up, Cain's invention of murder and war has reduced the span of life to its present brevity. Part II, "the Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas" takes place in 1920 and we hear Lubin (Asquith) and Burge (Lloyd George) discussing their election policies with clever eloquence. In "The Thing Happens" the cycle turns to the future, A. D. 2170, in which a couple of minor characters in the previous play, a young clergyman and a parlor maid find themselves living in full vigour for three hundred years and trying in every way to conceal their longevity until they find one another out and realize they must be others in the same predicament. The "Tragedy of An Elderly Gentleman" (A.D. 30,000) shows the long livers monopolizing the British Isles as oracles and being consulted by States whose citizens have not a long life-span. Finally, in "As Far as Thought Can Reach" (A.D. 31,920) the race achieves an immortality limited only by the mathematical fact that sooner or later an inhabitant is bound to have a fatal accident. Two new Shavian theses appear in the Pentateuch. The first is that if longer life is necessary for the preservation of the race, men will live longer. Mention has been made of Shaw's belief that man as he is at present has not sufficient capacity to cope with the complexity of human affairs. There seems to be no possibility of simplification of this complexity, therefore it is necessary to find some means of raising the human mind to a higher power. One obvious way to do this would be through education, but Shaw rejects this method, because of his habitual contempt for the school-

master. He offers the more interesting suggestion that human life should, by an effort of the will to live, be extended to three hundred years. Conrad Barnabas says: "It is now absolutely certain that the political and social problems raised by our civilization cannot be solved by mere human mushrooms who decay and die when they are just beginning to have a glimmer of the wisdom and knowledge needed for their government." There is no hope for the world unless man can live long enough to become wise. Conrad again: "Can't you see that three-score-and-ten though it may be long enough for a very crude sort of village life isn't long enough for a complicated civilization like ours? Flinders Petrie has counted nine attempts at civilization made by people exactly like us; and everyone failed just as ours is failing. They failed because the citizens and statesmen died of old age or over-eating before they had grown out of school boy games and savage sports and cigars and champagne. The signs of the end are always the same: Democracy, Socialism and Votes for Women. We shall go smash within the lifetime of men now living unless we recognize that we must live longer."

But how is man to attain longevity, and through it, wisdom? Towards the end of Part II five people are engaged in conversation: Conrad Barnabas, who is thought to have manufactured an elixir, his brother Franklin; Burge and Lubin the politicans; and Haslam, a young clergyman.

> Lubin. Take the mere question of the manufacture of specific, whatever it may be! There are forty millions of people in this country. Let me assume for the sake of illustration that each person would have to consume, say, five ounces a day of the elixir. That would be - let me see - five times three hundred and sixty-five is - um - twenty-five-thirty-two-eighteen - eighteen hundred and twenty-five ounces a year; just two ounces over the hundredweight.

Burge. Two million tons a year, in round numbers, of stuff that everyone would clamor for: that men would trample down women and children in the streets to get at. You couldn't produce it. There would be blue murder. It's out of the question. We must keep the actual secret to ourselves.

Conrad. (staring at them) The actual secret! What on earth is the man talking about?

Burge. The stuff. The powder. The bottle. The tabloid. Whatever it is. You said it wasn't lemons.

Conrad. My good sir: I have no powder, no bottle, no tabloid. I am not a quack: I am a biologist. This is a thing that's going to happen.

Lubin. (completely let down) Going to happen! Ah! Is that all? (he looks at his watch)

Burge. Going to happen! What do you mean? Do you mean that you can't make it happen?

Conrad. No more than I could have made you happen.

Franklin. We can put it into men's heads that there is nothing to prevent its happening but their own will to die before their work is done, and their own ignorance of the splendid work there is for them to do.

Conrad. Spread that knowledge and that conviction; and as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, the thing will happen.

Franklin. We don't know where or when or to whom it will happen. It may happen first to someone in this room.

Haslam. It won't happen to me: that's jolly sure.

Conrad. It might happen to anyone. It might happen to the parlormaid.

This proposal is probably intended to be nothing more than symbolic of the urgent necessity for making a desperate effort to do something, and something revolutionary. It will be remembered, as Shaw says in his preface, that just as he used the Don Juan legend in Man and Superman, so for Back to Methuselah he uses the legend of the Philosopher's Stone. His modern form of this medieval legend is given such a rich, dramatic elaboration that to many

people Back to Methuselah is simply the play in which Shaw says we can live for three hundred years if we want to. Franklin Barnabas anticipates this shallow view: "Do not mistake mere idle fancies for the tremendous miracle working force of Will nerved to creation by a conviction of Necessity. I tell you men capable of such willing, and realizing its necessity, will do it reluctantly, under inner compulsion as all great efforts are made. They will hide what they are doing from themselves: they will take care not to know what they are doing. They will live three hundred years, not because they would like to, but because the soul deep down in them will know that they must, if the world is to be saved." By itself the thesis of longevity is meaningless. It acquires meaning only when taken in conjunction with the much more profound teaching of the play with regard to Creative Evolution.

Shaw's second thesis appears in Part V in which the religious purpose of the play finds its fulfilment. Part I shows us the beginnings of Creative Evolution in the discovery, on the part of Life, of the twin instruments of progress - birth and death. Parts II, III and IV suggest that evolution has reached a stage where these two instruments can carry it no farther: another effort of will is needed to invent a new device - longevity. Part V shows the new beings thus evolved - the Ancients, who strive to eliminate one of the earlier factors, that, by releasing life from its dependence on matter. And this is Shaw's belief: that Life first manifested itself as a whirlpool in pure force. As such, it was able to seize upon matter as a means to an end. Having achieved, in the Ancients, intelligence of as high an order as is necessary for its purpose, Life has now, as the final stage to rid itself of the material bodies which it now feels as an encumbrance and become a whirlpool

(or a series of whirlpools) in pure intelligence. Such is the state towards which we are evolving, and as an incentive for us to speed up the workings of the Life Force, the shape of things to come is attractively presented. The external world in A. D. 31,920 has attained a classic perfection by the elimination of the romantic. The young are hatched from eggs and are at the adolescent stage of development at birth. At the age of four (comparable to the present age of fifty) they become sceptical of the joyous follies of life - dancing, lovemaking, eating and sleeping - and pass into maturity. Then follows a thousand years or more of intense work and abstract meditation. One of the maidens on the way to becoming an Ancient describes her new outlook:

> Just think. I have hundreds of years to live: perhaps thousands. Do you suppose I can spend centuries dancing; listening to flutes ringing changes on a few tunes and a few notes; raving about the beauty of a few pillars and arches; making jingles with words; lying about with your arms around me which is neither comfortable nor convenient; everlastingly choosing colors for dresses, and putting them on, and washing; making a business of sitting together at fixed hours to absorb our nourishment; taking little poisons with it to make us delirious enough to imagine we are enjoying ourselves; and then having to pass the night in shelters lying in cots and losing half our lives in a state of unconsciousness. Sleep is a shameful thing: I have not slept at all for weeks past. I have stolen out at night when you were all lying insensible - quite disgusted, I call it - and wandered about the woods, thinking, thinking, thinking; grasping the world; taking it to pieces; building it up again; devising methods; and having a glorious time. Every morning I have come back here with greater and greater reluctance; and I know that the time will soon come - perhaps it has come already - when I shall not come back at all.

To which one of the youths comments, "How horribly cold and uncomfortable". The Ancients are not popular with the young hedonists who denounce them as heartless, loveless, joyous monsters; but in return the Ancient despise the music, pictures, statues, flowers and bright fabrics of the young pleasure seekers. One Ancient exclaims to a two-year-old, "Infant, one moment of the ecstasy of life as we live it would strike you dead". Living in a chronic

orgasm of mental activity, and indifferent to creature comforts and common gregariousness, the ancients prefer asceticism, solitariness and silence. Indeed their power of exchanging thoughts telepathically has led to the disuse of speech among them. They direct their whole energy to helping life achieve its final goal of omniscience, omnipotence and independence of matter when there shall be "no people, only thought," for "life is thought". The play ends with the appearance of Lilith, the mother of mankind, and the first mythical personification of the Life Force, who gives her judgment on the race to which she first gave birth. For many years, she said, her children disappointed her, and she was on the verge of creating a new race to supersede them, when one man learned to live three hundred years. After that men redeemed themselves of their vileness and took on the burden of eternal life, yet despite all the goals they have passed, they still press on - "to redemption from the flesh, to the vortex free of matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence". When that point has been reached Lilith will herself be superseded and she will become only a legend.

> And because these infants that call themselves Ancients are reaching out towards that, I will have patience with them still; though I know well that when they attain it they shall become one with me and supersede me, and Lilith will be only a legend and a lay that has lost its meaning. Of life only is there no end; and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines. And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond.

In the examination of his works made in the earlier sections of this paper it would appear that Shaw believed the economic solution to be sufficient,

in itself and by itself, for the regeneration of society. Certainly Socialism is the foundation of most of the thought that lies behind his pre-war plays. But in two later plays he leaves the economic problem alone. What is wrong with the inhabitants of Heartbreak House is not that they are capitalists but that they are shallow cynics. In Back to Methuselah the problem of living under present economic conditions is forgotten in the greater problem of Life. The Great War awakened in Shaw a deep concern: Socialism is not enough. It would be of little use to reorganize Society unless man himself can be improved. Socialism might solve a nation's domestic problems but it could not stop international mass-murder. It would be of no avail to make the nations separately prosperous if they are collectively going to plunge into war. Moreover, Socialism itself cannot be administered by the type of statesmen who brought about or permitted the Great War. A dual process of reform is necessary; along with attempting to guide man's way of living in the direction of Socialism, it is necessary to change man's conception of the end of life and in so doing to evolve a higher individual - the superman. Only the superman is capable of organizing civilization under Socialism, and only under Socialism is it possible to create a superman.

APPENDIX

Table I

Growth of
Fabian Society Membership

Year	No. of Members
1886	87
1890	173
1891	361
1899	861
1904	730
1907	1267
1909	2462

Table II

Growth of
Local Fabian Societies
(Other than London)

Year	No. of Societies
1893	74
1905	9
1910	46
1912	50

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