CHAPTER VII

BERNARD SHAW
Of the eleven plays by Shaw two are assigned to different sections; "Village Wocing" has been included in the one on "Social Scene" and "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets" has been treated as part of the one on "Shakespeare Theme". The nine remaining plays present great variety, which requires a general statement to bring out some elements of the Shavian attitude, they express. Of Shaw as a dramatist, this is not the place to speak; for the complications of his art and philosophy require a much wider discussion that is inconsistent with the plan of this work. Our enquiry will, therefore, be strictly limited to our material but the comments made will not be without relevance to a more complete view. For, Shaw seems essentially a satirist; his aim everywhere is to laugh at ways of life not in accord with reality and a rational attitude, and his technique is often that of exaggeration and distortion. In some cases, like the character of Edward III and that of Prince Patiomkin, what emerges as a picture does not seem to introduce life but a piece of absurdity. History may prove that Patiomkin was wilder than Shaw's account and Edward III more henpecked and
unstable than he is painted. But in their own very different worlds and times they lived, moved and had their being. To transplant a tree, we have to recreate artificially the soil and climate in which it grew; otherwise it would perish. As regards human beings, when they are torn out of their temporal and other contexts, we have not to reproduce the conditions in which they lived, which is not possible, but to understand them and to make their reappearance in the twentieth century psychologically valid. Shaw sees them in isolation and the crudities and absurdities which belong to them make a wrong impression unless seen as part and parcel of the general behaviour - pattern of their class and society. The result is that we have a series of caricatures instead of living beings. The secret of the historical imagination is perhaps to conceive human beings in their essential humanity rather than to see them as different from those who are living - emphasizing the difference, which is superficial to the neglect of the similarity, which is fundamental. Shakespeare saw his characters in timeless dimension. Hence they seem so alive, whether they are Romans, Greeks, Scot or English. Enobarbus comments on Cleopatra's wildness:
I saw her once
Hop forty paces through the public street;
(II.II.232-233)

A little later he observes again:
for vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish.
(II.II.241-243)

Cleopatra who lived more than two thousand years ago in Egypt seems to become a contemporary; for we can enter into her feelings, we can understand her lightness of heart, her gaiety, and are impressed that in all things she remains a queen. Shaw's Catherine, tickling the English man with the toe of her shoe or lying in bed loses her majesty. She becomes a coquette. Cleopatra could be a coquette too but in her, something towered above all her frivolities and proclaimed her essential majesty. The element that transforms the mean into the great seems to be personality. Shaw is deficient in his conception of personality and his Edward III, Catherine, and Patiomkin are not alive. They seem hardly more than targets erected for criticism or illustration; an abstraction, which may be interesting for a special purpose but can never be a substitute for life.

Women are often more assertive than men; sometimes
they are fierce. Annajanska bites the hands of soldiers for restraining her. The English Claire also does so to force her way into Catherine's presence. Even Edward III's Queen rules her royal husband in spite of all her apparent mildness. Blanco Posnet quotes Scott's *Marmion* to show how unreal is the picture in a court-room, crowded with women demanding his death for stealing a horse:

> When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
> A ministering angel thou.

But the fierceness and the angelic qualities may both be attributes of women. What is perhaps noticeable is that Scott tended to see too much of the one and Shaw too much of the other. The prevalence of the fierceness is seen, in Shakespeare's Katherina (*The Taming of the Shrew*). He thought that women could get over it and did not really express them adequately. To him more than to any other we owe the picture, a combination of the conflicting elements as comprising the total personality. When united they become more temperate in their manifestation as in Beatrice (*Much Ado About Nothing*).

The attachment to mother and acceptance of her authority even in one's maturity, is seen in several
characters in O'Flaherty and also in Juno and Lunn (Overruled). One would imagine that Shaw in this view of the mother's control of adult sons is largely drawing upon his own experience. His tone is occasionally that of a satirist but at the same time, the tie seems far from tenuous or negligible.

It is hardly necessary to point out where Shaw's strength lies. All the world knows that his dialogues are among the most brilliant ever written. They are not just witty. What is remarkable is that they are an instrument for the discovery of truth or at least of a partial truth. What appears to be perfectly indefensible acquires a new interest for us when we see it with his eyes. In this recovery of some values we find the dialogues not only enjoyable but illuminating as well. If they were no more than witty, they could not have produced the same result. Thus he makes us aware of a complexity in the human situation, which we may well have ignored without his assistance. His weapon is most useful in fighting dogmatism in every sphere.

1. How He Lied to Her Husband by Bernard Shaw. In the brief preface the author stresses what is new in his
play: "Nothing in the theatre is staler than the situation of husband wife, and lover, or the fun of knock-about farce. I have taken both, and got an original play out of them,..."
The characters are He, She and Her Husband. She is "a very ordinary South Kensington female of about thirty-seven,..."2
"Her lover, a beautiful youth of eighteen,..." The pair are confronted by the danger of exposure. The youth's remedy is a show down and divorce. But the wife does not entertain such an idea. The exposure comes from the youth's poems written to her having been stolen from her room. Her name is Aurora, a name which in her opinion nobody else has in London. He has to lie like a gentleman to Rory's husband so that she may be properly shielded. When the husband demands an explanation for the poems, the young man is quite prompt with it but leaves the older man incredulous. The lover tells his story glibly enough:
"I wrote them years ago after reading Swinburne's Songs Before Sunrise.... Aurora, you know: the rosy fingered Aurora."3
The husband dismisses the ingenious invention with the comment: "I have heard far thinner stories from much older men."4 The young man declares, "I should never have

2. Ibid., p.45
3. Ibid., p.56. The reference is of course to the Homeric expression "rhododaktulos eos."
4. Ibid.
dreamt of writing poems to her. The thing is absurd ... I do not admire Mrs. Bompas - in that way." The husband is in a fury at the implied slight to his wife and goes on to give details about how irresistible is the lady he has married. Those who came under her spell include, according to his report, "one of the first professional poets," "the eldest son of a duke" and after the recital of her victories, he challengingly addresses the youth: "You regard her with coldness, with indifference; and you have the cool cheek to tell me so to my face." After this, concealment was out of the question. He made a full confession; the delighted husband shakes hands with him, saying "You've got to own that none of your literary heroines can touch my Rory" and seeks permission to bring out an expensive edition of the poems, which the young man gives. And when asked about what the volume shall be called the disgruntled poet suggests the title "How He Lied to Her Husband". The play is entertaining. The swift turns are well managed with the help of a brilliant dialogue but the lack of seriousness in the husband's view of the situation imports a farcical element, incompatible both with satire and philosophy.

5. Ibid., p.59
6. Ibid., p.61
"The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet" by Bernard Shaw has an explanatory sub-title: "A Sermon in Crude Melodrama." The scene begins and ends in a Sheriff's court-room in America. Published in 1909, the play contains no reference to the date with which its opening is associated. Of the women crowded into the room to watch the trial of an alleged horse-thief, the stage direction says: their dress and speech "are those of pioneers of civilization in a territory of the United States of America,..."[8]

The horse-thief, brought into the room, is the play's title—hero. He has his arms "bound with a rope with a long end." Evidently, he has a sardonic humour. After listening to the women who demand his hanging for the offence, he quietly repeats the lines from Scott's Marmion, VI.xxx:

Oh woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please—

Elder Daniels, charged by the Vigilance Committee, with the job of saving the prisoner's soul, is in fact the latter's brother with a record of drunkenness, which ought to make him feel thoroughly ashamed as a functionary saddled with the duty of saving other people's souls. But he has a Shavian explanation for his conduct: "When does the Devil catch hold of a man? Not when he's working and not when he's drunk;

8. Ibid., p.9.
but when he's idle and sober. Our own natures tell us to drink when we have nothing else to do."

His brother Blanco stole the horse but he was no thief; "I distrained on it for what you owed me." He was robbed of all he should have inherited from his parents as his share by his brother Elder Daniels. He wanted his "mother's old necklace with the hair locked in it." When this was refused, he took the horse, thinking it to be his brother's property but it belonged to the sheriff. This was how the trouble began. There was a grim determination among the crowd to see him hanged, for this was the legal punishment provided. One witness was immediately found to prove the crime. This was Miss Feemy Evans but Blanco challenged her: she was a whore and could not, therefore, be administered the oath. This was a legitimate objection. Next a woman was found in possession of the horse. She said, it was given to her by a man because she wanted to go to the doctor to save her son's life. The man knew that he would be hanged yet he gave away the horse, instead of riding to a place of safety. The woman did not identify Blanco. The story touched Feemy and she too also declared that Blanco was not the horse thief. Accordingly, Blanco was acquitted. He offered to marry Feemy and next the poor woman whose son had died, she being a widow. Blanco's final statement is significant for here we have the true explanation of the title. For the

9. Ibid., p.17
10. Ibid., p.16
exposure was not that of a villain but that of a saint who concealed himself in this corrupt and wicked world: "There's no good and bad; but by Jiminy, gents, there's a rotten game, and there's a great game. I played the rotten game; but the great game was played on me; and now I'm for the great game every time." Blancho condemned every thing and everybody as rotten and corrupt. His attitude was the Puritan's. He had love of fellowmen and pity for human suffering. It is in this that human salvation seems to lie and not in mouthing out words of religion and a sanctimonious attitude, such as we see in his brother Elder Daniels. Blancho seems also sentimental in his attitude to his mother's old necklace with the hair locked in it. The innate goodness in his character has a romantic streak for which Shaw has perhaps no good things to say. The play is enjoyable even when we see that the unmasking is artificial and is used as an occasion for a kind of sermon.

3. O'Flaherty V.C. In his brief preface the author gives the year, and the purpose of writing the play: "It may surprise some people to learn that in 1915 this little play was a recruiting poster in disguise." But as he says it "was voted utterly inadmissible." Brief as the play is, it covers a wide area of Irish life. O'Flaherty V.C. is

11. Ibid., p. 40
invited to tea by his general Sir Pearce and the hero adopts the usual respectful attitude, expected of a subaltern but Sir Pearce tells him "that little Cross of yours gives you a higher rank in the roll of glory than I can pretend to." 13 O'Flaherty is very frank about his escapades in early life. When the Queen compliments on his being "a fine young fellow", he replies that General Madigan on whose estate he was born would if all was known "think me the finest ornament for the county jail he ever sent there for poaching." 14 The curious fact comes out that he did not know what he was fighting for. He gives a very naive explanation. "I kilt them (the Germans) because I was afeared that, if I didnt, they'd kill me." 15 When the General spoke of patriotism as an adequate motive, the Irish soldier said that it did not mean for him what it did for an English man. "It means England and England's king to you. To me and the like of me, it means talking about the English just the way the English papers talk about the Boshes." 16 In fact, his mother whom he loved and feared thought that he was fighting for the Germans. He later told her that he served the English because they paid better than the French or the Germans. O'Flaherty hardly ever told the truth to his mother. He did not propose to change his habit, seeing that she was old and needed more comfort. His power to find justification for poaching and stealing was remarkable. One is almost persuaded that the acts

13. Ibid., p.69
14. Ibid., p.70
15. Ibid., p.74
16. Ibid.
intended for self-preservation, can hardly be condemned as anti-social. Why did he steal his geese, the General asked. His answer was, "Sure we needed them, sir. Often and often we had to sell our own geese to pay the rent to satisfy your needs; and why shouldn't we sell your geese to satisfy ours?"\(^\text{17}\)

O'Flaherty's mother thought that Gladstone was an Irishman. She declared that Shakespeare was born in Cork. Her views are summed up by her son, "She says all the English generals is Irish. She says all the English poets and great men was Irish. She says the English never knew how to read their own books until we taught them."\(^\text{18}\) But if she has such absurd notions, let her not be regarded as exceptional. Her son stresses the point, "She's like the English: they think there's no one like themselves."\(^\text{19}\) In developing this idea, the Irishman remarks profoundly: "You'll never have a quiet world 'til you knock the patriotism out of the human race."\(^\text{20}\) Shaw characterizes the Irishman's mother as "a Volumnia of the potato...."\(^\text{21}\) She had taught her son how to be brave. He was not allowed to run away from the boys who fought with him. He was dragged back by his mother to face them. If the German army had been brought up by his mother, he predicts, they would have scored an easy victory.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p.78
\(^{18}\) Ibid., p.79
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., p.80
\(^{21}\) Ibid., p.67
Then "the Kaiser would be dining in the banqueting hall at Buckingham Palace this day, and King George polishing his jack boots for him in the scullery."²² He thought of Ireland with great distaste and decided to settle in France as a farmer, marrying a French wife who would cook food which, the greater part of the land would be only too eager to taste. But he gave a gold chain to Teresa, a maid at Sir Pearce's house. She showed it to her lover's mother who claimed a prior right to it. She contemptuously spoke of Teresa as "a slip of a girl", wondering what she would do with a gold chain round her neck. This brought out the girl's redoubtable powers in the use of bitter words which bite and sting. The old woman's neck was described by her as a "a hank of wrinkles" and her lover as "your ugly stingy lump of a son."²³ They were both spirited women and their abusive tongue seems to bear some resemblance to "flyting" in England in the eighteenth century. Sir Pearce and O'Flaherty both agreed that it was easy to get together such large armies without conscription because domestic life was not as happy as people say it is.²⁴ The play is crammed with insights and comments of a revealing character.

4. "The Inca of Jerusalem" is preceded by a Prologue with the background of Ermyntrude, an Archdeacon's daughter and the widow of a millionaire, whose millions melted away in

²². Ibid., p.72
²³. Ibid., pp.89-90
²⁴. Ibid., p.91
paying debts after his death. She is too expensive in her habits to be able to manage on a monthly allowance of £150 and her father's home seemed to fall below her standards and taste: "I can't live in the squalid way you are accustomed to." Her father's advice was "you had better become lady's maid to a princess..." She promptly acted on this suggestion and found a Princess, staying at a hotel, whom she almost bullied into giving her a place as lady's maid. The Manager announced the visit of Captain Duval who came on behalf of the Inca of Jerusalem. His mission was to negotiate marriage between the Princess and one of the several sons of the Inca. The Princess considered her situation and prospect depressing, for she was in no mind to marry any son of the Inca. At the bidding of her new maid who showed herself highly capable in all practical matters, the Princess retired into her bedroom. Ermyntrude dismissed the idea that Captain Duval came on behalf of the Inca. She was convinced that the visitor was no other than the Inca - the German Emperor in person, and prepared to receive him as though she was the Princess herself. Captain Duval found that he was at a disadvantage in his disguise, of which the shrewd lady's maid took every advantage. She said, she had no reason to treat a stranger, who was almost a subaltern, being only a Captain, with ceremony. The Emperor's moustache drooped at this snubbing.

26. Ibid.
She goes on asking innocent questions like, Is the Inca nice looking? Can he laugh? When Captain Duval responds with a loud "ha ha!", she frigidly remarked "I asked could the Inca laugh. I did not ask could you laugh". Her strategy was to make him squirm without the power to retaliate or publish his identity. The Inca produced a brooch from the jewel case he carried. He said by way of commendation that it was designed by the Inca himself. The shrewd woman looked it over and said, could she wear such a big thing round her neck? She will pawn it and the Inca, to save himself from disgrace, will redeem it. The disguised Inca can no longer hold his temper. He said angrily that if the Inca's boy were on a desert island and you were the only human being on it, his father would not allow him to marry her. Ermyntrude now observes that after her marriage with the Inca's son, she will get the Inca to order the Captain to cut off his moustache, because she thinks it too irresistible. The disguised Inca erupts with the words: "By all the thunders of Thor, madam, it fascinates the whole world". And her biting comment is: "What I like about you, Captain Duval, is your modesty. The Inca's moustache, he explains, is "the political barometer of the whole continent" and when it goes up, culture rises with it. These absurdities, this self-conceit, vanity and megalomania are illustrated by

27. Ibid., p.109
28. Ibid., pp. 110-111
29. Ibid., p.111
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
a dozen more examples. He claims that he will rule the world by divine right, that those at war with him are actually in rebellion against him. His Imperial Family seems almost like a zoo from the names of its members and their variety - Chips and Spots and Lulu and Pongo and the Corsair and the Piffler and Jack Johnson the Second. 32 She could marry any one she chose but they are not worthy of her. And hence: "I suggest that you might prefer the Inca himself." 33 As regards others around him, his opinion is far from flattering: "Can you name a single man in the entourage of the Inca who is not a born fool?" 34 There is further self-glorification in his reference to the possibility of defeat in war and exile. Inca is an architect. St Helena will provide opportunities for his talent. He is a painter. He is a composer. If he goes to St. Helena "the world will crowd thither to see his works as they crowd now to Athens to see the Acropolis,..." 35

At the end Ermyntrude confesses that she knew from the beginning that Captain Duval was the Inca. The Inca in his turn springs a surprise by telling her that he knew her to be the Archdeacon's daughter. At the end he offers the sprightly lady "a drive round the town and a cup of tea at the Zoo," 36 which she accepts with pleasure.

32. Ibid., p.113
33. Ibid., p.114
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p.117
36. Ibid., p.121
The attack on the Kaiser seems to be a little unmannerly. Shaw's explanation was that he wrote the play before the Kaiser was defeated. He was not evidently hitting a fallen foe who could not hit back. From the date of composition, the explanation seems correct enough but there seems, nevertheless, a certain excess in the picture which the sub-title "An Almost Historical Comedietta" does not adequately justify.

5. "Annajanska, The Bolshevik Empress" is described as "a bravura piece" in the preface. Miss Lillah McCarthy's talent as actress contributed to its success on the stage. The scene opens in the General's Office in a military station on the east front in Beotia. The royal family of Panjandrums is deposed and transported to herd with convicts. Strammfest, the Commander-in-Chief of the Bolshevik regime, deeply regrets the fall of the royal power and even more the disappearance of the Grand Duchess, the daughter of the dethroned monarch. The story is that she had eloped with a lover. She is however traced and is brought to the Commander-in-Chief as prisoner. The Grand Duchess regarded her father's downfall without any sorrow or regret. She was identified with the Revolution and spoke of the need of a war as the sole means of welding "these wrangling factions into a solid commonwealth". According to Strammfest, only a man could do this. The Grand Duchess said, there was a man but the lover of whom the Military

Head spoke lived only in his imagination. She told him he was under his eye and asked him to look out of the window. As he moved to the window, the Duchess took off her cloak, and appeared in the uniform of the Panderobajensky Hussars. Strammfest turning from the window saw her with evident amazement and exclaimed: "You! Great Heavens! The Bolshevik Empress!" 38 The plot has some resemblance with "The Apple Cart", where King Magnus resigns his kingship and stands at the head of a popular poll, becoming thereby the country's chosen leader. The idea of a Bolshevik Empress seems a contradiction in terms, but perhaps even then not quite an impossibility in the world of affairs. At any rate Shaw has produced a drama out of the idea, which is full of surprising turns and provides occasion for much comic enjoyment. The Duchess setting her teeth into the arms of the guards holding her as prisoner brings out a picture of royalty and of other exalted persons in charge of human destiny, which shows that they are not different from the way the humblest man acts and feels. Shaw seems to take much care to establish this identity and rejoices in establishing it through many a comic scene in his plays, for which the only justification is that they illustrate the writer's belief.

38. Ibid., p.142
6. "Overruled". The characters are Gregory Lunn, Mrs Juno, Mrs Lunn and Juno. The scene is laid in the lounge of a seaside hotel. Gregory loves his wife and is yet in love with Mrs Juno. The latter's husband, being in love with Mrs Lunn, provides an exact parallel. The facts come to the notice of the injured parties. The following colloquy indicates the nature of the involvement and also the fact that no hearts are broken as a result:

"Juno. Lunn : I love your wife; and that's all about it.
Gregory. Juno : I love yours. What then?" 39

The tension, if there was one at all, is resolved by their going together to dine. The plot is funny and amusing. From a different point of view it could have been tragic. Apparently, wives and husbands have learnt not to claim exclusive rights over their partners. Is it immoral or merely a spirit of accommodation, which experience has shown to be necessary to preserve home life? Shaw's comments in his somewhat lengthy Preface make his attitude clear: "This piece is not an argument for or against polygamy. It is a clinical study of how the thing actually occurs among quite ordinary people, innocent of all unconventional views concerning it. The enormous majority of cases in real life are those of people in that position." 40

In this behaviour Shaw seems to discover the alleviations of monogamy. But perhaps this tendency to indulge in a lark may

40. Ibid., p.57.
give rise to more serious problems. Divorce courts instead of being emptied may get more and more crowded. Shaw's remedy is far from being reliable.

7. "Great Catherine" by Bernard Shaw is in four scenes. The source for the picture presented is Byron, as the dramatist acknowledges in his Preface: "if Byron leaves you with an impression that he said very little about Catherine, and that little not what was best worth saying, I beg to correct your impression by assuring you that what Byron said was all there really is to say that is worth saying. His Catherine is my Catherine and everybody's Catherine".

Patriomkin, superficially "is a violent, brutal barbarian, an upstart despot of the most intolerable and dangerous type, ugly, lazy, and disgusting in his personal habits". This is from the stage direction, which also states that Catherine II who could vie with Frederick the Great in his reputation as being the cleverest monarch in Europe, esteemed him highly as a counsellor and a good friend. With his account the play opens and during its progress the admiration expressed for his great worth is not substantiated by any evidence. He seems to have a wild and brutal humour and an excessive addiction to drinks. He has also a sharp intelligence, for he took in at a glance all the contents of the letter of introduction presented by Captain Edstaston and repeated them to the

amazement of the English man who had thought that he had merely looked at the letter without reading it. Captain Edstaston is a Spanish nobleman in Byron's account but he becomes an Englishman in Shaw's. Perhaps the inducement for the change is the opportunity to laugh at certain conventions, which in English society are held sacrosanct. The English Captain was invited by the great Russian Prince to see the Queen but he doggedly refused to do so without changing into the right clothes. Patiomkin, who was physically a giant, carried him, assisted by his niece Varinka into the Queen's presence, dumping him near her bed. The uncle and the niece both sing the following verses as they enter the hall:

March him baby,
Baby, baby,
Little baby bumpkins.

Edstaston lies sprawling on the carpet in angry confusion. Catherine who had plunged into the bed at the noise made by this singular mode of entry, angrily asks: "Patiomkin: how dare you?" The Great Minister in a drunken voice lays the blame on the Englishman and his desire to be taken to "the grea'est woman on earth." The Queen dismisses him. Varinka confirms the tale already told: "He came to the Prince and said he must see your Majesty. He can talk of nothing else. We could not prevent him." The Queen asked him, "Have you

42. Ibid., p.123
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p.124
never been taught, sir, how a gentleman should enter the presence of a sovereign?" She found out that the English Captain had seen her before in the hussar uniform. Varinka commented: "Oh! he has dared to admire your Majesty. Such insolence is not to be endured." Edstaston makes a courtier-like reply to the charge "All Europe is a party to that insolence, Madam". Later when he modified his remark about admiring Catherine and stammered in vain to find the right word while the Queen insisted on his saying it, he improved his position by a statement which seemed an appropriate homage to her beauty: "Well, let me put it this way: that it was rather natural for a man to admire your Majesty without being a philosopher." The Empress leaves him and a few minutes later, being robed, commands his presence. The Prince had told him that the Queen liked him. The Englishman took the expression in a limited and special sense. "Gracious heavens, man," he said, "I am engaged to be married," and ran away without ceremony. While he was telling his betrothed Claire that they must go away from Russia, guards came with gifts and pressed him for his acceptance. In a moment of unmindfulness, he gave them an opportunity to truss him up. He was thus carried into the presence of Catherine. She sat in her royal chair, he lay trussed up at

45. Ibid., p.124. 47. Ibid., p.126
46. Ibid., p.125 48. Ibid., p.127
her feet and she tickled him with the point of her shoe. The Captain begged her to release him. She was reading Voltaire with occasional comments expressive of admiration: "how he makes you laugh whilst he is convincing you!" Claire now rushes into the room and tries to unstrap him. But some endearing terms used by the Queen make her jealous and she prepares to leave but at the end all is well. To the Captain the Queen wishes happiness, at the same time telling him for his private ears: "I could have brought you more; but you did not think so. Farewell." The Captain like a typical Englishman gives her advice; "this Russian extravagance will not do ... Marry again. Marry some good man who will be a strength and a support to your old age ... abolish the stove:... there is nothing like the good old open grate." This is in accord with the middle class English attitude, which has been deservedly called philistine. Catherine is a liberal Empress and she declares that the relics of "barbarism are buried, thank God, in the grave of Peter the Great." She rejects all the idea of inflicting torture as anachronism but while she orders the soldiers off, her words suggest that her Liberalism may well be a deliberate facade for the rest of the world. To her Russia she turns a different face. For these are the words

49. Ibid., p.135
50. Ibid., p.141
51. Ibid., pp.141-142
52. Ibid., p.134
she spoke: "Five thousand blows of 'the stick for the soldier who is in the room when I speak next" 53.

The behaviour of Patiomkin in the introduction scene with the English Captain sprawling on the carpet was not the effect of drunkenness. It was the result of a desire to do him a friendly turn: "Not dead drunk, darling. Only diplomatically drunk. As a drunken hog, I have done for you in five minutes what I could not have done in five months as a sober man. Your fortune is made. She likes you" 54. The play hardly exhibits Catherine's greatness. The whole approach is marked by triviality. The horseplay in which the dramatist indulges does not give a sense that Kings and Queens stand on the same level with the common man by reason of their common humanity. The highest class seems to have a special privilege to cultivate wildness and savagery. These are in excess of what Nature can give, and as such, the feeling may well be that the highest stratum of society is different from everybody and everything by the unaccountable manner in which it acts and its general pattern of behaviour. Great people thus meanly seen are not seen in their true colours. We cannot replace the tendency to praise and admire by the tendency to make the same objects appear ridiculous. This may be a kind of debunking but it does not aid understanding.

53. Ibid., p.135
54. Ibid., p.127
8. "Augustus Does His Bit". Lord Augustus's Highcastle is seen in the Mayor's parlour in the Town Hall of Little Pifflington. A fifty-seven year old clerk appears and introduces himself as Secretary. He is the only officer, the entire staff, the others having been called to the front. Augustus is a pretentious wind-bag with an indomitable self-complacency. He complains that there was no response to the best recruiting speech he had delivered. The town, therefore, needs waking up but the clerk pointed out that he could get response if he had spoken a little differently to arouse enthusiasm. He enquired if the motorists knew about the reduction of the allowance of petrol. He was informed that this did not lead to the expected result, and munition work did not attract more people. Motorists were busy instead making small cars. The clerk observed that as he could not drink at the bar without losing his job, he had to buy a quart of whisky less than which is not sold, and to drink it at home. This is more than he thought he could consume. "That's the good of war: it brings out powers in a man that he never suspected himself capable of. You said so yourself in your speech last night." The clerk wanted his salary to be doubled. Augustus stressed the injustice of the demand: "Our gallant fellows are dying in the trenches; and you want a rise!" The clerk did not

56. Ibid., p.155
humbly withdraw the demand as Augustus had expected. On the other hand, he tried to establish it as perfectly right.

"What are they dying for? To keep me alive, aint it? Well, what's the good of that if I'm dead of hunger by the time they come back" 57. The plot is the showing up of Augustus, and this is done mainly through the way a secret document relating to gun emplacements is stolen from him in spite of warning. The Lady who came to see him without an introduction and with the design of the theft is described by the Clerk before she is admitted into his presence as "A human chrysanthemum, sir, believe me" 58. She asked him, would he lose his post if the document was lost. He was amazed and indignant. This was out of the question because there were hardly Highcastles enough at present to fill half the posts created by the war. "But I should be chaffed; and, frankly, I dont like being chaffed" 59. By a very simple trick the lady got hold of the document and ran away with it. But after a few minutes she returned and asked to use the telephone. When she got the connexion she said into the telephone:

"Yes : I have the list in my wallet ... Yes I got clean into the street with it. I have a witness. I could have got to London with it. Augustus wont deny it ..." 60.

57. Ibid. 59. Ibid., p.162
58. Ibid., p.156 60. Ibid., p.168
She had won a bet by this smart business. Augustus was hurt and remarked: "Madam: I consider your conduct most unpatriotic". The lady who knew how to win the bet was not slow in defending her conduct: "Oh, the gallant fellows are not all in the trenches, Augustus. Some of them have come home for a few days hard-earned leave; and I am sure you won't grudge them a little fun at your expense". His answer was amiable "Ah, well! For my country's sake - !".

Shaw wrote in the Preface that Kings, Emperors, Generals, were scrapped at home and abroad. "But Augustus stood like the Eddystone in a storm, and stands so to this day". The vain, idle, self-complacent, aristocrat holds the reins of government. But perhaps the scene is altered today and the aristocrat does not walk into a department to take charge of it as he used to do until the 'forties. The play was performed for the first time on 21 January 1917.

9. "The Six of Calais". The play was first performed in July, 1934. It opens on the last day of the siege of Calais on 4 August 1347. Edward III was upset by the long-drawn-out siege, which had already gone on for a whole year and calculated gloomily the various losses this meant for him. His terms of surrender were that "Six of the most purseproud of their burgesses,... are to come in their shirts with halters round

61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p.169.
63. Ibid.
their necks for me to hang in the sight of all their people." John of Gaunt, aged seven, brings news of the surrender, the King clouting him, commands him to hold his tongue. Out of the six burgesses, five make their humble surrender for the sake of their people, their wives and children. The sixth man Peter was defiant and abusive. He declared that they were beaten by famine and not by Edward, calls the King 'Naddy', and asserts: "I am a good dog, but not of your kennel, Naddy." As punishment, he is hamstrung and gagged. While preparations under the King's orders are being made for the public execution, the Queen Philippa of Hainault enters the pavilion. The stage direction points out: "It is evident that the Queen's arrival washes out all the King's orders." The Queen's speech is full of gentle pleading: "You said once that you would lead ten kings captive to my feet." She will ask for a much smaller favour, the lives of these burgesses. Edward recognizes defeat and begins to cry, and observes blubbing, "I am never allowed to do anything I want. I might as well be a dog as a king." The burgesses kneel gratefully to the Queen but the sixth man was a far more difficult subject. He calls Edward "Henpecked," and asks the Queen to leave him alone: "Leave me to settle my business with your henpecked husband." When the Queen

64. "The Six of Calais", Selected One-Act Plays vol.2 p.179
65. Ibid., p.181
66. Ibid., p.184
67. Ibid., p.185
68. Ibid., p.186
69. Ibid., p.187
helplessly appeals for protection against the foul-mouthed prisoner, the King in imitation of the Queen's manner, takes up the plea of mercy. Peter growls like a dog and the King returns the growl chin to chin. The Queen tears the two dogs asunder and in spite of Peter's insufferable conduct he is allowed to go. The stage direction says, "He finishes with a spirited imitation of a donkey's bray." The King snatching the Queen in his arms, laughs boisterously, and the laugh spreads to soldiers and courtiers, while the Queen out of profound disgust keeps on saying "for shame! for shame."

The picture of a fourteenth century royal pair is offered by the dramatist to emphasize, as he says in the Preface, that this is far different from the conception of King and Queen, which has come down as a Victorian heritage. About his source, Shaw writes this short paragraph: "I have had to improve considerably on the story as told by that absurd old snob Froissart, who believed that 'to rob and pill was a good life' if the robber was at least a baron. He made a very poor job of it in my opinion."  

The play gives rise to the interesting question of the relation between a play and a historical portrait. For the latter we require facts and data, for the former psychological convincingness. A reader of the play should not go to history

70. Ibid., p.189
71. Ibid., p.175
to ascertain whether the characterization is right or not. The play alone is his evidence. Judged by this standard, Shaw's picture of Edward III is disappointing. It seems to be like no human being, far less a king. His clownish behaviour justifies the derision from Peter: "Give her your sword and sit in the corner with her distaff".\footnote{Ibid., p.189}