CHAPTER I : SOCIAL ABUSES

I

What was Shaw's role as a dramatist ? The briefest answer would be that he woke people up and started them thinking.

Shaw's contribution to the social thinking of his time was immense. As a playwright, he took as his medium the drama of ideas. He set out to stimulate thought and to lay bare the social evils, follies, and hypocrisies which surrounded him. In this respect he was among the pioneers of the Social Drama.

What is the Social Drama ?

It is a kind of drama which came into existence in Britain and on the Continent in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It aimed at expressing the social needs and purposes of the time; to mirror the pains, pleasures and problems of society; and to protest against the current state of Edwardian drama which was dominated by unreality in the topics it dealt with, in its language as well as in the acting.

The Social Drama stems from the Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen (1828 – 1906), who developed the first important social drama by placing great emphasis on dramatic realism and on a natural approach to both character and subject matter. He set himself to turn people's minds from corruption and hypocrisy; and called men to judgment. One of his notable plays was <u>A Doll's House</u>. When its heroine, Nora, rushed out of her home,

banging the door behind her, its slam was heard in nearly every theatre in the world. Several writers in Russia, France, Germany and England were inspired to write new plays with an understanding of the social conscience of man.

Henry Arthur Jones (1851 - 1929), Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900), Forbes Robertson (1829 - 1871), George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950) and John Galsworthy (1867 - 1933) were among the first British dramatists who contributed to the development of modern English drama. Of these it was Shaw, Galsworthy and Jones in his later plays who not only criticized the social system but also mentioned what at the time was supposed to be unmentionable, and furthermore, insisted upon doing so. They attacked the morals of the respectable, their hidden sins and hushed-up scandals. All that was generally accepted as good, proper and desirable was brought into the light of day and shown to be improper.

Naturally this kind of play was unpopular at first and hardly attracted the commercial theatre managers. But The Independent Theatre founded in 1891, The Stage Society in 1900, and The Court Theatre in 1904 supported the New Drama. These theatres aimed at producing the sort of worthy, realistic plays that failed to attract the attention of commercial theatres. The way was then opened for new figures in the theatrical world, especially for Shaw.

His early plays, namely, Widowers' Houses (first produced in 1892), Arms and the Man (1894), Candida (1895), The

Devil's Disciple (1897), *You Never Can Tell* (1899), *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1901) and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1902) seemed to his audiences to be full of the most ruthless kind of humour. The public was not yet attuned to the new type of play. It was the production of *John Bull's Other Island* in 1904 at the Court Theatre that first won wide recognition for Shaw as a social dramatist. From then onwards the English theatre-going public began to be eager for social drama.

Shaw was the most original of all the social dramatists of his day. In his plays, he not only depicted the real every-day problems he found, but he also made an illuminating, courageous commentary on them through the mouths of his characters and in his long, eloquent prefaces. His subject matter was undoubtedly serious. But he deliberately avoided heavy-handed seriousness and treated his grave argument with sparkling wit and even farcical dialogue. He filled his plays with the audacious humour which was his personal gift. He presented his radical thinking on nearly all subjects of human interest, in the fields of economics, politics, sociology, religion, art, education, and philosophy — all in his own style which was often satiric or ironic and often depended on anticlimax for its effect. These characteristics distinguished him from the other social dramatists. His drama was not solely Social Drama. It was, in fact, exclusively "Shavian" Drama, packed with social commentary: on slum — landlordism, prostitution, militarism, marriage, history, current politics, natural

Christianity, national and individual character, questions of conscience and so on.

II

Shaw's first play dealt with slum-landlordism. The problem of slums in England is one that has grown less acute with the passage of time; but at the time that Shaw wrote Widowers' Houses (1885 - 1892), it was of immediate concern. Shaw was well aware of this social defect and courageously exposed the unpleasant facts on the English stage. He showed that ' middle class respectability and gentility were fattening on the poverty of the slum as flies fatten on filth.' [1]

Shaw exposed the fact that slum-landlords left their slum tenements in a very deplorable plight and never took the trouble to repair or improve them in any way. Some slum property was let by the room or half - room or even quarter - room. The rent was calculated on the cubic foot of space. This method enabled the slum - landlords to get higher rents than the landlords who let whole houses or mansions. Shaw demonstrated that while the slum - landlords were refusing to give proper dwellings to their poor tenants, they also pressed mercilessly for the rents from them. He showed that there were some respectable aristocratic

1 Preface to Unpleasant Plays by Bernard Shaw (R.& R.Clark Limited, 1934), p.xxii.

people who prospered on the interest from mortgages on slum property, though some of them tried to ignore the fact, or were never found out.

In _Widowers' Houses_, Sartorius, a rich slum - landlord, dismisses his rent - collector for extravagance because the latter has repaired a broken staircase in one of his slum tenements. Sartorius justifies himself by saying that he must save his money in order to provide more homes which are suited to the small means of very poor people who require roofs to shelter them just like other people. He assumes that the poor people do not know how to live in proper dwellings; they would pull down the banisters, and handrails, etc. to make fires. When Dr. Trench, the young son of an aristocratic family and Sartorius's future son-in-law, learns that Sartorius's fortune is derived from slum property, he firmly refuses to take any allowance whatever from this source. But his moral attitude cannot stand the test when Sartorius proves to him that he himself is living without knowing it on the interest from a mortgage on the property in question.

TRENCH (dazed). Do you mean to say that I am just as bad as you are ?

SARTORIUS. If, when you say you are just as bad as I am, you mean that you are just as powerless to alter the state of society, then you are unfortunately quite right. [1]

[1] _Widowers' Houses_, Act II

Yet the demolition of slums was posible and, in fact, went on in Shaw's day. In the play Shaw shows how landlords could turn such demolition to their own ends by claiming compensation, and how, by improving their property slightly, they could get compensation at highly profitable rates. Thus Sartorius improves his slum property — but does so only for his own sake.

Shaw considered the existence of slums as one of the grave social defects, the most villainous abuse of society to which the public shut their eyes. To him, slums were the product of the indifference of people with a higher standard of living to the condition of the city they lived in. They were living comfortably on money earned by somebody else's labour. He suggested in the preface to Widowers' Houses that it was the duty of the whole body of citizens to pay higher taxes willingly. In this way the government would be able to replace the slums with decent dwellings.

III

In Mrs. Warren's Profession (1894), Shaw drew attention to the timeless problem of prostitution. He claimed that prostitution was caused by a defect in the social system: it was because the majority of English girls remained very poor. Overworked, underpaid and undervalued women were forced to resort to prostitution to get more money to keep themselves and to escape

from the lung disease, premature death and brutality that faced them in such ill - paid drudgery as that of bar-maid, scullery-maid, waitress and shop-girl, or in work in factories such as whitelead factories. Any poor but sensible girl with good looks was not likely to let other people trade on those same good looks by employing her as shop-girl or barmaid or waitress, when she could trade in them herself and get the profit instead of starvation wages.

For Shaw, it was equally moral whether a girl made money as a professional prostitute or whether, brought up a respectable girl, she caught some rich man and got the benefit of his money by marrying him. He thought that starvation, overwork, dirt and disease were as anti-social as prostitution. They are the vices and crimes of a nation and not merely its misfortunes. In Shaw's opinion, no normal woman would be a professional prostitute if she could afford to better herself in a respectable way. In _Mrs.Warren's Profession_, Liz, Mrs. Warren's elder sister, owned a house of ill-fame for a time as she found no better way to earn her living. When she had saved enough money to be independent of her trade, she left all that behind her and set out to live a very respectable life.

Shaw also exposed the fact that prostitution was not only carried on by individual enterprise, but it was organized and exploited on an international scale, like any other commercial dealing, for the profit of capitalists. It was very lucrative to great city estates, including church estates, through the rents of the houses in which it was practised. This point of view carries us to the other side of an argument. It might have caused many

people to realize, perhaps for the first time, that they took some part in such enterprises without ever knowing it. It is one of many examples of Shaw's ability to carry his argument further than the average thinker.

In Mrs. Warren's Profession, Sir George Crofts, a wealthy gentleman from his birth, goes into partnership with Mrs. Warren, who is the managing director of the hotel brothels scattered over Europe. He puts £ 40,000 into the business for the sake of thirty-five per cent interest. When the upright Vivie Warren, Mrs. Warren's only daughter, finds this out and calls him 'a pretty common sort of scoundrel', this is his answer:

> CROFTS. Why the devil shouldn't I invest my money that way ? I take the interest on my capital like other people: I hope you don't think I dirty my own hands with the work. Come ! you wouldn't refuse the acquaintance of my mother's cousin, the Duke of Belgravia, because some of the rents he gets are earned in queer ways. You wouldn't cut the Archbishop of Canterbury, I suppose, because Ecclesiastical Commissioners have a few publicans and sinners among their tenants. Do you remember your Crofts scholarship at Newnham ? Well, that was founded by my brother the M.P. He gets his 22 per cent out of a factory with 600 girls in it, and not one of them getting wages enough to live on. How d'ye suppose they manage when they have no family to fall back on? ....And do you expect me to turn my back on 35 per cent when all the rest are pocketing what they can, like sensible men ? No such fool ! [1]

[1] Mrs. Warren's Profession, Act III

The passage is a very good instance of Shaw's courageous declaration of the truth as he saw it, regardless of how unpleasant it would be for some people. It also shows his method of presenting other sides of an argument by standing things on their heads. It is this quality of his that makes his criticisms of society so effective — more effective than any factual report.

CHAPTER II : IBSENISM, THE NEW WOMAN

I

Between *Widowers' Houses* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Shaw wrote *The Philanderer* (1893). In a discussion of Shaw's social themes, this play is not so important as the first two, because it is lighter in tone and not so passionate about the "wrongs" in society. It is a comedy of manners in which the central character is a witty, young man about town — the philanderer himself. However, it is interesting for the discussion of part of Ibsenism, particularly as regards the woman Ibsenites.

The Philanderer was thus in part a satire on the Ibsenites. It was very topical as the discussion about Ibsenism was then at its height. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* started a number of silly women who were on the prowl for something new or rampant to engage in a movement for independence in several ways, as Nora had done in the play. These women called themselves ' advanced women '.

A woman of advanced views regarded lawful marriage as a degrading bargain by which a woman sold herself to a man for the social status of a wife and the right to be supported and pensioned in old age out of her husband's income. She believed that a wife was but a husband's doll who had no liberty of her own. She became his property. To her, lawful marriage was undesirable because, as the law stood, she had to be tied to her

husband even if he turned out badly. In order to belong to herself and to nobody else, she preferred companionship by which she could reserve her right to leave her partner at any time.

This conception may, in some respects, sound reasonable. But it was impracticable in the long run. Shaw, having no illusion about advanced women, wrote The Philanderer to deride them and open their eyes to the fact that, as the hero in the play put it,

"If Ibsen's sauce is good for the goose, it's good for the gander as well."

Julia Craven, according to the Ibsen code that she professes, has refused to marry Leonard Charteris, claiming her right to separate from him if she finds their companionship 'incompatible with her full development as a human being.' But when he claims the same right to leave her, impatient of her wild jealousy, to marry Grace Tranfield, she strongly resists his plan and finally asks him to marry her. Thus Shaw demonstrated that Julia's advanced views, like many women Ibsenites', were merely a fashion picked up and followed like any other fashion, without their understanding or meaning a word of them. The following extract gives Shaw's opinion:

> CHARTERIS. Advanced views, Julia, involve advanced duties : you cannot be an advanced woman when you want to bring a man to your feet, and a conventional woman when you want to hold him there against his will. Advanced people form charming friendships: conventional people marry.

Marriage suits a good many people; and its first duty is fidelity. Friendship suits some people; and its first duty is unhesitating, uncomplaining acceptance of a notice of change of feeling from either side. You choose friendship instead of marriage. Now do your duty, and accept your notice. [1]

This speech alone might have damped the enthusiasm of a considerable number of woman Ibsenites. In it Shaw takes an idea to its logical end as he usually does in his plays. He points out that the freedom a woman seeks in such a relationship is not only her prerogative, but belongs too to the other partner.

II

The original wit and humour Shaw displayed in The Philanderer may be considered a foretaste of the greater things to come. It is the sort of style we come to call "Shavian" with which we shall deal more thoroughly later on.

Charteris and Julia are forerunners of more popular characters in his later plays. Julia foreshadows the kind of woman Shaw was fond of portraying - one who fankly pursues a man or even proposes to him herself, for instance, Ann Whitefield

1 The Philanderer, Act I

in Man and Superman (1903) and "Z" in Village Wooing (1933). Julia's uncontrollable tempers also foreshadow his future invention of Eppy, the central figure in The Millionairess (1935) who knocks a man down the stairs for a trifling provocation. Hector Hushabye in Heartbreak House (1919) is drawn in the same vein as Charteris.

CHAPTER III : "ROMANTIC" SOLDIERS

I

Widowers' Houses, The Philanderer and Mrs.Warren's Profession were followed by Arms and the Man (1894). The play shows Shaw's further liberation from the yoke of Ibsenism and the development of the mental processes we found in those three early plays, for instances, his debunking an accepted idea, his turning things upside down — all at a more lighthearted level. His shafts are not aimed at "defects" in society such as slum - landlordism, but at society's romantic notions.

Many people have romantic ideas of heroism and gallantry. The average English soldier, for example, is generally accepted as being very brave and gallant in warfare. Conventional stage soldiers, particularly the heroes, were supposed to fear no foe and to suffer from no physical necessities. A hero was assumed to feel no fatigue nor apprehension and to be always ready to fight any number of enemies at any moment. If he won a fight, he would drop a tear for the dead and treat the wounded with care. He would not fight an empty - handed enemy, and had a habit of performing gallant deeds.............

Shaw was impatient with this outworn romantic view. With Arms and the Man, he tried to shatter the romantic ideals of heroism and gallantry and open the eyes of the public to military realism and the ordeal of war. The practical hero,

Captain Bluntschli, is made to say that "nine soldiers out of ten are born fools";[1] that a professional soldier fights when he has to, and is glad to get out of fighting when he has not to fight; and that he will sometimes run away when there is no way of winning the battle, and will do anything to have his life saved, no matter by whom.

In the play, Captain Bluntschli, a fugitive member of the Servian Army, flees from the victorious Bulgarians. He bursts into the chamber of Raina Petkoff, the daughter of the Bulgarian Major Petkoff, and asks for shelter at pistol point, a very ' ungallant ' way to behave to a lady. But Bluntschli's behaviour is dictated by need, not gallantry. To insure his safety, Bluntschli even gets possession of Raina's cloak so that she dare not let any soldier enter the room to capture him and, therefore, see her only in her nightgown.

> BLUNTSCHLI. I don't intend to get killed if I can help it.
>
> RAINA (disdainfully). Some soldiers, I know, are afraid to die.
>
> BLUNTSCHLI (with grim goodhumour). All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me. It is our duty to live as long as we can. [2]

What sincere soldier would deny this ?

He tells her further that if his enemies find him, they will not allow him to fight it out in single combat but will all

[1] Arms and the Man, Act I

[2] Ibid, Act I

come up to him and slaughter him like a pig. He confesses that his gun is unloaded because he has no cartridges with him. Like many experienced soldiers who keep food in their holsters instead of ammunition, he himself keeps chocolate —even in the field. Hence the name Raina gives him, "The Chocolate Cream Soldier."

This assertion shows that in his effort to explode romantic illusions, Shaw sometimes goes to an extreme. To assume that some soldiers carry no ammunition but food in war-time is not altogether convincing.

As a fugitive who has been three days under fire, Bluntschli has become very nervous, hungry and in need of sound, long sleep. He jumps at every unexpected movement or sound, for instance, when Raina turns to get her cloak and when she sits on a pistol and jumps up with a shriek. When Raina offers him three little pieces of chocolate cream, he gobbles them greedily and is not able to conceal his hope for more. He cannot help falling fast asleep even in the house of his enemy. From this, we see that Shaw gives a very realistic natural condition of a soldier under such circumstance, and thus makes the hero seem ridiculous to those who have romantic ideals of heroism. He does this by using and exploiting the high comedy of the situation.

Heroism turns out to be sheer ignorance of the art of war in this play. Sergius, a young Bulgarian amateur, goes into battle for the first time. Anxious to show his bravery, he audaciously leads, without orders from his commanders, a cavalry charge against a Servian battery of machine guns, and beats it

successfully. But it emerges that his success is due only to the fact that his enemies have been sent the wrong ammunition, so that they cannot fire a round for ten minutes. If it had not been for this, Sergius and his regiment would simply have committed suicide because, if the guns had gone off, not a horse or a man would have survived. Thus Sergius' heroic deed is but the mad action of one who knows nothing about war. He cuts a poor figure in the eyes of an experienced soldier like Bluntschli who tells Raina that "of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest......He ought to be court-martialled for it."

Shaw brings the comedy effectively to its farcical climax when he makes Raina reveal to Bluntschli that the "hero", that Don Quixote who charges the windmills and imagines he is doing a very brave thing, is, in fact, her fiancé.

II

In the play, Shaw also portrays the absurd impulse to pose and to lie which is dominant in men and women. Raina's noble attitude of being a lady is only a fraud which is so cleverly played that no one suspects it. She always appears at the right moment — but it is because she has a habit of waiting for it and listening at keyholes. She pretends that she has never told a single lie in her life whereas she often does so - so effectively that everyone

except the intelligent Bluntschli believes her.

Sergius manages to appear gallant and gentlemanlike before his fiancée, yet as soon as her back is turned, he flirts with Louka, her peasant maid, confessing that it is very fatiguing to keep up with Raina's "higher love" and that he needs some relief from it.

Bluntschli's character— clear - sighted, worldly, impartial, frank, businesslike — is a contrast to that of Raina and Sergius. Both types are skilfully sketched: each has its own individuality. It shows Shaw's skill at characterization. Bluntschli is a development of Charteris in The Philanderer, a character who shows up the delusions in other people: the falseness of their positions, or their thoughts, or their poses. It is a type that recurs often in his plays, such as Doyle in John Bull's Other Island (1904) and King Magnus in The Apple Cart (1929).

Apparently Bluntschli can have no relationship with anyone in the play, least of all with the romantic posing Raina. But with his clear-sightedness, he penetrates to the real Raina beneath the pose. And the apparently irreconcilable couple unite. This is a typically "Shavian" trick. Here, more than in the three earlier plays, we feel the sureness of touch, the sense of control over the movement of the dialogue and the characters that betokens the true dramatist. The audience or the reader is held in a watchful kind of suspense, waiting for the inconceivable and yet the inevitable to happen; Bluntschli and Raina are destined

for one another like other improbable pairs in later Shaw plays (for instances, "A" and "Z" in Village Wooing (1933), Eppy and the Egyptian doctor in The Millionairess (1935)), and the end is completely satisfying.

Arms and the Man, therefore, represents a considerable advance in Shaw's development as a dramatist.

III

We might pause here to collect from it some of the lines in which Shaw's wit is seen at its best, lines which amuse or shock the audience, sometimes simply with the sheer joy of witty repartee, and sometimes with the uncomfortable probing satire of pointed remarks on the main ideas which are under fire in the play.

For instance, when Bluntschli first takes refuge in Raina's room:

RAINA. You do not yet know in whose house you are. I am a Petkoff.

BLUNTSCHLI. A pet what ?

RAINA (rather indignantly). I mean that I belong to the family of the Petkoffs, the richest and best known in our country.

BLUNTSCHLI. Oh yes, of course. I beg your pardon. The Petkoffs, to be sure. How stupid of me!

RAINA. You know you never heard of them until this moment. How can you stoop to pretend ![1]

This is slick comic dialogue.

Then when we first dimly feel the inevitability of Bluntschli and Raina's love for one another:

RAINA. How did you find me out ?

BLUNTSCHLI (promptly). Instinct, dear young lady. Instinct, and experience of the world.

RAINA (wonderingly). Do you know, you are the first man I ever met who did not take me seriously ?

BLUNTSCHLI. You mean, don't you, that I am the first man that has ever taken you quite seriously ?

RAINA. Yes: I suppose I do mean that.[2]

Then in line after line when Bluntschli begins to shatter Raina's romantic illusions about heroism and warfare:

RAINA. Were they angry with you for running away from Sergius's charge?

BLUNTSCHLI (grinning). No: they were glad; because they'd all just run away themselves.[3]

1 *Ibid*, Act I

2 *Ibid*, Act III

3 *Ibid*, Act III

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BLUNTSCHLI. I am a soldier. Now what are the two things that happen to a soldier so often that he comes to think nothing of them ? One is hearing people tell lies: The other is getting his life saved in all sorts of ways by all sorts of people.[1]

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RAINA. Did you see the great cavalry charge ? Oh, tell me about it. Describe it to me.

BLUNTSCHLI. Well, it's a funny sight. It's like slinging a handful of peas against a window pane: first one comes; then two or three close behind him; and then all the rest in a lump.

RAINA (her eyes dilating as she raises her clasped hands ecstatically). Yes, first One ! the bravest of the brave !

BLUNTSCHLI (prosaically). Hm! you should see the poor devil pulling at his horse.

RAINA. Why should he pull at his horse ?

BLUNTSCHLI (impatient of so stupid a question). It's running away with him, of course: do you suppose the fellow wants to get there before the others and be killed? Then they all come. You can tell the young ones by their wildness and their slashing. The old ones come bunched up under the number one guard : they know that they're mere projectiles, and that it's no use trying to fight. The wounds are mostly

1 Ibid, Act III

broken knees, from the horses cannoning together.[1]

Sergius even more bluntly shows his own cynical view of soldiering:

> SERGIUS. Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms.[2]

The dialogue then, like the manipulation of the characters and the airing of ideas in the play, points to greater thing to come. Shaw is now liberated from the grimmer social themes of his very early plays, and begins to be great and successful as a dramatist.

1 *Ibid*, Act I

2 *Ibid*, Act II

CHAPTER IV : WOMAN AND THE LIFE FORCE

I

Writing Candida in 1894, Shaw chose a plot which was already familiar to theatre audiences -- that of 'the eternal triangle' -- a three - sided affair in which two men are in love with the same woman, usually a woman already married to one of them. In the customary treatment of this theme, the wife would get all the blame for being unfaithful to her husband, while the two men fought over her and decided her fate. But Shaw's originality did not allow him to follow the usual tradition. So he turned 'the eternal triangle' upside - down. The heroine comes out of the struggle without any stain on her character.

Candida or Mrs. Morell, the wife of the Reverend James Mavor Morell, is adored by a young poet Eugene Marchbanks. There is no great aura of secrecy around this state of affairs, no furtiveness or sense of intrigue. Instead of waiting for Morell to find this out, Eugene frankly tells him the situation. Candida sees and declares that the poet needs her love, and that if she denies it to him he will only learn things the wrong way from bad women. She has, therefore, neither repulsed nor encouraged Eugene. Morell decides that Candida must choose between them. To tempt her choice, Morell offers her

"his strength for her defence, his honesty for her surety, his ability and industry for her livelihood, and his authority and position for her dignity." Eugene, on the contrary, offers her "his weakness, his desolation and his heart's need." To these bids, Candida says that she chooses "the weaker of the two" - by which she means her apparently successful and self-assured husband, not the emotional, young poet.

Candida's commonsense, her strength of mind which is freed from emotional slop, and her unerring wisdom on the domestic plane make her the complete mistress of the situation. She sees through the vaunted strength of her husband to his very real weakness and hence to his need of her. She points out that his strength is rooted in her and would be non-existent without her care and devotion. This is because Morell has always been under the care of his women folk: his mother, his sisters, and finally his wife. To deprive him of such homely warmth and comforts as he is used to having would undoubtedly ruin his career. Candida, however, has treated him with wifely tact out of her love for him. She has never imposed this unpleasant fact on her husband until the last moment, when to win her choice, Morell offers her "my strength for your defence." She demonstrates that it is she who builds "a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him, and stands sentinel always to keep little vulgar cares out, and makes him master...... though he does not know it." [1] Realizing it at last Morell admits that:

" It's all true, every word. What I am you have made

[1] Candida, Act III

me with the labour of your hands and the love of your heart. You are my wife, my mother, my sister: you are the sum of all loving care to me." [1]

The poet, on the other hand, has, since his childhood, learnt to live without comfort and happiness. He has spent his life facing disappointment. His spiritual loneliness and self-dependence are likely to make him find domestic life imprisoning. As an artist, he lives in another world, that of the romantic imagination, and this is why he is so astonished when he sees Candida peeling onions or trimming the lamps or tending her children. Candida sees that Eugene is in love, not with her, but with being in love with her; and that this kind of love will not last long, — least of all in domestic confinement.

With her strength of character, Candida takes the situation under her own control. She brings Morell and Eugene's dispute to an end, confessing her devotion to her husband, and, at the same time, convincing Eugene that his poetic spirit does not become domestic life. Nothing could be more reasonable than her urging of the young poet to repeat the following sentences every time he thinks of her:

"When I am thirty, she will be forty-five. When I am sixty, she will be seventy-five." [2]

So Candida leaves the stage as a great woman: admirable as a person, faithful as a wife. She emerges as the dominant figure in the play to whom all the praise goes.

1 Ibid, Act III

2 Ibid, Act III

Thus Shaw turned ' the eternal triangle ' upside down. Ten years later in How He Lied to Her Husband, a comic one-act play, Shaw gave an even more unusual twist to the Candida theme. In this play, the husband finds out that the lover, also a poet, has written a book of passionate love - poems to his wife. Instead of being angry, the husband is so delighted that his wife should be adored and thus complimented that he suggests publishing the poems himself.

II

Shaw, in a letter which appeared in the Press in 1944, stated that Candida "is a counterblast to Ibsen's Doll's House, showing that in the real typical doll's house it is the man who is the doll," — not the woman. So far as the play is concerned, Shaw carried his argument well enough. Morell, though physically robust and apparently strong in spirit in view of his forceful sermons that successfully change the minds of so many listeners, is in fact a pet in his own house. He has been pampered and protected by women since he was born, and cannot do without them. A woman like Candida does not hunger for his protection or support. She wants somebody to protect, to help, and to work for. And her husband is the very person. In this respect, Morell is in a similar position to that of King Magnus in Shaw's later play, The Apple Cart (1929). Despite their success outside their home,

the first as a clergyman, the latter as a very intelligent king who has complete control over his Cabinet, the wife of each makes a pet of her husband.

Candida's strength of mind and her warmth of heart resemble those of Lady Cicely Waynflete in Captain Brassbound's Conversion (1899). Both are of the motherly type but also very strong characters and in fact dominate the situations in which they find themselves and get what they want. Candida, however, is more subtle than Lady Cicely in asserting her will. Lady Cicely can completely cool down Brassbound's evil passion for revenge by treating him warmly, civilly, sensibly and, above all, persuasively. Warmth of heart and love and understanding of other people do not prevent their taking charge of developments. These characteristics are of course closely connected to ideas about woman's individuality and her place in society and culminate in Shaw's idea of the New Woman.

Most of Shaw's women have the characteristics of the New Woman: they are independent in spirit, self-confident, clear-headed, morally courageous, emotionally well controlled and frank. This is contrary to the sort of soft, yielding girl with no opinions of her own which the popular heroine usually is. Such women as Vivie Warren (in Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1893), Major Barbara (in Major Barbara, 1905) and Lina (in Misalliance, 1909) prefer to take up a business or professional career rather than allow themselves to become preoccupied with men and marriage. They often lack womanly mystery, grace, divinity and charm. If

they pursue their man as in the case of Ann Whitefield (in Man and Superman, 1901 - 1903) or that of "Z" (in Village Wooing, 1933), they seem to be quite unromantic in their pursuit. The very idea of woman chasing man, instead of waiting for him to come and woo her, is of course contrary to the spirit of romanticism.

Shaw believed that human beings were created to carry out the divine purpose of raising mankind to a progressively higher level until Man becomes perfected in the Superman. For the achievement of this purpose, Woman is of primary importance as the bearer of better and better children. Man is chiefly the instrument through whom Woman's destined function is fulfilled. According to Shaw's philosophy, women are unconsciously controlled by what he calls the Life Force (the driving power of the universe) to do their proper duty and life-work as mothers. Animated by that irresistible impulse, each woman marks down her man and pursues him. She uses all her arts to seduce him for the purpose: she adorns her body by devices that are often elaborate and alluring; she paints her face and her nails and her toes to provoke his emotional appetite. She is in fact the hunter of man, and man is but the quarry. So this argument is opposed to the customary belief that man is the hunter and woman is the prey.

In Man and Superman, his first great play for its wisdom, and in the preface to it, Shaw stated his philosophy. In the play itself, he shows that woman is ruthless in her determination to create children through the man she has chosen for their father. Ann Whitefield is in love with John Tanner, her guardian.

Octavius Robinson, a close family friend who has been almost part of the Whitefield family, hopes to marry her and everyone seems satisfied with the arrangement; but Ann shatters his hopes. She refuses Octavius's proposal on the grounds that her mother wants her to marry Tanner. This, remarks her mother afterwards, is Ann's way of saying that she wants to marry Tanner. So Ann has marked down her man and he is 'doomed'. She makes several advances in order to have him. She forbids her younger sister to go for a drive with Tanner, excusing herself by saying that her mother made her do so. When Tanner, far from being serious, dares her to go on a long Continental trip with him, she readily takes her chance. When Tanner calls her a "boa-constrictor", she takes it as an excuse to put her arms round him. Tanner's violent temper makes her faint in his arms, and the first moment she opens her eyes, she announces to the others who happen to come in at that opportune moment that she has promised to marry Tanner. This makes him capitulate. So in spite of his protestations to the last that he will not surrender, Ann succeeds in her pursuit. Tanner is only left to say: "I am lost.... I am in the grip of the Life Force."

Thus we see the Life Force in operation: woman gets the mate she wants. In the course of this process, the characters discuss many other related ideas, many of which must have shocked the public by being so far in advance of the accepted ideas of the day. For instance, when Tanner wrongly assumes that Octavius's sister, Violet, is going to have an unlawful baby, he tells her that:

"I know, and the whole world really knows, though it dare not say so, that you were right to follow your instinct; that vitality and bravery are the greatest qualities a woman can have, and motherhood her solemn initiation into womanhood; and that the fact of your not being legally married matters not one scrap either to your own worth or to our real regard for you." [1]

Tanner shocks those who hear his views, and however fresh and stimulating his opinions may be, the tables are turned on him by Violet's revealing the fact that she is married, and that Tanner is only jumping to hasty conclusions just like all the others. So his original ideas do not really get much serious consideration in the play.

However, Shaw really did advocate motherhood, as we have seen within his scheme of the Life Force. There seems to be a clear instance of this in Buoyant Billions (1946-1948). When Miss Buoyant, afraid of the Life Force which is seeking to make her marry, asserts that 'the day of ridiculous old-maids is over. Great men have been bachelors and great women virgins,' her lover replies, 'they may have regretted it all the same,' and the solicitor reminds her that 'though many women have regretted their marriages, there is one experience no woman has ever regretted, and that experience is motherhood'. He goes on to say that "Celibacy, for a woman is "il gran rifiuto," the great refusal of her destiny, of the purpose of life which comes

1 Man and Superman, Act I

before all personal consideration, the replacing of the dead by the living." [1]

Again in Village Wooing (1933) Shaw makes his heroine as ruthless as Ann in the pursuit of her man, and even more frank. The hero, "A", is an educated gentleman who likes to use his mind. "Z", the heroine, is an under-educated village girl who is used to following her instinct. "Z" proposes to "A" in a businesslike way the second time she meets him. When "A" resists her, she insists, telling him frankly that, "the moment I set eyes on you I said to myself, 'Now that's the sort of man that would suit me as a husband'.......There was something about you: I don't exactly know what; but it made me feel that I could do with you in the house." Her frankness somewhat alarms "A" who tells her that, "You announce all the plans that well-bred women conceal. You play with your cards on the table instead of keeping them where a lady should keep them: up your sleeve." And she answers: "Something above me and beyond me drove me on." [2] This refers to Shaw's lifelong belief in the Life Force, the power that can bring together the apparently irreconcilable.

To fit in with his ideas about the Life Force, Shaw's men characters are often "doomed" by the firm determination of a certain girl. After some struggle he finally gives in. We find

[1] Buoyant Billions, Act III

[2] Village Wooing, Third Conversation.

examples in several of his plays, not only in those in which the Life Force idea is developed. In Arms and the Man (1894) Sergius gives in to Louka; in You Never Can Tell (1898) Valentine to Gloria; in On the Rocks (1933) David Chavender to Aloysia; and in The Millionairess (1935) the Egyptian doctor to Eppy. In other words, the theme recurs throughout Shaw's plays, early and late, as if he were preoccupied by it before he developed it into the neat all-embracing theory of the Life Force. Did this theory, in fact, develop to meet something long in Shaw's mind and in his psychology rather than being something he suddenly thought of at a later date ?

CHAPTER V : POLITICS

I

In a letter, dated November 7,1904, to Lady Gregory, W.B.Yeats, the famous Irish writer, tells her that:

'I have seen Shaw's play,' which had just been produced at the Court Theatre a week earlier: 'it acts very much better than one could have foreseen, but it is immensely long. It begins at 2.30 and ends at 6. I don't really like it. It is fundamentally ugly and shapeless, but certainly keeps everybody amused.' [1]

This refers to John Bull's Other Island, a play about Ireland written by an Irishman.

Yeats's criticisms were partly justified. The play is quite a long one; and the scene shifts from place to place: a Civil Engineer's Office at Wesminster, the Rosscullen Hill in Ireland, the Round Tower in Rosscullen, the Grass Plot before Corney Doyle's House, The Parlour at Corney Doyle's, and finally the Rosscullen Hill again. But the play, which flatters and ridicules the English and the Irish at the same time, not only kept everybody amused as Yeats commented. It created a furore. Play-goers, including eminent politicians, began to take Shaw very seriously. They discussed him and resolved that it was proper to be 'modern' in the Shavian way. So Shaw at last became a

1 The Letters of W.B.Yeats, edited by Allan Wade, page 442

fashionable craze. It was reported that when King Edward VII commanded an evening performance, he laughed so heartily that he broke his chair. The monarch's delight in it set the seal on its success.

In the play, Shaw criticizes the English sentimentality towards Ireland and the Irish idle patriotic enthusiasm that had so far led to no betterment of an Ireland which was then under English rule.

Tom Broadbent, an English Liberal, is eager to devote himself to the cause of Ireland by submitting himself as a candidate to stand for Parliament and fight for Irish Home Rule. But he has little understanding of Ireland and its needs. While advocating Home Rule, he adds, quite innocently, that it should be 'under English guidance.' His interest in Ireland is based on his love of professional politics and his sentimental views of the Celtic race: its patriotism, its love of freedom, its romantic wilfulness and its determination. His romantic illusions are shown to be strengthened by a worthles Irish swindler, Haffigan, who, finding English people like Broadbent full of romantic political nonsense, gets what he can out of it for himself by flattering them. This is continually happening, says Shaw; consequently, the English never know the real need of Ireland, and Ireland, therefore, remains very poor and in need of reform.

Broadbent plans to use an estate in Ireland for a land development scheme and bring prosperity to Rosscullen by building an hotel and opening a golf-course. This, as he points out, will

cause hardship and distress to the small tenant-farmers such as Barney Doran and Matthew Haffigan. But he will provide other jobs for them because he thinks that his capital, knowledge and English business habits 'can make ten pounds out of land that Haffigan, with all his industry, could not make or lose ten shillings out of.' He thinks that Doran's mill is 'a superannuated folly' which he wants for electric lighting. So, eager as he is to help Ireland, Broadbent still has a sense of the English superiority and thinks that the English way is the best of all. Talking about the Land Development Syndicate, he says that 'all it needs to make it pay is to handle it properly, as estates are handled in England.'

Larry Doyle, Broadbent's Irish partner, on the other hand, knows his own country well and has no illusions about his compatriots. He sees that most Irish patriots are foolish and have no mind for business. They spend their lives sneering at the English and doing nothing for the good of their country. They deride the English for having no sense of humour whereas the Irish tradition of wit and laughter have not carried them anywhere. It is through Doyle, and Keegan, the unfrocked Irish priest, that we seem to hear most of Shaw's opinions of his native country.

Keegan and Doyle see what is wrong with Ireland. But they do not think that the answer lies in the 'English' method of modernization which will destroy the true essence of the place and its people. Keegan seems to see through the insincerity of political agitation which Broadbent in part justifies. Broadbent gravely expounds his theory of Ireland's needs and is given three

cheers by the Irish as their prospective candidate; but soon after he confesses that his fine speech is only a knack that he has picked up on the platform to stoke up enthusiasm. He has the answer for everything. It is likely that he will get into parliament, in Keegan's words, not because of his principles, but because he wants to get into it enough to take any necessary step to induce the people to vote for him. By way of cultivating popularity, Broadbent offers a lift in his car to Haffigan and his pig. This leads to a very comic incident. He tries to please Keegan, though the latter infuriates him, because he has been told that Keegan has a vote and has considerable influence on the Irish.

Shaw's commentary on the English and the Irish is very brilliant and penetrating. It is tactful of him to make Irishmen comment on Ireland and its people; and to make the English sympathetic and eager to help. He not only ridicules but also flatters both sides. He softens Keegan's straight attacks on the insincerity of the English help for Ireland by making Keegan a half-crazy character and by making Doyle disagree with him. In this way, neither the English nor the Irish have enough reason to remonstrate against the play. In a way the play is somewhat weak, as Shaw just presents the case as it is without suggesting any direct remedy for it. Nevertheless, the play had great effect on both nationals. On the side of the Irish, they came to realize their idleness. As for the English, it gravely disturbed the complacency of English politicians of the time. Mr.Arthur Balfour, the Prime Minister, was so deeply impressed by the play

that he persuaded eminent politicians, Liberal as well as Conservative, to see it and enlighten themselves about the country whose people and needs they had so little real knowledge of.

II

The clash of opinions between Broadbent and Doyle in John Bull's Other Island is one of Shaw's typical themes. It is the conflict between one type of character who is self-deceived and another who sees things clearly the way they are. Each type expresses his own views which are opposite to and sometimes irreconcilable with the other's. In this play, the conflict is cleverly worked out. Above all it illustrates Shaw's power of seeing the world from the point of view of others, and of stating all the sides of an argument. This is one of the qualities that makes him great and popular as a dramatist.

Several speeches in the play, though they are very moving and carry us away, are extremely long. Long monologue becomes one of the characteristics of Shaw's later plays. Here are some examples from John Bull's Other Island.

When Broadbent tells Doyle that he wants Doyle's company in Ireland, this is what Doyle says:

DOYLE. I have an instinct against going back to Ireland: an instinct so strong that I'd rather go with you to the

North Pole than to Rosscullen........How many of all these millions that have left Ireland have ever come back or wanted to come back ?......Oh, the dreaming ! the dreaming ! the torturing, heartscalding, never satisfying dreaming, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming! No debauchery that ever coarsened and brutalized an Englishman can take the worth and uselessness out of him like that dreaming. An Irishman's imagination never lets him alone, never convinces him, never satisfies him; but it makes him that he can't face reality nor deal with it nor handle it nor conquer it: he can only sneer at them that do, and be "agreeable to strangers", like a good-for-nothing woman on the streets. It's all dreaming, all imagination. He can't be religious. The inspired Churchman that teaches him the sanctity of life and the importance of conduct is sent away empty; while the poor village priest that gives him a miracle or a sentimental story of a saint, has cathedrals built for him out of the pennies of the poor. He can't be intelligently political: he dreams of what the Shan Van Vocht said in ninetyeight. If you want to interest him in Ireland you've got to call the unfortunate island Kathleen ni Hoolihan and pretend she's a little old woman. It saves thinking. It saves working. It saves everything except imagination, imagination, imagination; and imagination's such a torture that you can't bear it without whisky. At last you get that you can bear nothing real at all: you'd rather starve than cook a meal; you'd rather go shabby and dirty than set your mind to take care of your clothes and wash yourself; you nag and squabble at home because your wife isn't an angel, and she despises you because you're not a hero; ....

and you hate the whole lot round you because they're only poor slovenly useless devils like yourself. And all the while there goes on a horrible, senseless, mischievous laughter. When you're young, you exchange drinks with other young men; and you exchange vile stories with them; and as you're too futile to be able to help or cheer them, you chaff and sneer and taunt them for not doing the things you daren't do yourself. And all the time you laugh, laugh, laugh! eternal derision, eternal envy, eternal folly, eternal fouling and staining and degrading, until, when you come at last to a country where men take a question seriously and give a serious answer to it, you deride them for having no sense of humor, and plume yourself on your own worthlessness as if it made you better than them.[1]

In talking about the future of Ireland, Broadbent tells Father Keegan that he has great faith in Ireland:

KEEGAN. And we (the Irish) have none: only empty enthusiasms and patriotisms, and emptier memories and regrets. Ah yes: you have some excuse for believing that if there be any future, it will be yours; for our faith seems dead, and our hearts cold and cowed. An island of dreamers who wake up in your jails, of critics and cowards whom you buy and tame for your own service, of bold rogues who help you to plunder us that they may plunder you afterwards. Eh ?....Ireland, sir, for good or evil, is like

1 John Bull's Other Island, Act I

no other place under heaven; and no man can touch its sod or breathe its air without becoming better or worse. It produces two kinds of men in strange perfection: saints and traitors. It is called the island of the saints; but indeed in these later years it might be more fitly called the island of the traitors; for our harvest of these is the fine flower of the world's crop of infamy. But the day may come when these islands shall live by quality of their men rather than by the abundance of their minerals; and then we shall see.[1]

Listening to these long speeches, the audience tends to get lost in words. Yet in spite of such a dramatic defect as this, Shaw's plays were greatly enjoyed. The audience of his day overlooked the defects of his word-spinning in their love of Shavian wit and humour. People came to see his plays and laughed so heartily at them that the performers were often compelled to pause until the laughter had quiet down. In 1913, when John Bull's Other Island was revived at the Kingsway Theatre, a leaflet by Shaw was given with the programme. In it, Shaw urged his audience to restrain their shouts and applause until the fall of the curtain so that his plays might go on smoothly in perfect silence. He made this rebuke at great length, and in no uncertain terms; allowing for its wit and gaiety and for the beguilement of this novel appeal to the audience, the strong, even arrogant language Shaw used in it must still have been quite a large pill for the

[1] Ibid, Act IV, Scene 2

audience to swallow. But Shaw, with his assertiveness and self-confidence, was by this time completely assured of his popularity and showed, by writing thus, that he could toy with his audience in the best tradition of public idols.

CHAPTER VI : DEMOCRACY

I

So far we have dealt with Shaw's criticisms of social defects, mass follies, and his own philosophy. In this chapter, let us consider his political views as they appear in his plays.

In spite of his socialism Shaw had never been a democrat. He found that the accepted definition of the word "Democracy" as "government of the people, for the people, by the people" is humbug. To him, democracy is not government by the people. It is government by consent of the governed. He is of the opinion that "government by the people" is only a cry by which demagogues humbug people into voting for them. When they are elected, they can do anything they like in the name of the people and often leave the people where they were before. In his eyes, most political leaders are blunderers, insufficiently educated in the art of ruling, which he regarded as the highest art of all. Democratic government, therefore, ends in government neither of the best nor of the worst, but in an official government which can do nothing but talk. The result is that people look round for a saviour and are ready to give a hopeful trial to anyone bold enough to assume dictatorship and get rid of the officiel government.

In Shaw's opinion, a parliament consists mostly of members who do not know better than the rest of us what should be done in any state of emergency. They are people like Tom

Broadbent in John Bull's Other Island who loves professional politics but has little capacity for them. They are, therefore, not doing the work they are elected to do, that is, to govern with equal consideration for everybody and to increase the welfare and happiness of the people.

In The Apple Cart (1929) Shaw has a lively discussion on democracy. Like his other discussions, such as that of the Ibsenites in The Philanderer, Shaw turns the topic inside out. He carries his argument further than the average man. The political discussion in the play through the voices of cabinet ministers who express different views, sometimes in long speeches, are truly dramatic because it becomes the politicians to make them. These speeches are no longer over-lengthy monologues of ideas that have little connection with the play such as Doyle's or Keegan's in John Bull's Other Island. We see that in this play Shaw has developed the use of such speeches to better dramatic effect.

Shaw makes King Magnus, a man of ability and great astuteness, upset the democratic apple-cart of windbags and spineless bureaucrats, leavened by some members who have brains.

The labour government is represented as really controlled by Breakages Limited, a big monopoly which opposes industrial progress and suppresses every new invention for the reason that it has an interest in perpetuating the inferior and less durable machinery that requires more frequent repairs. The ministers rarely agree with one another; and the Prime Minister cannot control them. His speeches are often followed by flippancy and

laughter which send him out of the meeting room in a rage. The Cabinet's lack of efficiency and the personal weakness of character of its members enable the intelligent King, manifestly abler than any of his ministers, to rule them, chiefly with flattery. Magnus's one powerful weapon is that he could abdicate in favour of his son. He would then stand for Parliament as a private citizen, and, in view of his popularity, would have a very good chance of being elected Prime Minister. Faced with this possibility, the Cabinet is disarmed, and remains helpless against his will.

So in this play, Shaw points out that in a Constitutional Monarchy, a weak Cabinet is of little importance when the King is very competent. We see that an able king, even if he is an absolute monarch, is more to Shaw's liking than a Cabinet of scrapings.

In spite of Magnus's urbanity and subtle flattery towards his ministers, he may be considered a dictator who has his own way even if the Cabinet exists all the time.

Shaw seems to exalt the ideal of dictatorship. His admiration for dictators is almost unbounded. In Geneva (1938) he made the best of them: Bombardone (Mussolini), Battler (Hitler) and General Flanco (Franco). In the preface to Too True to be Good (1931) Shaw hails Stalin and Mussolini as "the most responsible statesmen in Europe because they have no hold on their places except their efficiency; and their authority is consequently greater than that of any of the monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers who have to deal with them".[1] And he goes on to praise Stalin as "one

1 Preface to Too True to be Good (Constable, 1934), p. 23

of the higher functionaries with whom governing is necessarily a whole-time job. But he is no richer than his neighbors, and can "better himself" only by bettering them, not by buttering them like a British demagogue." [1]

Thus Shaw is contemptuous of democracy. To escape from it he will support a dictatorship, whether that dictatorship be upon the Russian or Italian model. His main idea is that human discipline and welfare can be achieved only by the labour of exceptional people. This is why he is attracted by the idea of dictatorship.

The ruthless way in which Shaw praises the dictators is significant in view of the growing trends in Spain, Italy and Germany, where trouble was to come from conflict of the dictators and the people. It shows his independence of mind in a confusing and tragic period. It must have bewildered him, however, when he saw the dictators collapse before the patient resistance of the democrats of Britain and America: Mussolini was strung by his people upside down and shot; Hitler, at last aware of his ruin, ordered a soldier to blow the back off his head.

II

Writing On the Rocks in 1933, Shaw again reveals the defects of democratic government by making the Cabinet a collection

1 Preface to Too True to be Good (Constable, 1934), p. 23

of noodles and windbags. Even if there are a few competent members among these, the worthless members, who are in the majority, often upset their programme.

The play opens with the Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Chavender, who is idling over a late breakfast and The Times, although Whitehall is congested with processions of unemployed workmen. Then the deputation comes to enquire what he intends to do about the unemployed. When the Prime Minister asks the Mayor what he can do for them, the Mayor replies: "Well, Sir Arthur, as far as I can make it out, the difficulty seems to be that you can't do anything. But something's got to be done." [1] This answer provokes the Prime Minister to a frank speech in a typical Shavian manner :

"What can I do ?" he exclaims. "Do you suppose that I care less for the sufferings of the poor than you do ? Do you suppose I would not revive trade and put an end to it all tomorrow if I could ? But I am like yourself : I am in a grip of economic forces that are beyond human control. What mortal man could do, this government has done. We have saved the people from starvation by stretching the unemployment benefit to the utmost limit of our national resources ! ....." [2]

It is apparent that neither he nor the Mayor has the faintest idea of what should be done. The Prime Minister thinks

1 On the Rocks, Act I

2 Ibid, Act I

that he is doing the best he can while he is in fact doing very little and at the same time is underworked.

His colleagues, also, take little interest in the street meetings of the unemployed. Sir Broadfoot Basham, the Chief Commissioner of Police, thinks that it is better to let them go on because they keep the crowd amused. Sir Dexter Rightside, the Foreign Secretary, represents blind conservatism which sticks to the pre-existing state of affairs through sheer obstinacy and inability to imagine anything else.

The Prime Minister, after reading volumes of Marx and Lenin, has worked out a clever scheme for preserving the capitalist state through a programme of partial nationalization and taxation of unearn-ed incomes. But Sir Dexter does not support this new scheme. He threatens to rouse the support of the young people, or, as he says, to "put coloured shirts on fifty thousand patriotic young Londoners" and to call them into the streets against the proposed programme. So the Prime Minister is compelled to give up his attempt. But he knows now that people are sick of his so-called democracy; what they really want is decent employment, food and drink, and they will follow any man who is strong enough to make them take action. What is needed, then, is a dictator. But, as he says, he is not the man for the job and he will hate the man who will carry it through for his cruelty and the desolation he will bring on politicians, so he will renounce his career.

"That looks like despair," he says to his wife, Lady Chavender, "but it's really the beginning of hope, and the end of

hypocrisy ... Do you think I didn't know, in the days of my great speeches and my roaring popularity, that I was only whitewashing the slums ? I couldn't help knowing as well as any of those damned Socialists that though the West End of London was chockful of money and nice people all calling one another by their Christain names, the lives of the millions of people whose labour was keeping the whole show going were not worth living; but I was able to put it out of my mind because I thought it couldn't be helped and I was doing the best that could be done. I know better now ! I know that it can be helped, and how it can be helped. And rather than go back to the old whitewashing job, I'd seize you tight around the waist and make a hole in the river with you." 1

The play ends with a riot of the unemployed who are breaking windows and singing "England, arise," while the Police club them. The sight touches the heart of the Prime Minister's secretary, Miss Hilda, who says: "It's all right when you only read about it in the papers; but when you actually see it you want to throw stones at the police." [1] She rushes out to join the rioteers.

"What she felt just now," prophesies the Prime Minister, "other girls and boys may feel tomorrow. And just suppose England really did arise!" [1]

This sentence ends the play.

The defeat of the unemployed in On the Rocks demonstrates Shaw's assertion that democratic government does not listen to

1. Ibid, Act II

the urgent need of its people, particularly, of the poorer class. Thus Democracy fails Shaw. He, then, puts his hope in the superior man who will put the world in order. It is Shaw's belief (which is definitely described in Man and Superman) that unless Man learns how to live in order, the Life Force (his synonym for Nature, or Providence, or whatever name be given to the driving power of the universe) will destroy Man and replace him by some superior creature - the Superman — as the mammoths were destroyed and superseded by Man. His philosophy is that the Life Force, seeking for a perfection it does not yet possess, had begun by using mindless creatures who were not aware of its intention. Finding them useless because they could not consciously assist the Life Force in the realisation of its intention, the Life Force scrapped them and evolved a finer creature with a mind with which to understand its purpose: Man. And Man must obey the Life Force or be scrapped.