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

Appended to the play is an entertaining though somewhat mysterious document called "The Revolutionist's Handbook." It contains many very sound remarks ; this, for example, which I cannot too much applaud : "If you hit your child, be sure that you hit him in anger." If that principle had been pro-

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perly understood, we should have had less of Shaw's sociological friends and their meddling with the habits and instincts of the poor. But among the fragments of advice also occurs the following suggestive and even alluring remark: "Every man over forty is a scoundrel." On the first personal opportunity I asked the author of this remarkable axiom what it meant. I gathered that what it really meant was something like this: that every man over forty had been all the essential use that he was likely to be, and was therefore in a manner a parasite. It is gratifying to reflect that Bernard Shaw has sufficiently answered his own epigram by continuing to pour out treasures both of truth and folly long after this allotted time. But if the epigram might be interpreted in a rather looser style as meaning that past a certain point a man's work takes on its final character and does not greatly change the nature of its merits, it may certainly be said that with *Man and Superman*, Shaw reaches that stage. The two plays that have followed it, though of very great interest in themselves, do not require any revaluation of, or indeed any addition to, our summary of his genius and

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success. They are both in a sense casts back to his primary energies ; the first in a controversial and the second in a technical sense. Neither need prevent our saying that the moment when John Tanner and Anne agree that it is doom for him and death for her and life only for the thing unborn, is the peak of his utterance as a prophet.

The two important plays that he has since given us are *The Doctor's Dilemma* and *Getting Married*. The first is as regards its most amusing and effective elements a throw-back to his old game of guying the men of science. It was a very good game, and he was an admirable player. The actual story of the *Doctor's Dilemma* itself seems to me less poignant and important than the things with which Shaw had lately been dealing. First of all, as has been said, Shaw has neither the kind of justice nor the kind of weakness that goes to make a true problem. We cannot feel the *Doctor's Dilemma*, because we cannot really fancy Bernard Shaw being in a dilemma. His mind is both fond of abruptness and fond of finality ; he always makes up his mind when he knows the facts and sometimes before. Moreover, this particular problem (though

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Shaw is certainly, as we shall see, nearer to pure doubt about it than about anything else) does not strike the critic as being such an exasperating problem after all. An artist of vast power and promise, who is also a scamp of vast profligacy and treachery, has a chance of life if specially treated for a special disease. The modern doctors (and even the modern dramatist) are in doubt whether he should be specially favoured because he is æsthetically important or specially disregarded because he is ethically anti-social. They see-saw between the two despicable modern doctrines, one that geniuses should be worshipped like idols and the other that criminals should be merely wiped out like germs. That both clever men and bad men ought to be treated like men does not seem to occur to them. As a matter of fact, in these affairs of life and death one never does think of such distinctions. Nobody does shout out at sea, "Bad citizen overboard!" I should recommend the doctor in his dilemma to do exactly what I am sure any decent doctor would do without any dilemma at all: to treat the man simply as a man, and give him no more and no less favour than he would to anybody else. In short, I am

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sure a practical physician would drop all these visionary, unworkable modern dreams about type and criminology and go back to the plain business-like facts of the French Revolution and the Rights of Man.

The other play, *Getting Married*, is a point in Shaw's career, but only as a play, not, as usual, as a heresy. It is nothing but a conversation about marriage; and one cannot agree or disagree with the view of marriage, because all views are given which are held by anybody, and some (I should think) which are held by nobody. But its technical quality is of some importance in the life of its author. It is worth consideration as a play, because it is not a play at all. It marks the culmination and completeness of that victory of Bernard Shaw over the British public, or rather over their official representatives, of which I have spoken. Shaw had fought a long fight with business men, those incredible people, who assured him that it was useless to have wit without murders, and that a good joke, which is the most popular thing everywhere else, was quite unsaleable in the theatrical world. In spite of this he had conquered by his wit and his good dialogue; and by the time of which

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we now speak he was victorious and secure. All his plays were being produced as a matter of course in England and as a matter of the fiercest fashion and enthusiasm in America and Germany. No one who knows the nature of the man will doubt that under such circumstances his first act would be to produce his wit naked and unashamed. He had been told that he could not support a slight play by mere dialogue. He therefore promptly produced mere dialogue without the slightest play for it to support. *Getting Married* is no more a play than Cicero's dialogue *De Amicitia*, and not half so much a play as Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. But though it is not a play, it was played, and played successfully. Everyone who went into the theatre felt that he was only eavesdropping at an accidental conversation. But the conversation was so sparkling and sensible that he went on eavesdropping. This, I think, as it is the final play of Shaw, is also, and fitly, his final triumph. He is a good dramatist and sometimes even a great dramatist. But the occasions when we get glimpses of him as really a great man are on these occasions when he is utterly undramatic.

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

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

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

The method of his life has remained mostly unchanged. And there is a great deal of method in his life ; I can hear some people murmuring something about method in his madness. He is not only neat and business-

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like ; but, unlike some literary men I know, does not conceal the fact. Having all the talents proper to an author, he delights to prove that he has also all the talents proper to a publisher ; or even to a publisher's clerk. Though many looking at his light brown clothes would call him a Bohemian, he really hates and despises Bohemianism ; in the sense that he hates and despises disorder and uncleanness and irresponsibility. All that part of him is peculiarly normal and efficient. He gives good advice ; he always answers letters, and answers them in a decisive and very legible hand. He has said himself that the only educational art that he thinks important is that of being able to jump off tram-cars at the proper moment. Though a rigid vegetarian, he is quite regular and rational in his meals ; and though he detests sport, he takes quite sufficient exercise. While he has always made a mock of science in theory, he is by nature prone to meddle with it in practice. He is fond of photographing, and even more fond of being photographed. He maintained (in one of his moments of mad modernity) that photography was a finer thing than portrait-painting, more exquisite and more imaginative ; he

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urged the characteristic argument that none of his own photographs were like each other or like him. But he would certainly wash the chemicals off his hands the instant after an experiment ; just as he would wash the blood off his hands the instant after a Socialist massacre. He cannot endure stains or accretions ; he is of that temperament which feels tradition itself to be a coat of dust ; whose temptation it is to feel nothing but a sort of foul accumulation or living disease even in the creeper upon the cottage or the moss upon the grave. So thoroughly are his tastes those of the civilised modern man that if it had not been for the fire in him of justice and anger he might have been the most trim and modern among the millions whom he shocks : and his bicycle and brown hat have been no menace in Brixton. But God sent among those suburban one who was a prophet as well as a sanitary inspector. He had every qualification for living in a villa—except the necessary indifference to his brethren living in pigstyes. But for the small fact that he hates with a sickening hatred the hypocrisy and class cruelty, he would really accept and admire the bathroom and the bicycle and asbestos-stove, having no

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memory of rivers or of roaring fires. In these things, like Mr. Straker, he is the New Man. But for his great soul he might have accepted modern civilisation ; it was a wonderful escape. This man whom men so foolishly call crazy and anarchic has really a dangerous affinity to the fourth-rate perfections of our provincial and Protestant civilisation. He might even have been respectable if he had had less self-respect.

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

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ciled to the British public as the British public is certainly largely reconciled to Shaw.

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

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duct, then the modern world will stop you somehow if it can. We are long past talking about whether an unbeliever should be punished for being irreverent. It is now thought irreverent to be a believer. I end where I began : it is the old Puritan in Shaw that jars the modern world like an electric shock. That vision with which I meant to end, that vision of culture and common sense, of red brick and brown flannel, of the modern clerk broadened enough to embrace Shaw and Shaw softened enough to embrace the clerk, all that vision of a new London begins to fade and alter. The red brick begins to burn red-hot ; and the smoke from all the chimneys has a strange smell. I find myself back in the fumes in which I started. . . . Perhaps I have been misled by small modernities. Perhaps what I have called fastidiousness is a divine fear. Perhaps what I have called coldness is a predestinate and ancient endurance. The vision of the Fabian villas grows fainter and fainter, until I see only a void place across which runs Bunyan's Pilgrim with his fingers in his ears.

Bernard Shaw has occupied much of his life

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

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mere insincerities, and which make it necessary to disentangle the good he has done from the evil in this dazzling course. I will attempt some summary by stating the three things in which his influence seems to me thoroughly good and the three in which it seems bad. But for the pleasure of ending on the finer note I will first speak of those that seem bad.

The primary respect in which Shaw has been a bad influence is that he has encouraged fastidiousness. He has made men dainty about their moral meals. This is indeed the root of his whole objection to romance. Many people have objected to romance for being too airy and exquisite. Shaw objects to romance for being too rank and coarse. Many have despised romance because it is unreal; Shaw really hates it because it is a great deal too real. Shaw dislikes romance as he dislikes beef and beer, raw brandy or raw beefsteaks. Romance is too masculine for his taste. You will find throughout his criticisms, amid all their truth, their wild justice or pungent impartiality, a curious undercurrent of prejudice upon one point: the preference for the refined rather than the

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rude or ugly. Thus he will dislike a joke because it is coarse without asking if it is really immoral. He objects to a man sitting down on his hat, whereas the austere moralist should only object to his sitting down on someone else's hat. This sensibility is barren because it is universal. It is useless to object to man being made ridiculous. Man is born ridiculous, as can easily be seen if you look at him soon after he is born. It is grotesque to drink beer, but it is equally grotesque to drink soda-water; the grotesqueness lies in the act of filling yourself like a bottle through a hole. It is undignified to walk with a drunken stagger; but it is fairly undignified to walk at all, for all walking is a sort of balancing, and there is always in the human being something of a quadruped on its hind legs. I do not say he would be more dignified if he went on all fours; I do not know that he ever is dignified except when he is dead. We shall not be refined till we are refined into dust. Of course it is only because he is not wholly an animal that man sees he is a rum animal; and if man on his hind legs is in an artificial attitude, it is only because, like a dog, he is begging or saying thank you.

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

So far as Shaw has spread or helped a certain modern reluctance or *mauvaise honte* in these

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

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but do them awkwardly. That which was of old a free and hilarious function becomes an important and embarrassing necessity. Let us endure all the pagan pleasures with a Christian patience. Let us eat, drink, and be serious.

The second of the two points on which I think Shaw has done definite harm is this: that he has (not always or even as a rule intentionally) increased that anarchy of thought which is always the destruction of thought. Much of his early writing has encouraged among the modern youth that most pestilent of all popular tricks and fallacies; what is called the argument of progress. I mean this kind of thing. Previous ages were often, alas, aristocratic in politics or clericalist in religion; but they were always democratic in philosophy; they appealed to man, not to particular men. And if most men were against an idea, that was so far against it. But nowadays that most men are against a thing is thought to be in its favour; it is vaguely supposed to show that some day most men will be for it. If a man says that cows are reptiles, or that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, he can always quote the contempt of his contemporaries as in some mysterious way proving the complete con-

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version of posterity. The objections to this theory scarcely need any elaborate indication. The final objection to it is that it amounts to this : say anything, however idiotic, and you are in advance of your age. This kind of stuff must be stopped. The sort of democrat who appeals to the babe unborn must be classed with the sort of aristocrat who appeals to his deceased great-grandfather. Both should be sharply reminded that they are appealing to individuals whom they well know to be at a disadvantage in the matter of prompt and witty reply. Now although Bernard Shaw has survived this simple confusion, he has in his time greatly contributed to it. If there is, for instance, one thing that is really rare in Shaw it is hesitation. He makes up his mind quicker than a calculating boy or a county magistrate. Yet on this subject of the next change in ethics he has felt hesitation, and being a strictly honest man has expressed it.

“I know no harder practical question than how much selfishness one ought to stand from a gifted person for the sake of his gifts or on the chance of his being right in the long run. The Superman will certainly come like a thief

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in the night, and be shot at accordingly ; but we cannot leave our property wholly undefended on that account. On the other hand, we cannot ask the Superman simply to add a higher set of virtues to current respectable morals ; for he is undoubtedly going to empty a good deal of respectable morality out like so much dirty water, and replace it by new and strange customs, shedding old obligations and accepting new and heavier ones. Every step of his progress must horrify conventional people ; and if it were possible for even the most superior man to march ahead all the time, every pioneer of the march towards the Superman would be crucified."

When the most emphatic man alive, a man unmatched in violent precision of statement, speaks with such avowed vagueness and doubt as this, it is no wonder if all his more weak-minded followers are in a mere whirlpool of uncritical and unmeaning innovation. If the superior person will be apparently criminal, the most probable result is simply that the criminal person will think himself superior. A very slight knowledge of human nature is required in the matter. If the Superman may possibly be a thief, you may bet your

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boots that the next thief will be a Superman. But indeed the Supermen (of whom I have met many) have generally been more weak in the head than in the moral conduct; they have simply offered the first fancy which occupied their minds as the new morality. I fear that Shaw had a way of encouraging these follies. It is obvious from the passage I have quoted that he has no way of restraining them.

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

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

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himself, he has encouraged cowards, and though sincere himself, has helped a mean escape.

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

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becomes a most unmilitary trick of announcing the victory before one has gained it.

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

In the first place, and quite apart from all particular theories, the world owes thanks to Bernard Shaw for having combined being intelligent with being intelligible. He has popularised philosophy, or rather he has re-popularised it, for philosophy is always popu-

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lar, except in peculiarly corrupt and oligarchic ages like our own. We have passed the age of the demagogue, the man who has little to say and says it loud. We have come to the age of the mystagogue or 'don, the man who has nothing to say, but says it softly and impressively in an indistinct whisper. After all, short words must mean something, even if they mean filth or lies ; but long words may sometimes mean literally nothing, especially if they are used (as they mostly are in modern books and magazine articles) to balance and modify each other. A plain figure 4, scrawled in chalk anywhere, must always mean something ; it must always mean $2 + 2$. But the most enormous and mysterious algebraic equation, full of letters, brackets, and fractions, may all cancel out at last and be equal to nothing. When a demagogue says to a mob, "There is the Bank of England, why shouldn't you have some of that money?" he says something which is at least as honest and intelligible as the figure 4. When a writer in the *Times* remarks, "We must raise the economic efficiency of the masses without diverting anything from those classes which represent the national pros-

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perity and refinement," then his equation cancels out ; in a literal and logical sense his remark amounts to nothing.

There are two kinds of charlatans or people called quacks to-day. The power of the first is that he advertises—and cures. The power of the second is that though he is not learned enough to cure he is much too learned to advertise. The former give away their dignity with a pound of tea ; the latter are paid a pound of tea merely for being dignified. I think them the worse quacks of the two. Shaw is certainly of the other sort. Dickens, another man who was great enough to be a demagogue (and greater than Shaw because more heartily a demagogue) puts for ever the true difference between the demagogue and the mystagogue in *Dr. Marigold* : " Except that we're cheap-jacks and they're dear-jacks, I don't see any difference between us." Bernard Shaw is a great cheap-jack, with plenty of patter and I dare say plenty of nonsense, but with this also (which is not wholly unimportant), with goods to sell. People accuse such a man of self-advertisement. But at least the cheap-jack does advertise his wares, whereas the don or dear-jack advertises nothing except himself.

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His very silence, nay his very sterility, are supposed to be marks of the richness of his erudition. He is too learned to teach, and sometimes too wise even to talk. St. Thomas Aquinas said: "In auctore auctoritas." But there is more than one man at Oxford or Cambridge who is considered an authority because he has never been an author.

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

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

This plain, pugnacious style of Shaw has greatly clarified all controversies. He has slain the polysyllable, that huge and slimy centipede which has sprawled over all the valleys of England like the "loathly worm" who was slain by the ancient knight. He does not think that difficult questions will be made simpler by using difficult words about them. He has achieved the admirable work, never to be mentioned without gratitude, of discussing Evolution without mentioning it. The good work is of course more evident in the case of philosophy than any other region; because the case of philosophy was a crying one. It was really preposterous that the things most carefully reserved for the study of two or three men should actually be the things common to all men. It was absurd that certain men should be experts on the special subject of

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everything. But he stood for much the same spirit and style in other matters ; in economics, for example. There never has been a better popular economist ; one more lucid, entertaining, consistent, and essentially exact. The very comicality of his examples makes them and their argument stick in the mind ; as in the case I remember in which he said that the big shops had now to please everybody, and were not entirely dependent on the lady who sails in "to order four governesses and five grand pianos." He is always preaching collectivism ; yet he does not very often name it. He does not talk about collectivism, but about cash ; of which the populace feel a much more definite need. He talks about cheese, boots, perambulators, and how people are really to live. For him economics really means housekeeping, as it does in Greek. His difference from the orthodox economists, like most of his differences, is very different from the attacks made by the main body of Socialists. The old Manchester economists are generally attacked for being too gross and material. Shaw really attacks them for not being gross or material enough. He thinks that they hide themselves behind long words, remote

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hypotheses, or unreal generalisations. When the orthodox economist begins with his correct and primary formula, "Suppose there is a Man on an Island——" Shaw is apt to interrupt him sharply, saying, "There is a Man in the Street."

The second phase of the man's really fruitful efficacy is in a sense the converse of this. He has improved philosophic discussions by making them more popular. But he has also improved popular amusements by making them more philosophic. And by more philosophic I do not mean duller, but funnier; that is more varied. All real fun is in cosmic contrasts, which involve a view of the cosmos. But I know that this second strength in Shaw is really difficult to state and must be approached by explanations and even by eliminations. Let me say at once that I think nothing of Shaw or anybody else merely for playing the daring sceptic. I do not think he has done any good or even achieved any effect simply by asking startling questions. It is possible that there have been ages so sluggish or automatic that anything that woke them up at all was a good thing. It is sufficient to be certain that ours is not such an age. We do

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not need waking up ; rather we suffer from insomnia, with all its results of fear and exaggeration and frightful waking dreams. The modern mind is not a donkey which wants kicking to make it go on. The modern mind is more like a motor-car on a lonely road which two amateur motorists have been just clever enough to take to pieces, but are not quite clever enough to put together again. Under these circumstances kicking the car has never been found by the best experts to be effective. No one, therefore, does any good to our age merely by asking questions—unless he can answer the questions. Asking questions is already the fashionable and aristocratic sport which has brought most of us into the bankruptcy court. The note of our age is a note of interrogation. And the final point is so plain ; no sceptical philosopher can ask any questions that may not equally be asked by a tired child on a hot afternoon. “Am I a boy?—Why am I a boy?—Why aren't I a chair?—What is a chair?” A child will sometimes ask these sort of questions for two hours. And the philosophers of Protestant Europe have asked them for two hundred years.

If that were all that I meant by Shaw

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

In this great sense Shaw has brought philosophy back into drama—philosophy in the

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sense of a certain freedom of the mind. This is not a freedom to think what one likes (which is absurd, for one can only think what one thinks); it is a freedom to think about what one likes, which is quite a different thing and the spring of all thought. Shakespeare (in a weak moment, I think) said that all the world is a stage. But Shakespeare acted on the much finer principle that a stage is all the world. So there are in all Bernard Shaw's plays patches of what people would call essentially undramatic stuff, which the dramatist puts in because he is honest and would rather prove his case than succeed with his play. Shaw has brought back into English drama that Shakespearian universality which, if you like, you can call Shakespearian irrelevance. Perhaps a better definition than either is a habit of thinking the truth worth telling even when you meet it by accident. In Shaw's plays one meets an incredible number of truths by accident.

To be up to date is a paltry ambition except in an almanac, and Shaw has sometimes talked this almanac philosophy. Nevertheless there is a real sense in which the phrase may be wisely used, and that is in cases where some

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

Consider in this respect how many and fine have been Shaw's intrusions into the theatre

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with the things that were really going on. Daily papers and daily matinées were still gravely explaining how much modern war depended on gunpowder. *Arms and the Man* explained how much modern war depends on chocolate. Every play and paper described the Vicar who was a mild Conservative. *Candida* caught hold of the modern Vicar who is an advanced Socialist. Numberless magazine articles and society comedies describe the emancipated woman as new and wild. Only *You Never Can Tell* was young enough to see that the emancipated woman is already old and respectable. Every comic paper has caricatured the uneducated upstart. Only the author of *Man and Superman* knew enough about the modern world to caricature the educated upstart—the man Straker who can quote Beaumarchais, though he cannot pronounce him. This is the second real and great work of Shaw—the letting in of the world on to the stage, as the rivers were let in upon the Augean Stables. He has let a little of the Haymarket into the Haymarket Theatre. He has permitted some whispers of the Strand to enter the Strand Theatre. A variety of solutions in philosophy is as silly as it is in arithmetic, but one may

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be justly proud of a variety of materials for a solution. After Shaw, one may say, there is nothing that cannot be introduced into a play if one can make it decent, amusing, and relevant. The state of a man's health, the religion of his childhood, his ear for music, or his ignorance of cookery can all be made vivid if they have anything to do with the subject. A soldier may mention the commissariat as well as the cavalry ; and, better still, a priest may mention theology as well as religion. That is being a philosopher ; that is bringing the universe on the stage.

Lastly, he has obliterated the mere cynic. He has been so much more cynical than anyone else for the public good that no one has dared since to be really cynical for anything smaller. The Chinese crackers of the frivolous cynics fail to excite us after the dynamite of the serious and aspiring cynic. Bernard Shaw and I (who are growing grey together) can remember an epoch which many of his followers do not know : an epoch of real pessimism. The years from 1885 to 1898 were like the hours of afternoon in a rich house with large rooms ; the hours before tea-time. They believed in nothing except

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good manners ; and the essence of good manners is to conceal a yawn. A yawn may be defined as a silent yell. The power which the young pessimist of that time showed in this direction would have astonished anyone but him. He yawned so wide as to swallow the world. He swallowed the world like an unpleasant pill before retiring to an eternal rest. Now the last and best glory of Shaw is that in the circles where this creature was found, he is not. He has not been killed (I don't know exactly why), but he has actually turned into a Shaw idealist. This is no exaggeration. I meet men who, when I knew them in 1898, were just a little too lazy to destroy the universe. They are now conscious of not being quite worthy to abolish some prison regulations. This destruction and conversion seems to me the mark of something actually great. It is always great to destroy a type without destroying a man. The followers of Shaw are optimists ; some of them are so simple as even to use the word. They are sometimes rather pallid optimists, frequently very worried optimists, occasionally, to tell the truth, rather cross optimists : but they are not pessimists ; they

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can exult though they cannot laugh. He has at least withered up among them the mere pose of impossibility. Like every great teacher, he has cursed the barren fig-tree. For nothing except that impossibility is really impossible.

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I know it is all very strange. From the height of eight hundred years ago, or of eight hundred years hence, our age must look incredibly odd. We call the twelfth century ascetic. We call our own time hedonist and full of praise and pleasure. But in the ascetic age the love of life was evident and enormous, so that it had to be restrained. In an hedonist age pleasure has always sunk low, so that it has to be encouraged. How high the sea of human happiness rose in the Middle Ages, we now only know by the colossal walls that they built to keep it in bounds. How low human happiness sank in the twentieth century our children will only know by these extraordinary modern books, which tell people that it is a duty to be cheerful and that life is not so bad after all. Humanity never produces optimists till it has ceased to produce

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happy men. It is strange to be obliged to impose a holiday like a fast, and to drive men to a banquet with spears. But this shall be written of our time: that when the spirit who denies besieged the last citadel, blaspheming life itself, there were some, there was one especially, whose voice was heard and whose spear was never broken.

THE END



