Chapter I
Drama from 1892-1900

The Emergence of Bernard Shaw as a Dramatist.
Widowers' Houses, 1892.
Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1894.
Arms and the Man & Candida, 1894.
You Never Can Tell, 1896.
Captain Brassbound's Conversion, 1899.

George Bernard Shaw started his career as a playwright with a series of plays, each dealing with a particular aspect of social justice. His first play Widowers' Houses is a powerful dramatization of the injustice involved in the system of slum-landlordism. But the writing of his first play in 1885 was only incidental to his socialistic activities. Meetings, debates, discussion, study took up most of his time. As he said later,

"It was not until I could deliver separate lectures without notes on Rent, Interest, Profits, Wages, Toryism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade unionism, Co-operation, Democracy, The Division of Society into classes, and the Suitability of Human Nature to systems of just Distribution, that I was able to handle social Democracy as it must be handled before it can be preached in such a way as to present it to any sort of man from his own particular point of view." (1)

It was only nine years since he had left Dublin, where he had spent the first twenty years of his life. An astonishing change had taken place in the life of Shaw during these nine years.

The 'upstart son of a downstart' as he later described himself, he was forced to earn his livelihood at the age of fourteen as clerk in a land-agent's office - a condition he must have felt all the more keenly because his family being well-connected claimed Scottish descent from Macduff. The Shaws in Ireland were men of wealth and position. But George Carr Shaw, the playwright's father became an alcoholic and went downgrade. The humiliation of being declassed and being regarded as such by his relations

1. "The Fabian Society: what it has done and how it has done it"
   — Essays in Fabian Socialism, p-144.
must have been keenly felt by the youth who was later to play ha-
voc with aristocratic pretensions. Shaw painfully remembered his
colchildhood:

We were finally dropped socially. After my childhood
I can never remember paying a visit at a relative's
house. (1)

Though he acquired business habits and was soon promoted to keep-
ing the cash, he was quite indifferent to this advance and did
not even trouble particularly to ask for a rise in wages. The real
world for him was still that of his imagination. He taught himself
to play the Piano, and when the Shaw family broke up and Mrs Shaw
went to London (to live an independent life), Shaw played and sang
the operas he no longer heard in the house. He spent hours in the
Dublin Art Gallery; he read Shelley. This world of imagination and
art mattered more to him than the world of success to which he did
not aspire, and was a refuge from the world which he hated - the
squalid Dublin tenements where his nurse had secretly taken him as
a child when she wanted to drink with her friends, and where he
now had to go every week collecting the rents (an experience which
he later put to use in Widowers' Houses).

In March 1876, he gave notice at the offices and left for
London, the land of Shakespeare, whom he, 'had unconsciously re-
solved to reincarnate' (2) from his cradle. During his first three
years in London, where he lived with his mother and sisters in a
house off Brompton Road, Shaw did little but keep his freedom. He
resisted all pressure to put him into a job. She sometimes enga-
ged him to play the piano accompaniments at her musical evenings,
and as Lee's ghost he wrote some musical criticism; but he had no
regular paid work until 1879, when for some months he was employ-
ed with the Edison telephone company, deriving great delight, as
he relates in the preface to The Irrational Knot, from the obvi-
ous uncertainty of visitors, after he had demonstrated the tele-
phone to them, as to whether they ought to tip him. He kept

1. Shaw 'In the Days of My Youth' reprinted in The Living Age,
    1924.
2. Prefaces, p-660.
himself aloof also from the social life of London, making little use of the few introductions he had been given; for he was afraid he says, lest some well-meaning acquaintance might find him work. Diffidence also held him back. He describes in the preface to Immaturity his agonies of shyness before he could bring himself to ring the bell at the residence of Cecil Lawson, the painter, in Chelsea where he had a standing invitation for Sunday evenings.

Having ended his career as a commercial employee in June, 1880, Shaw devoted himself entirely to literary pursuits – writing of novels, - the popular literary form then in vogue. But he had no success as a novelist. No publisher in London and America would venture on his novels in view of his "hostility to respectable victorian thought and society". Yet the novels are important as much as they indicate the way in which Shaw's mind had been working. He had grafted on to them the sociological themes which were in the forefront of his mind at that time. The first to be published, The Irrational Knot was a tract on marriage and class relations which set up an exemplary worker Edward Connolly as a Shavian hero. Connolly refuses to take back his erring upper-class wife because she has failed to acquire a sound plebsian mode of living. In Cashel Byron's Profession the victorian world is turned topsy-turvy when a cultivated girl of the classes marries a pugilist because he would make a better husband and father than the gentlemen of her circle. In An unsocial Socialist, the hero Trefusis knows that he is a son of capitalism. His eyes opened to the social corruption which he is a part, Trefusis decides to devote his energies and money to assisting the organization of the workers. He tells his wife that he is helping to unite the workers in "A vast international association" whose aim is socialism. But finally he changes his mind after the death of his wife. He leaves his hermit's cave, discards his workman's clothes, abandons his efforts to organise an international association of workers and attacks the men and women of his own class from within, as one of themselves.
During the years that he was writing novels, Shaw regularly visited the Zetetical Society, the Dialectical Society and other debating Societies, forcing himself to speak "like an officer afflicted with cowardice, who takes every opportunity of going under fire to get over it and learn his business". (1) In the Zetetical Society, he met Sidney Webb, then a young man of about twenty-one. One evening in September, 1882, Shaw heard Henry George, the author of Progress and Poverty, lecture on the necessity of nationalising the land. This speech was a revelation (2) and it changed the whole course of his life. He now discovered that everything that he was mulling over—the Victorian conflict between religion and Science, the education of women, Mill in Liberty, the controversy over Darwinism and the Philosophy of Spencer—was not fundamental. It was all mere middle-class business and the importance of "the economic basis" which he was later to introduce as a major contribution to the content of modern English drama, suddenly dawned on him.

Shortly after this, Shaw attended a public meeting of Hyndman's Democratic Federation. In the discussion he attacked the policy of the Federation as a confusing diversion from Henry George's correct solution of the social question by nationalisation of the land. He was told that no one was qualified to discuss the subject until they had read Marx. Shaw went to the British Museum Reading Room and read Marx's Capital (in the French translation—no English translation had yet been made). "From that hour", Shaw said later, "I became a man with some business in the world". (3) On his seventieth birthday Shaw declared, "Karl Marx madea man of me". (4) In later years Shaw would call himself an "old Marxist". Nevertheless when he declares that "Socialists who are not essentially Marxists are not Socialists at all"(5) he apparently understands by Marxism solely the economic interpretation of history and the uncompromising collectivist stand. Shaw believed that economics was the basis of all

2. Edmund Wilson: The Triple Thinkers, P-158.
5. Fabian Quarterly, April 1944.
social and individual life. Thus not merely the suitability of 
Human Nature to systems of just Distribution, but politics, ethics, 
religion — everything was formed and informed by the distribution 
of money. Even, as Shaw claimed, his drama. He wrote to his autho-
ris ed biographer Henderson:

Indeed, in all my plays my economic studies have 
played as important a part as a knowledge of Ana-
tomy does in the works of Michael Angel. (1)

In May, 1884, not long after finishing his last novel, he 
went for the first time to a meeting of the Fabian Society, which 
had been founded in January of the same year by a group which had 
broken away from an association called "The Fellowship of the New 
Life, whose aim had been to reform society in accordance with the 
highest moral possibilities"; in September he became a member, and 
in January 1885, he was elected on to the Executive Committee. He 
found the Fabians thoughtful, clever, full of social compunction, 
well-read, critical and all converted and avowed socialists. These 
were exactly the people whom Shaw could work with and lead. The 
second tract of the Fabians, written by Shaw himself was a clear 
exposition of the social condition:

The most striking result of the present system of 
farming out the national land and capital to pri-
ivate individuals has been the division of society 
into hostile classes with large appetites and no 
dinner at one extreme and large dinners and no 
appetites at the other.

In spite of their professed aim at social amelioration and demand 
for social justice, the Fabians, and for that matter Shaw, differ-
ed from the Marxists. Marxist socialism claims to be not a senti-
ment of indignation at injustice, but a scientific demonstration 
that capitalism will give way to socialism. Fabianism begins and 
ends as an appeal — emotionally based — for social justice. 
Negatively stated, it is a protest against social inequality.

1. The letter dated June 30, 1904, Quoted in Archibald Henderson's 
George Bernard Shaw: Man of the century, P-xvii
The Fabianism that Shaw propounded in numerous tracts and in his bulky Intelligent women's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism scrapped Marxism of the class-war theory and expected a Socialism run by experts and effected by "inevitability of gradualness". What Sidney Webb (who coined the phrase) meant was simply that social and political change would have to come slowly because social and political institutions could not be radically changed before the people who lived by them were taught to desire a change. It was in this dilution of Marxism by the concept of change by gentle reform and government by the elite (as opposed to the rule of the Proletariat advocated by Marx) that the British habit of compromise caught up with Shaw. It was modified by his continuous insistence on equality of income:

What the achievement of socialism involves economically is the transfer of rent from the class which now appropriates it to the whole people. Rent being that part of produce which is individually unearned, that is the only equitable method of disposing it.(1)

The product of society as a whole are regarded as 'rent' of the 'man of property' who may be wasteful, inefficient and qualitatively bankrupt. No wonder, therefore, that Shaw agreed with Proudhon that 'property is theft' (2) and he was convinced that a system which encouraged practices so inimical to general welfare should be changed. Commonsense, to say nothing of a sense of justice cried out for more equitable system of distribution, and what the community produced should be distributed among the community. So in a manner which echoes Marx, Shaw appealed to the sense of injustice for the benefit of the under-privileged, to the sense of justice for the shaming of the privileged, to democratic sentiment and so he avowed that the cause of socialism was "not only unobjectionable, but sacredly imperative". (3)

Ibsen created as deep an influence on Shaw as Marx did. Janet Achurch's performance of A Doll's House on 7 June 1889, left so

1. Fabian Essays, 1889, P-179.
2. 'Maxims for Revolutionists' — Man and Superman.
3. 'The Transition to social Democracy' — Essays in Fabian Socialism P-40.
profound an impression on Shaw's mind that commenting on the far-reaching significance of Nora's daring he observed, "The slam of the door behind her is more momentous than the cannons of Waterloo or Sedan"; (1) but the novelty of the play "as a morally original study of a marriage did not stagger" him "as it staggered Europe" (2) and "shocked far beyond the bounds of middle class idealism" (4) by Karl Marx. He rejoiced in it and watched the ruin and havoc it made among the idols and temples of the idealists as "a young correspondent watches the bombardment of the unhealthy quarters of a city". (5) It should be noted here that Shaw wrote a prose sequel to A Doll's House under the caption Still after the Doll's House which appeared in the Time, February 1890. Shaw delivered an illuminating address before the Fabian Society on July 18, 1890. This was published in 1891 as The Quintessence of Ibsenism which formed in reality, a prelude to his own dramatic career, opening with the premiere of Widowers' House on 9 December, 1892 at the Royalty Theatre.

2. Prefaces, p. 689.
4. Ibid.
According to the original plan, *The Widowers’ Houses* was to be a work of collaboration between Shaw and William Archer who supplied the material. Archer meant it to be a well-made play then in vogue particularly in the manner of Augier’s *Ceinture d’or* (1) Shaw had used up Archer’s material by the end of the second Act and while so doing had grafted on to it the sociological themes which were in the forefront of his mind. As Shaw reported later, "Laying violent hands on his (Archer’s) thoroughly planned scheme for a sympathetically romantic well-made play of the Parisian type then in vogue, he had, "perversely distorted it into a grotesque realistic exposure of slum-landlordism, municipal jobbery and the pleasant people with independent incomes who imagine that such sordid matters do not touch their own lives". (2)

The action of the play moves round the marriage between the daughter of a slum-owner and an idealist young man who lives on an income from the same slum-land. During a tour up the Rhine Dr. Harry Trench and his companion Cokean accidentally meet at an hotel Sartorius and his daughter Blanche. Trench and Blanche pick up unconventional acquaintance and the girl leads the man on to propose marriage. The girl’s father approve of the marriage with a condition that Trench guarantees his aristocratic relatives will accept Blanche into the family. Back to London Sartorius sacks his rent-collector Lickcheese for an unauthorised expenditure on some repair works of the slum-houses owned by him. Trench who arrives with the required letters accidentally meets Lickcheese and learns that Sartorius’s wealth comes from the ownership of slums. Trench thereupon tells Blanche that he cannot take any of her father’s money; they will be poor, as his income is small. Neither the girl nor her father will agree to this and the engagement is broken off by the girl. Sartorius now reveals that a mortgage of £10,000 on the same slum property provides Trench’s own income. Trench feels helpless and is eager to make amends by renewing the

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1. Archer’s account of the same was published in the Independent Theatre Edition of *The Widowers’ Houses* in 1895.
2. Preface to *Plays Unpleasant*. 
proposal of marriage which is turned down with indignation by Blanche. A few months later Lickcheese, now a prosperous speculator in real property, calls upon Sartorius with a proposal to improve his slum so that he can get increased compensation when the land is required for public improvement scheme of which he has gained secret information. Trench is now called upon to give his consent to the scheme. Trench says he cannot afford to risk his income in the improvement. This is settled by his marrying Blanche.

The thesis of the play is founded on a patent Fabian economic theory, enunciated by Jevons and sponsored by Sidney Webb. Shaw had already touched upon the theory in his treatise "The Economic Basis of Socialism" in 1889. "Let us, in the manner of political Economics", he says "trace the effects of settling a country by private property with undisturbed law and order". (1) Shaw does this in the form of a parable. Mr. A. Seizes the best piece of land in a virgin region and makes £1,000 with its products. Mr. B, the next man to turn up, gets inferior land which yields say £500. Mr. A may now rent his land to Mr. B for £500; for the latter could not make a higher rate of profit any way. Mr. A can now retire and live as an idler on rent. So much for the parable; but it established three things — Ricardo's principle of economic rent, the county family and the opportunity for Shaw to give vent to moral indignation at the social injustice involved in it.

At the bottom of the economic ladder are the poor; propertyless, foodless, homeless as well unless one applied the term "home" to the tenement warrens for which they pay 'rent'. The rent collector is Lickcheese who twists, squeezes and bullies rent out of them in ways that are entirely compatible with legality and his understandable desire to keep himself and his family alive. The first landlord is Sartorius, who twists, squeezes and bullies

1. Essays in Fabian Socialism, P- 4.
Lickcheese in ways that are entirely compatible with legality and his middle-class affluence. Then comes Trench, who does no twisting, squeezing and bullying, but sits back in gentlemanly indolence and well-bred ignorance of the source of his independent income of seven hundred pounds a year. Sartorius tells him that it is he, Sartorius, who has to pay him the money — and with this the second landlord discovered, Richardo's theory of rent is neatly rounded off.

At the same time it is most effectively dramatized. The first Act that serves the purpose of exposition by introducing characters is full of action. The chance meeting between Trench and Blanche, their love at the first sight, the proposal of marriage and Sartorius's cunning approval of the same, — all these smoothly advance the action in the fashion of a well-made romantic comedy. The conflict takes shape in the second Act which is grimly logical, discovery following on discovery with the kind of effect only a natural flair for theatre and sense of dramatic timing can produce. The accidental meeting between Trench and Sartorius's just-dismissed rent-collector Lickcheese leads to a shocking discovery for Trench that the wealth and aristocracy of his would-be father-in-law thrive on slum-rent exacted in the most inhuman way from the poor. Quite naturally Trench makes the expected gesture of disdaining to accept the money. With this act, the Shavianising of Archer's play begins. The first inversion is that of the heroine's response. She does not undertake to give up all for love and marry her husband penniless. The conflict expands into complications when both father and daughter cancel the engagement.

The confrontations that issue from the situation are as vivid and intense as varied in nature. At the same time, it is a conflict not of action proper but of ideas. The conflict progresses through discussions. Shaw would have us "suspend our judgement" until there is "a little Quiet discussion" of the "sentimental
"Sit down and listen; and consider the matter calmly and judicially. Don't be headstrong."

Now follows a long discussion in which Trench and Sartorius are allowed to express their respective views in their own way. It is Sartorius who begins the discussion. Knowing that Trench is a conservative not opposed to true progress Sartorius says,

As to my business, it is simply to provide homes suited to the small means of very poor people, who require roofs to shelter them just like other people. Do you suppose I can keep up those roofs for nothing?

And Trench sharply retorts:

"Yes, that's all very fine, but the point is, what sort of homes do you give them for their money? People must live somewhere, or else go to jail. Advantage is taken of that to make them pay for houses that are not fit for dogs. Why don't you build proper dwellings and give fair value for the money you take?"

What Trench objects to is not rent itself but the rate of rent and the manner in which such rent is exacted. He voices his grievance against the injustice of the system of slum-landlordism — the unfair advantage taken of the helplessness of the poor, homeless destitutes.

Pitying the innocence of his adversary and defending his action Sartorius mentions the incorrigible habits of the poor:

My young friend: these poor people do not know how to live in proper dwellings: they would wreck them in a week. You doubt me, try it by yourself. You are welcome to replace all the missing banisters, handrails, cistern lids and dusthole tops at your own expense, and you will find them missing again in less than three days: Burnt sir, every stick of them. I do not blame the poor creatures; they need fires, and often have no other way of
getting them. But I really cannot spend pound after pound in repairs for them to pull down, when I can barely get them to pay me four and six pence a week for a room, which is the recognised fair London rent. No, gentlemen, when people are very poor, you cannot help them, no matter how much you may sympathise with them.

Theoriticians of socialism like Trench are in blissful ignorance of the real state of things. They want change and reform, they clamour for gratuitous millennium, but they do not care to think if that is practicable. Individual sufferings can be removed by small acts of charity, but a social order cannot be changed all on a sudden. The condition of the mass cannot be altered by simple good will and a few measures of reform.

Trench proudly declares that his income is derived from interest on mortage. Sartorius comes out with the most fatal blow. He reveals that Trench's income of seven hundred pounds a year is paid by him towards rent of the land originally belonging to Trench but used by him for slums. This disarms Trench and wrings from him the anguished murmur:

Well, people who live in glass houses have no right to throw stones. But on my honour, I never knew that my house was a "glass one until you pointed out. I beg your pardon".

But the confrontation between Trench and Blanche is not to be settled by this repentance and calm surrender of the disenchanted young man. Despite her father's insistence, Blanche does not revise her decision and the possibility of re-union seems remote. With this climax in action the second Act closes.

The Third Act is much inferior to the second Act. It was written hurriedly five or more years after the first and the second Acts had been completed. Shaw did it for Mr. Grein who searched for an unacted native dramatic masterpiece. Shaw here seems to look round in an uncertain way for something that will go one better than twice-paid rent, and settles on a piece of skulduggery
which, if it generally confirms the infernal nature of moneyed respectability, is too subtle in its details for the theatre. Out of last stirring of a sense of social justice, and much more out of offended pride at having been turned out of the house by Blanche, Trench refuses his consent as mortgagee to Lickcheese's scheme of improving the slums in order to obtain higher compensation when they are pulled down. But both the sense of social justice and the offended pride are utterly lost in the ravening delight of physical desire as soon as Lickcheese sends in Blanche to seduce him. ("you never ad such a managin man as me, Sartorius", Lickcheese says in an aside, as he prepares to leave the couple alone together). Blanche and Trench —

Stand face to face, quite close to one another, she provocative, taunting, half-defying, half inviting him to advance in a flush of undisguised animal excitement,

and Trench's eye "lights up as it suddenly flashes on him that all this ferocity is erotic". Lickcheese's stratagem has succeeded. In delight, Trench pays the required price to the pander for the flesh which has heated his desire; and the woman's father abets the transaction, selling his daughter's body for profit. They go into supper to celebrate, "Lickcheese jocosely taking Sartorius on one arm, and Trench on the other". The flies settle down again on the filth.

There is in the play an obsessing consciousness of the corruption of capitalist society. Marx's *Capital*, Shaw once wrote, appealed "to an unnamed, unrecognised passion of hatred in the more generous souls among the respectable and educated sections for the accursed middle class institutions that had starved, thwarted, misled and corrupted them from their cradles". That passion of hatred is so strong that Shaw does indeed seem to feel a relish in exposing the filth of capitalism.
That being his desire, the play shows in society nothing that is noble and creative. It is robbed of the power it would have had, if the hero, instead of being stupid and submissive, had been bold and intelligent, and had before him the choice, not of merely refusing or accepting Sartorius's money, but of accepting or fighting capitalism. As Shaw said in a letter to the *Star*, reprinted on the original edition of the play, he might have made Sartorius "a shareholder in a match factory where avoidable 'phospy jaw' is not avoided", and where the match girls strike (the famous strike took place in July, 1888) four years before the play was produced: the hero would then have known of forces within capitalist society that fight capitalism. But in the action of the play, Sartorius's only opponent is Lickcheese, the member of the exploited class who makes himself into an exploiter and who thus foreshadows Mrs. Warren and Andrew Undershaft. Sartorius's only consistent opponent is a clergyman who fights him on the vestry; but he is only talked about, and never materializes. Trench must accept capitalism, for there seems to be no way of fighting it; and thus the play is without conflict.

The view of society that the play unfolds is of a conspiracy between the aristocracy of 'birth' and the self-made middle class against the poorest section of the community. Such remains the alignment, more elaborately embellished, in Shaw's later play *Major Barbara*. Sartorius's wealth is extracted as rent from the labour of the class he thus contrives to keep poor and helpless. The wealth is shared with an idle upper class in return for the patents of respectability — admission to 'society' — that class is able to bestow. Cockane's insistence on 'tact' gravitates naturally towards the blackmail Lickcheese turns to; such parasites flourish where the appearance of virtue can lull moral consciences into apathy. The conventional docility of mankind readily acquiesces in the apophthegm: Whatever is generally accepted must be right. Revolution or even evolution, is prevented and the social
order kept static by inducing an easy determinism in the minds of idealists who consider themselves detached enough to want reform. Lickcheese and Harry, for all the difference of character and circumstances that divides them, are both brought to heel by the realisation that they are already part of the system and the fear that they cannot possibly survive outside it. The aim of the conspirators is to persuade all potential reformers of the inevitability of the prevailing system and the helplessness of individuals to change a condition of society that all right-minded men deplore. This is Sartorius's line with the initially rebellious Trench:

"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". (Act-II)

The same feeling is repeated in another statement:

".... your feelings do you credit: I assure you I feel exactly as you do, myself. Everyman who has a heart must wish that a better state of things was practicable. But unhappily it is not."

The abrogation of moral responsibility turns such sentiments into a luxurious self-indulgence which corrupts the mind that entertains it. The parody of romance which Shaw's play offers is a satirical attack on the tendency to such self-flattering sentiments on the part of his audience. Stung to a sufficient alertness, it is left to them to draw the responsible conclusion that the dramatist has refrained from drawing: that Sartorius's euphemistic dismissal of evil can and should be turned on its head — not 'just as bad ....... mean(s) ....... just as powerless ......... to alter the state of society', but 'just as powerless ...... mean(s) ....... just as bad". (Act-II, P-72.)

The play bears an analogy to Dicken's Little Dorrit, (1) though the treatment is different. The different impression made by the two daughters is what chiefly conceals the likeness between

1. Shaw's allusions to Little Dorrit are so frequent that the hypothesis of direct invitation may fairly be made. Dicken's hero Arthur Clennam and Harry Trench are both innocents who undergo enlightenment as to the nature of the society they live in. Unlike Arthur, Harry does not escape relatively uncorrupted.
Shaw's group of landlord, agent, landlord's daughter (and her young man) and Dickens's presentation of Casby, Panks and Flora. Like Casby, Shaw's Sartorius is a widower with an indulged daughter, his only child. The name Blanche signifies the innocence of ignorance which Dickens treats ironically in so many aspects of *Little Dorrit*. Sartorius is less cherubic than Casby, but equally respectable in the public eye and benevolent in his private aspect. Like Panks, Shaw's Lickcheese has to collect the slum-rents and fulfils the role of scapegoat whereby the public and official 'innocence' of the landlord is preserved. In naming Sartorius Shaw was certainly drawing on the Swift-Carlyle-tradition of metaphor which represents social institutions and manners as clothes that may be changed (1) and it is not unlikely that he remembered the incident of Pank's exposure of his master by literally stripping him of his disguise, the respectable hat and snowy locks. Both rent-collectors rebel against their cruel service and undergo a form of conversion. But whereas Pank becomes a good-hearted dupe of another kind, still enmeshed in the system, Lickcheese emerges as a personification of Henry George's view of the origin of capital — in the middleman who is neither owner of property nor labourer, but able to persuade the landowner in the value of his service.

*Widowers' Houses* evinces certain marks of immaturity characteristic of an early composition. It remains a very patchy affair, showing signs of having been composed in fragments that do not fit very well together or fall into any satisfactory dramatic rhythm. (2) A perfunctoriness of treatment is evident in the arbitrary, isolated character of certain passages that do not forward the action — notably the scene of Blanche with her maid. Shaw himself emphasized the excellence of his play as a work of art. To the critics he wrote:


2. Charles K. Shattuck in his comparison of the text published in 1895 with the revised version Shaw issued in 1898 amply demonstrates the marks of immaturity in Shaw's first play.
In fact the play is not a Fabian pamphlet or a Succession of social tirades and rhetorical speeches, uttered by mere abstractions attired in human clothing. On the contrary, it exhibits many of the qualities which go to the making of a dramatist of the first rank. Shaw creates sufficient interest in a story which primarily aims at setting forth the alleged iniquities of slum-landlords. He depicts character with a hand at once so subtle and so sure and brings out meanwhile, the satirical aspects of the relations with so light and easy a touch that hardly any contemporary play can compare with it. Notwithstanding the fervour of detestation with which he was filled in considering the misery of the slum-dwellers, Shaw is capable of the detachment essential to a playwright. Social reforms which appear to be simple justice and plain commonsense to some, are difficult to bring about for the reason that anti-reformers also have a point of view, which to them represents also justice and commonsense. The mutual understanding of opposing points of view is an invaluable solvent in controversy, and it is in the balanced presentation of the conflicting aspects of a problem that playwrights are superior to pamphleteers. The playwright's concern is human beings in all their contrariety; the pamphleteers with facts and cases, which however much we may deplore it, are of limited and temporary concern, where as men and women shown in action on the stage are universally and perennially interesting and entertaining. The scene in the drawing room of the mansion of Sartorius at Surbiton, in which this wealthy owner of unwholesome 'tenement houses' discusses with his predestined son-in-law Dr. Trench, and other friends, the very serious aspects of affairs created by the disclosure in evidence before

(1) Preface to *Widowers' Houses*, 1898.
the Parliamentary Committee on the subject of the dwellings of the poorer classes, is really comedy of a high order. Every person is here in his place as a factor in the scene: Mr. Sartorius who finds it is time to acknowledge that we live in a 'humanitarian age', Dr. Trench who has thought of renouncing the hand of Sartorius's ill-conditioned daughter, but who for certain cogent reasons, thinks better of it; Cockane, the latter's smugly moral friend, with his unerring sense of propriety; and lastly Lickcheese, the poor oppressed clerk, who after being ignominiously dismissed, has sprung into prosperity by trading in compensation. Each speaks according to his kind and the result is a scene as diverting as it is clever in its satirical vein.

William Archer thinks that the First Act is thoroughly dull and ineffectual portion of the play. But he says, "In the Second Act where Mr. Shaw gets upon his own ground of economic theory and fact, he at once becomes competent and entertaining". (1) Shaw displays an unmistakable faculty for making political economy dramatically effective. The real originality of the play lies in the dramatic tension it pursues -- between socialist logic and private emotion, while the firmness and clarity with which it diagnoses social ills are attributable to Shaw's self-education in Marxism, following his reading of Dickens and his discipleship of Henry George, its force is supplied by the passionate misogyny more overt in some of his early unpublished work, e.g. The Cassone or even in the drawing of Mary in his juvenile Passion Play. In dramatising the blue book Shaw is astonishingly successful.

Shaw's campaign against social injustice is distinctly resumed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the third of the Unpleasant Plays. It was composed in 1893 when Shaw, an ardent Fabian had been preaching the gospel of socialism through a series of tracts and speeches. With unflagging interest in "burning social questions" (1), the young dramatist, for his new play, had seized upon a subject which the Victorians referred to as "the great Social Evil". Public attention had already been drawn to the loathsome institution of prostitution by the publication of such verses as Tom Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs" (1846) and D.G. Rossetti's "Jenny", and such novels as Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1846). Dr. William Acton's factual account of London prostitution (2) and General William Booth's *In Darkest England and the way out* (1890) had prepared the way for Shaw's play. Shaw had worked out his ideas about the economic causes of prostitution and about society's collective guilt and responsibility in a variety of ways beginning with his publication of the *Quintessence of Ibsenism* and its section on the "Womanly woman" in 1891. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* he developed his thesis dramatically. Shaw professed his aim in the Preface to the play:

"*Mrs. Warren's Profession* was written in 1894 to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together.

The story is much the same as in *Widowers' Houses*. The starting point was a treatment by Maupassant of the theme of a girl finding out that her mother is a courtesan. (3) Shaw, however, rejects the ending of Maupassant's story with a surrender to the system. A young girl discovers that the wealth which has paid for her upbringing was earned by immoral means and dissociates herself

1. Preface to *Widowers' Houses*.
3. *Yvette*
entirely from any touch of "tainted money". Mrs. Warren is the prosperous head of a syndicate that organizes international brothels. She herself had taken to the prostitute's career because there was no other escape from a life of grinding poverty. She got financial support from George Crofts to operate the business on a large scale. She has brought up and educated her daughter Vivie, keeping her in the dark about her own profession. Before starting her professional career as an actuary in London Vivie is having a holiday at Surrey where she becomes friendly with Frank Gardner, son of the local rector. Mrs. Warren comes there with her aristocratic bully George Crofts. Here she recognizes the reverent Samuel Gardner, the father of Frank, as an old acquaintance who had written letters to her years ago. She warns both Frank and Crofts against entertaining any serious intentions regarding Vivie. Vivie, left alone with her mother, learns the secret of her life. The next morning Crofts proposes to marry Vivie who scornfully rejects it. Crofts takes revenge by disclosing that Vivie is sharing with him the profits of her mother's business and also that Samuel Gardner is her father. This is too much for Vivie who dissociates herself from Frank and her mother and goes off to London to live an independent life as an actuary clerk.

Though Mrs. Warren's Profession is not the levying of rack-rent, it thrusts home almost the same moral as Widowers' Houses. In both plays Shaw says that it is the system rather than the individual, which is responsible. This means, not that no one is guilty but that everyone is guilty. It is impossible for a man to escape responsibility with a disdainful gesture. Harry Trench's guilt is, if anything, greater than Sartorius's, because Sartorius has at least had to face the task of getting in the rents himself. Mrs. Warren's guilt is less than that of the Capitalist bully Sir George Crofts who reaps the benefits without doing the work. Mrs. Warren is the counterpart of Sartorius and she is drawn in more flattering colours. None could have more boldly affronted Victorian
values. Within the scheme of bourgeois morality and bourgeois fiction a prostitute must be either strong and villainous or weak and virtuous. Shaw's procuress is neither the one nor the other. Shaw neither attacks nor defends her. He does not take sides. He explained to his public that he was attacking them, not his characters. Society was guilty and socialism was the remedy. The play was a strong plea for social justice.

Shaw intended to achieve a transference of the horrors and shame conventionally associated with the sex-trade to its normally accepted and respected counterparts in the economic and social organisations of society. Our gradual enlightenment is enacted on the stage by Vivie Warren. Whether he did in fact succeed, or whether his puritanical attitude to sex interfered and confused the issues has been disputed by Eric Bentley. (1) The play needs to be carefully and thoroughly followed.

The basic conflict in the play is the mother-daughter conflict calculated to the two opposite views about the ideal way of life in the present set-up of society. The conflict starts with the scene which opens as a denunciation of Mrs. Warren by Vivie and works round by way of a taut fighting dialogue.

Mrs. Warren. (Piteously) Oh, my darling, how can you be so hard on me? Have I no rights over you as your mother?

Vivie. Are you my mother?

Mrs. Warren. (appalled) Am I your mother? Oh, Vivie!

Vivie. Then where are our relatives? my father? our family friends? You claim the rights of a mother: the right to call me fool and child, to speak to me as no woman in authority over me at college dare speak to me; to dictate my way of life, and to force on me the acquaintance of a brute whom anyone can see to be the most vicious sort of London man about town. Before I give myself the trouble to resist such claims, I may as well find out whether they have any real existence.

Mrs. Warren. (distracted, throwing herself on her knees)

Oh. no, no. Stop. Stop. I am your mother:
I swear it. Oh, you can't mean to turn on me — my own child!

Vivie.

Who was my

Mrs. Warren. You don't kn

Vivie. (determinedly) Oh, yes you can, if you like. I have a right to know; and you know very well that I have that right. You can refuse to tell me, if you please; but if you do, you will see the last of me tomorrow morning.

Mrs. Warren. Oh, it's too horrible to hear you talk like that. You would not — you could not — leave me.

Vivie. (Ruthlessly) Yes, without a moment's hesitation, if you trifle with me about this.

(Shivering with disgust) How can I feel sure that I may not have the contaminated blood of that brutal waster in my veins?

Mrs. Warren. No, no. On my oath it's not he, nor any of the rest that you have ever met. I'm certain of that at least.

This is a revelation quite shocking to Vivie. She has no more doubt about the way of her mother's life, the profession Mrs. Warren has chosen for herself.

Mrs. Warren's appeal to her daughter is rationally persuasive. "Shame on you for a bad daughter and a stuck up prude" is enough of a home thrust to ensure a hearing for her case:

Do you think I was brought up like you? able to pick and choose my own way of life? Do you think I did what I did because I liked it, or thought it right; or would not rather have gone to the college and been a lady if I'd had the chance?

To this the independent spirited daughter sharply retorts:

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cannot find them, make them.
It is by a flashback method on the stage that Shaw analyses how, in the present set up, it is very hard to lead an honest life. The jolly old woman almost bursts into tears when she plunges into a reminiscence of the unhappy days of her childhood — her short stay at the Church school, then her employment as a scullery-maid in a temperance restaurant and then as waitress at the Bar at Waterloo Station, where she worked fourteen hours a day for four shillings a week and board. The chance appearance of her elder sister Liz on a cold wretched night at the bar brought a new turn in her life. Her alluring call opened the eyes of her sister to the injustice of which she had been a victim so long. "What are you doing there, you little fool? Wearing out your health and your appearance for other people's profits". Kitty Warren preferred the life of vice in a real high-class at Brussels to a life of barmaid in which to become a worn out old drudge before forty.

Forced as a young woman to choose between penury and respectability on the one hand and money and vice on the other, Kitty Warren chooses money and vice. Orthodoxy would read her in this way, but Shaw's inversion table, working from the premise that penury is a vice and money a virtue rewords her career of prostitution as sensible and virtuous. Relatively virtuous, that is; for Shaw does not suggest that life as a prostitute would be preferable to life as a waitress if the waitress were paid as well as prostitutes. Prostitution is a filthy and damnable social system which drives women like Mrs. Warren to sell their bodies so that they may gain their lives. Mrs. Warren brusts out against this:

Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick! Liz and I had to work and save and calculate just like other people; elsewhere we should be as poor as any good-for-nothing drunken waster of a woman that thinks her luck will last for ever........ I despise such people: they've no character; and if there's a thing I hate in a woman it's want of character.
A woman of distinct character that she is, Mrs. Warren has every cause to rebuke the world for its hypocrisy — the Duke of Belgravia via the Arch-bishop of Casterbury, "all decent society" in fact, for pocketing its 22 percent on this questionable investment and that dubious undertaking while denouncing her profession. But woman of tireless energy that she also is, Mrs. Warren cannot give up her work; for as she eventually admits to Vivie, she likes making money; she likes her 40 percent on the 'hotels' she runs on the continent: she likes being a conventional capitalist. So Vivie who had found in her heart to forgive and love her mother, now decides to renounce her finally, because social determinism has been superseded by individual freedom of choice, which Mrs. Warren cheerfully abuses.

The mother-daughter conflict reaches its climax in the final scene where Vivie takes the momentous decision to live her life deprived of any gifts from the past. The scene is presented with a poignant irony only equalled in modern drama by certain scenes in Ibsen and Strindberg. (1) When Vivie declares "I don't want a mother; and I don't want a husband" Mrs. Warren turns upon her with a depth of passion such as had not been heard in British drama for two centuries.

Mrs. Warren. Oh, the injustice of it! the injustice, the injustice! I always wanted to be a good woman. I tried honest work; and I was slave-driven until I cursed the day I ever heard of honest work. I was a good mother, and because I made my daughter a good woman she turns me out as if I was a leper.

It is easy to conceive of this raging fury tearing to pieces the whole fabric of hypocrisy. In Mrs. Warren Shaw has created a living woman of the people who makes war in the only way she knows on the employers and clergymen. Though in fighting society she is corrupted by its filth, she remains a rebel to the end.

1. The scene of Nora's parting from her husband in A Doll's House and the scene where Axel leaves his wife Berta in Strindberg's Comrades may be mentioned here.
In *Widowers' Houses* the young man and the young woman both accept the situation and the ending is happy. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* it is the unhappy ending that Shaw travesties; the boy does not get the girl; mother and child part; yet Vivie is happy. She refuses to accept the situation — not out of an individualistic heroine's smug disdain, not out of socialist conviction, but out of spontaneous vital protest, out of the feeling of having her own life to live. The events and discoveries of the play are her education, for which her career at Newnham was not even a preparation, and for the first of many times in Shavian drama the core and culmination of the play is a personal crisis, a disillusionment, almost a conversion.

Vivie Warren is the first full-length portrait of an unwomanly woman. Beatrice Webb had suggested that Shaw should write a play with "a real, modern, unromantic, hard-working woman" in it. (1) In a stage direction Shaw describes Vivie as "an attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly educated, young middle-class English woman. Age 22. Prompt, strong, confident, self-possessed, plain business - like dress, but not dowdy". She has passed her examination at Cambridge and is ready for an independent life as a career woman. It is conceivable that Vivie should have appeared even more unwomanly and unattractive to contemporary critics and playgoers than to modern audiences; her attitude toward her mother, the procuress, is rebellious and contemptuous. Ervine found her "unpleasing" but "undoubtedly a sign and a portent to those who had discerning eyes in 1893". (2) In creating this stage character, Shaw with his usual foresight, anticipated the development of women into something quite different from the Victorian "Womanly woman" and in several of his plays insists that this development must be through education. As Louis Simon puts it "Several of Shaw's plays reveal that in many of his characterisations of women there lurks an implicit criticism of the kind of education they have been subjected to". (3)

2. Ervine, P- 256.
During the latter part of the nineteenth century industrialism had changed the social and economic conditions for poor women by engaging increasing numbers of them in factory and office-work. Women of the middle class however were prevented by class-distinctions from earning livelihood except as governesses, authors or artists. Being insufficiently educated or trained for professions, as there existed practically no such training for women, they were forced to lead lives of idleness until they found husbands who could offer economic security and social position. Clear sighted and intelligent men and women realised the necessity of achieving parliamentary franchise and of improving education for women. One of their spokesmen was Bernard Shaw. Shaw was pained to notice that admission to universities and degrees was not generally granted to women though London University opened its door to women as early as 1878 and was also first to appoint a woman to a chair in 1913. At the exclusively male Oxford and Cambridge Universities, colleges were opened for women students about 1880, but full membership or degrees were not granted until about the middle of the twentieth century and even later (1). Thus in Shaw's play, Vivie was permitted to pass the examination for the mathematical tripos, but as a female she did not have the right to a degree at Cambridge University. Shaw propagated for equality between men and women through Vivie Warren.

To some extent Vivie may have been modelled on Ibsen's Nora in A Doll's House who made a strong impression on Shaw, but Vivie is "strong" from the beginning. There are other differences too, since Shaw, no doubt unconsciously, used his sister Lucy for a model. (2) Her brusque treatment of her brother reminds us of Vivie's attitude toward her mother.

1. Full membership and the right to receive degrees were not conferred on women by Oxford until 1920 and by Cambridge until 1948. (Sources: Handbook to the University of Oxford, 1964. PP. 308-9; Commonwealth Universities Year Book, 1974. P- 301.

Mrs. Warren is described as "rather spoilt and domineering and decidedly vulgar". But Shaw stresses her vitality, thrift, energy and outspokenness. She has made her way from the slums and prostitution to wealth, independence and an exciting life as the manager of a chain of brothels; and even if it is dirty work, it is stimulating and gives her satisfaction. She is indeed a modern career woman, though her work is suspect. As Mrs. Warren confesses: "I must have work and excitement, or I shall go melancholy mad ....... The life suits me. I'm fit for it and not for anything else ....... I can't give it up - not for anybody." The playgoers may have found Mrs. Warren even more interesting than Vivie, the heroine of the play and that may be due partly to her background of the slums, partly to her emotionality, her hasty changes of temper, her whims and her sex-appeal. Assuredly there had never been such a personality as Mrs. Warren on the English Stage.

Sir George Crofts stands for the principle of idleness and waste and callousness which society not merely tolerates but rewards and the bullying attitude that feeds on the subjection of workers and is the antithesis of genuine authority. In him one finds the answers to the questions: What is horrible about the continuance of the business Mrs. Warren carries on? And what is horrible in the prevailing economic and social structure to which the business in fact conforms? In an article written in 1912 Shaw himself answered the question.

'The fundamental condition of the existence of this traffic is that society must be so organised that a large class of women are more highly paid and better treated as prostitute than they would be as respectable women and that people who organise the labour of Prostitutes make larger profits than those who organise the labour of respectable women. In other words, society must be like English Society at the present day, where the heroine of Tom Hood's Bridge of Sighs is much better off than the heroine of his Song of the Shirt, and as a matter of fact neither jumps off Waterloo Bridge nor has to work two hours to make 3½d. (1)

1. The Root of the White Slave Traffic published in The Awakener 1(1), 16 Nov. 1912
Shaw suggests the remedy:

There is one remedy, and one alone, for the white slave traffic. Make it possible, by the enactment of a Minimum Wage Law and by proper provision for the unemployed, for any woman to be forced to choose between prostitution and penury, and the white slaver will have no more power over the daughters of labourers, artisans, and clerks than he (or, under the New Act she) has over the wives of bishops. (1)

The traffic in girls was an urgent problem as late as 1910, as Kercherer-Knight states: "It has proved the great stumbling block to the free discussion of the abominable traffic in womanhood ... it has become impossible to ventilate the grievance through the medium of the press" (2) Shaw's criticism of prostitution had not been particularly effective.

In the short interval between Widowers' Houses and Mrs. Warren's Profession there is a remarkable advance in Shaw's quality as a playwright. His contribution to English Drama—

the discussion of the two colloquies between Mrs. Crofts's attempt to blackmail Vivie into marrying Mr. um; all three scenes have that high dramatic tension and unique verbal interest by which Shaw contrived to rivet the audience's attention in passages of conversation. Yet one might notice a theatrical lameness in the dialogue between mother and daughter in Act-IV. Shaw wanted this second encounter because the parting between mother and daughter was vital to his conception of the play; he was concerned with the tragic implications of such a parting — and the tragedy might be judged the mother's and the daughter's. But it is doubtful whether he had left himself enough material for a second debate between the two. Ibsen's dramatic re-examination of past incident and motive (as in Ghost and Rosmersholm) carry the analysis deeper and the social indictment further than the original exposition has done. This is hardly true of the second discussion here. The breaking of the family bond—

1. Ibid.
between Vivie and her mother properly peters out, it does not vio-

lently break, because so little was over there.

However, with Mrs. Warren's Profession Shaw ended his appren-
ticeship and the New Drama as well as the New woman was born. The New Drama must be so called, for it was a radical departure from the current mode, though its affinity with the work of Molière and other earlier playwrights becomes increasingly apparent as the to-

pical themes dwindle in importance and the fundamentals become clear.

- III -

Compared with the tension in the middle eighties and the early
nineties, the fighting in Trafalgar Square on Bloody Sunday, the Dockers' Strike in 1889 and that of the miners in 1893— the years when Shaw was writing the Pleasant Plays and the Plays for Puritans (1894-1899) seemed to promise more peaceful progress; and this re-

laxation of the tension can be felt in the plays.

Thus, in Arms and the Man, Shaw's purpose is to strip war and love of the glamour of romance with which they are invested. But the socialist Shaw peeps out now and then and we have casual references to the evils of society operating through some of its institutions. There are certain significant remarks made by the characters of the play, which do not appear to be irrelevant or superfluous. They are dexterously fitted into the situations in which they occur.

The rise and fall of classes, the see-saw of social movement which is the theme of Strindberg's Miss Julie, is reflected in the alliance of Louka and Sergius— a subtly different phenomenon from the union of Raina, the child of aristocracy with Bluntschli, the egalitarian democrat, representative of the classless society. Louka is a rebel against society that considers human beings only in terms of money and class position. She is Shaw's mouthpiece for
expressing his democratic ideas of the essential equality between one person and another.

As an upholder of social equality Shaw was opposed to any idea that the servants are an inferior class. He held that all necessary work, however menial, is valuable as a service to the community. Louka says to Sergius:

I have to get your room ready for you; to sweep and dust, to fetch and carry. How could that degrade me if it did not degrade you to have it done for you?

The point of Louka is that slavery degrades not only the slave, but also the master who employs the slave in his service. This is Socialist Louka's diatribe against the rich who are proud of slave-owning. She possesses "a soul above her station". Though fate placed her in the mean position of a servant, she retains her spirit and maintains a defiant attitude. Indeed, she is so defiant that her servility to Raina is almost insolent. When Nicola, her betrothed, chastises her for her forwardness which, he thinks, will spell her ruin, Louka tells him plainly "I do defy her. I'll defy her. What do I care for her?" She even once calls Raina by her name, and when Raina and Catherine are indignant, she asserts "I have right to call her Raina, she calls me Louka". A vivacious and artful coquette, Louka exercises her feminine charm on the disillusioned Sergius. It is a curious coincidence that at the time when the romantic lover feels it fatiguing to keep up any further a show of "higher love" and pines for a soft and warm touch, Louka falls in his way. It is no anti-climax if this spirited, beautiful, ambitious, intelligent and witty country-girl who was condemned by fate 'to sweep and dust, to fetch and carry' in the house of the Petkoffs, becomes instrument of the Life Force and grabs Sergius, who is far above her station, to fulfil Nature's purpose. In mental accomplishment she is no unworthy match for the aristocratic Sergius.
Prof. S.C. Sengupta objects to the central theme of the drama as being unreal. "In real life", he says, "Sergius's are much often-married to Raina's than to servant girls like Louka". (1) But in the changed social conscience of the Twentieth Century human relations are established not by considerations of wealth and social positions, but by the true democratic spirit which obliterates all barriers of classes and takes a more liberal view of man as man, irrespective of the class or community he or she belongs to.

An ardent believer in social equality, Shaw naturally hates snobbery or social conceit, i.e. an exaggerated respect for wealth or social position. He has severely attacked the snobbery of the man-servant Nicola and his masters, the Petkoffs. Nicola may be regarded as a typical snob because he believes that his employers are superior to him for their higher social rank. He regards his master and mistress with servility. The Petkoffs make themselves ridiculous by their vanity. Raina shows her ignorance and foolish vanity by boasting before the Swiss soldier that her house has a flight of stairs inside to get up and down by. Catherine is proud of the fact that she has set up an electric bell in the house. Both Raina and her father are proud of their library which is not much of a library. Shaw hits at their social snobbery through the mouth of Bluntschli:

"I have the rank of an officer and the standing of a gentleman; and I have three native languages. Show me any man in Bulgaria that can offer as much...... my rank is the highest known in Switzerland. I am a free citizen."

Indeed it is mean and foolish to act and speak as though the possession of wealth or any other material advantage is a sign of personal superiority.

_Candida_ follows _Arms and the Man_ as the second of the _Plays Pleasant_ volume. It is, according to Shaw, an uneven, over-rated

1. _The Art of Bernard Shaw._
play. The action here is centrally devoted to a love-triangle: a young intruder into a happy marriage presents his challenge and departs leaving husband and wife to take up their relationship in a new basis of understanding. Instead of playing up the titillating possibilities of the adultery motif, Shaw has chosen to develop the thesis character of the play in an analysis of the actual role of women in contemporary English Society. As he himself later pointed out, Candida presents a view antithetical to that of Ibsen's A Doll's House (2): instead of woman as the typical plaything of man, Shaw emphasizes her maternal aspect, her influence over men and their dependence on her strength.

In the Preface Shaw explains why he rejected the idea of presenting a straight conflict between Christian Socialism and Vulgar unsocialism: "In such cheap wares I do not deal", he protested. (3) Yet the character of Burgess, the petty Capitalist, is introduced in the play, unnecessary as he seems to the development of the action. At the opening of the play, we see Morell as a socialist. On his bookshelves are Progress and Poverty, Fabian Essays, A Dream of John Ball, Marx's Capital and half a dozen other literary landmarks in Socialism. Then we see him as a man who fought the Crofts Warren company. Candida's father, Burgess, is one of those who share indirectly in the profits of that company. He is a small clothing manufacturer. Three years before the action of the play opens he had put on a tender to the guardians of Morell's Parish for supplying clothing to the workhouse. It was, he boasts "in a paroxysm of public spirit", the lowest tender, for the wages he paid to his girls were so low that they were driven on to the street. Morell fought him, and the contract went elsewhere. Now Burgess comes to make up the quarrel.

1. In a letter to Ellen Terry of Dec. 25, 1896, he said of a proposed reading "Candida does not matter: I begin to think it an overrated play". (Letters ed. Laurence P-668)
2. Letter in the Evening Standard (30 Nov. 1944): the play is a counterblast to Ibsen's A Doll's House, showing that in the real typical doll's house it is the man who is the doll.
Morell gives his father-on-law a bit of his mind calling him the worst type of employer who paid worse than starvation wages to his workers.

You paid worse wages than any other employer—starvation wages—aye, worse than starvation wages—to the women who made the clothing. Your wages would have driven them to the streets to keep body and soul together.

The author of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* speaks out once again through Morell his socio-economic analysis of the causes that degrade women. They go to the street out of a state of helplessness in a society that cannot provide for them an honourable means of livelihood. The petty capitalist Burgess, like the rest of employers, trades with the hardest bargain. But Morell, the Christian Socialist Preacher is interested in enhancing the rate of wages of poor workers. Incidentally it may be noted that the Christian Socialists of the time organised themselves into the "Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations" and worked in the direction of improving the condition of workers (particularly the tailors) by conducting co-operative workhouses. Morell is apparently pleased with Burgess when he announces that he has raised the wages of his employees. "Not a man as less than six-pence a hour; and the skilled gits the Trade Union rate". The optimist clergyman, like the Christian Socialists of the school of Charles Kingsley, believes that a change of heart and mind would peacefully bring about an improvement in material conditions. He finds a good sign in the measures taken by his father-in-law and extends his warmest approval of it. But the next moment he learnt that Burgess did it out of a purely selfish motive to get his contracts accepted by the County Council which almost forced him to pay fair wages. The well-meaning Pastor is rudely shocked to discover that the tireless efforts of the Christian missionaries like him have utterly failed to achieve the desired end. Shaw, a socialist thinker was keenly aware of the hard actualities of present
society where majority people have little sense of social justice. Perhaps Shaw differed from Kingsley in this respect. Speaking to the Chartists, Kingsley wrote "I think you have fallen into..... the mistake of fancying that legislative reform is social reform; or that men's heart can be changed by Acts of Parliament". (1) Shaw, the devout Fabian, advocated the policy of Gradualness: the faith that the basis of society should be changed by Govt. Acts of Reform.

When Burgess has dropped his pretence of having turned Christian and has given "a good scoundrelly reason" as Morell calls it, for wishing to be friends ("you and your crew are getting influential"), Morell offers his hand "with thorough decision" and promises, in the event of his being made a bishop to introduce him to the biggest jobbers he can get to come to his dinner parties.

Burgess (who has risen with a sheepish grin and accepted the hand of friendship): You will have your joke, James. Our quarrel's made up now, ain it?

A woman's voice. Say yes, James.

So we first see Candida, the virgin mother, as she stands in the doorway and looks "with an amused maternal indulgence which is her characteristic expression" at those two quarrelsome children of hers, the Christian Socialist and the Capitalist. That look is the "woman's point of view", from which Shaw had shown the rebel Sergius in Arms and the Man. Her "Say yes, James", is the opening of her attack on the Socialist: he and the Capitalist must be friends. Then he proceeds to undermine his belief in his work. All his toiling for Socialism is a waste of time; nobody minds what he says, not even Morell himself. His congregation of women are in love with him, and he is "in love with Preaching". His sermons are "mere phrases you cheat yourself and others with everyday". Candida changes the socialist who has Karl Marx on his

and bookcase, who fought her father. Mrs. Warren's accomplice, who tirelessly makes propaganda for socialism among the working class as well as among the middle-class. Candida changes this fighter for Socialism into a fashionable preacher adored by wealthy women and carried away by his own empty rhetoric. As such, not as socialist, he makes his bid when he and the poet Marchbanks have asked Candida to choose between them:

Morell (with proud humility) I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty of purpose for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman.

That is the bourgeois conception of the relation between husband and wife. This annihilation of the Socialism in Morell by Candida is quite in keeping with Shaw's changing attitude.

- IV -

The last and best of the works in Plays Pleasant, You Never Can Tell was written between 1895 and 1897 when Shaw was theatre-critic for the Saturday Review. Unlike the six other preceding plays, it seemed to have a brighter prospect. Cyril Maude planned to put it on at the Haymarket Theatre and several leading American companies were interested in it. (1) This was because Shaw here made the gesture of throwing away principles and serious intentions of social or moral reform in order to reassure a possibly apprehensive audience.

The plot is one of the oldest known in the tradition of comedy: the chance encounter, mutual recognition and reunion of a long separated family. Shakespeare used versions of this plot,

1. Shaw himself contributed a chapter to Cyril Maude's The Haymarket Theatre. This chapter is reprinted in The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw.
which was also a favourite of ancient Greece. It occurs in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which bears a particular burlesque relation to the *Ion* of Euripides. Its familiarity and the traditional theatricality offered Shaw sufficient disguise for a more intimately autobiographical element and in some ways *You Never Can Tell* can be regarded as among the most personal plays he ever wrote. The five members of the family— Crampton, the long-deserted father, broken down by over-indulgence in alcohol; the independent woman who left him and brought up his children under the name of clandon; the beautiful and talented daughter Gloria; and the gay twins Philip and Dolly— show as a group and individually an insistent resemblance to the Shaw family; the father left in Dublin, when Mrs. Shaw departed to London in 1875, taking her younger daughter 'Yuppy' and soon to be joined by the other, Lucy, who became a singer and musical comedy actress, then by her son George Bernard Shaw, in 1876. After that date, twenty years before *You Never Can Tell* was written, none of them seems to have seen the father again. St. John Irvine points out that Mrs. Clandon was partly modelled on Shaw's mother (and in her role as public reformer and authoress, on his friend Annie Be- sant) and Gloria on his sister Lucy (1).

Shaw chose to write about his own family situation only as it could be translated into general terms and seen in an impersonal perspective. The issues involved are lightly identified with favourite 'advanced' themes of the period and tendencies at work in contemporary society: the late Victorian reaction against the family as a social institution; the Feminist Movement as a rejection of paternal dominance at the public level, the relations of the sexes as a Schopenhauerian power-struggle; and— less narrowly contemporary— the puritan tradition.

The general fabric of the play is too delicate— in a way too flimsy— to carry anything like a straight political or

sociological approach and this is, in itself, a likely reason for Shaw's later deprecation of it as a pot-boiler. Yet the play is worth-taking notice of in so far as it treats, though in a casual manner, the important problems of the age.

Shaw's criticism of the disintegrating family system in the late Victorian England finds its due reflection in the relation between Crampton and his family. The wife with the children live in separation from the husband and the relation between the pair is so strained that the children are left in the dark about their father. *Major Barbara* also gives a similar picture of a disintegrated family with the difference that the wife has not altogether broken with her husband. Lady Britomart lives with her two daughters and one son detached from their father who, unlike Crampton, provides a substantial allowance for the smooth running of the family. In view of our biographical knowledge of Shaw's mother-fixation and the lack of respect which seems to have been accorded to his father in the Dublin household it would be easy to trace the recurrence of the mother-dominated family group in his work. Mrs. Clandon attributes the cause of this separation to the tyranny of her husband. Glimpses of her unhappy married life can be had from what she says to her daughter Gloria about the father:

Mrs. Clandon. (with great force) Gloria: if I had ever struck you (Gloria recoils: Phil and Dolly are disagreeably shocked: all three stare at her, revolted, as she continues mercilessly)—struck you purposely, deliberately with the intention of hurting you, with a whip bought for the purpose! would you remember that, do you think? (Gloria utters an exclamation of indignant repulsion). That would have been your last recollection of your father, Gloria if I had not taken you away from him. I have kept him out of your life; keep out of mine by never mentioning him to me again.
Further accounts of ill-treatment might follow had it not been for the sudden appearance of Valentine. But the subject is resumed again by the children—this time the discussion takes an impersonal turn:

Gloria. Phil, can you believe such a horrible thing about our father? What mother said just now.

Philip. Oh, there are lots of people of that kind. Old Chamico used to thrash his wife and daughters with a cart whip.

Dolly. (contemptuously) Yes, a Portuguese!

Philip. When you come to men who are brutes, there is much in common between the Portuguese and the English Variety, Doll. Trust my knowledge of human nature.

The rudeness of her husband has possibly forced Mrs. Clandon to live in separation and ultimately turned her into a champion of the Feminist Movement of the time. Shaw describes her as "a Veteran of the Old Guard of the Women's Rights movement which had for its Bible John Stuart Mill's treatise on The Subjection of women. She belongs to the forefront of her own period (say 1860-80) and feels strongly about social questions and principles not about persons." As she testifies nobly to Valentine:

Let me tell you Mr. Valentine, that a life devoted to the cause of Humanity has enthusiasms and passions to offer which far transcend the selfish personal infatuation and sentimentalities of romance.

Shaw has revealed Mrs. Clandon's admirable altruism to its ground in personal deprivation:

My case is a very common one, Mr. Valentine. I married before I was old enough to know what I was doing. As you have seen for yourself, the result was a bitter disappointment for both my husband and myself. So you see, though I am a married woman, I have never been in love; I have never had a love affair; and to be quite frank with you, Mr. Valentine, what I have seen of the love affairs of other people has not led me to regret that deficiency in my experience.

Mrs. Clandon's present preoccupations are reiterated in her con-
conversation with her old friend M'comas whom she meets after a long time.

M'comas. And you are still ready to make speeches in public, inspite of your sex (Mrs. Clandon nods); to insist on a married woman's right to her own separate property (she nods again); to champion Darwin's view of the origin of Species and John Stuart Mill's Essay on Liberty (nod); to read Huxley, Tyndall and George Eliot (three nods); and to demand University Degrees, the opening of the professions, and the parliamentary franchise for women as well as men?

Mrs. Clandon. (resolutely) Yes: I have not gone back one inch; and I have educated Gloria to take up my work when I must leave it.

These ideas, 'advanced' as they were, were considered outdated in England at the time when the play was written because Socialism was the cry of the day. For all his radical ideas of liberty and the rights of the individual M'comas is indulged as an old fogey. The following conversation shows the rapidly spreading influence of Socialism:

M'comas. ..... I'm out of everything, because I have refused to bow the knee to Socialism.

Mrs. Clandon. (Shocked) Socialism!

M'comas. Yes, Socialism. That's what Miss Gloria will be upto her ears in before the end of the month if you let her loose here.

Mrs. Clandon. (Emphatically) But I can prove to her that Socialism is a fallacy.

M'comas. (touchingly) It is by proving that, Mrs. Clandon, that I have lost all my young disciples. Be careful what you do; let her go her own way. (with some bitterness) We're old fashioned; the world thinks it has left us behind, there is only one place in all England where your opinions would still pass as advanced.

Mrs. Clandon. (sconfully unconvinced) The Church, perhaps?

M'comas. No, the theatre.

Contrary to the wishes of her mother Gloria, with all her 'advanced' ideas, falls a victim to the convention of marriage so strongly denounced by her mother. Valentine contends that
"Twentieth Century Woman" can no more escape subjection to Man than the traditionally submissive woman, and Gloria is driven to confess the inescapable laws of her female nature:

I am one of those weak creatures born to be mastered by the first man whose eye is caught by them, and I must fulfil my destiny, I suppose.

Indeed the play seems curiously anti-feminist and conservative in its endorsement of the old order of relations between the sexes. Ostensibly it is a far remove from Ibsen in its attitude. Yet something like a reminiscence of Ibsen is embedded in the play and modifies its explicit statement. The holiday atmosphere of the sea-side town, Crampton's profession of Yacht-builder, and his navy blue coat like a pilot's coat, Gloria's sea-green silk blouse, not only point forward to the sea-symbolism of such later plays as Heartbreak House and The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, but direct attention to further resemblances between You Never Can Tell and Ibsen's Lady from the Sea: the estrangement (not long separation) between Dr. Wangel and his second wife is reflected in his habitual drinking; Dolly's adolescent insouciance faintly echoes the all-but inhuman mockery of the adolescent Hilda; and William the Waiter has a counterpart in the factotum, Ballested with his choric refrain on the theme of acclimatization. Such trifling similarities combine significantly in the light of the general theme of The Lady from the Sea: the balance of human freedom and responsibility, in specific relation to the freedom loving woman who learns to accept the bonds of responsibility.

You Never Can Tell essentially, makes a plea for sympathetic understanding as the better part of justice. At the centre, surrounded by the comedy chorus, stand Gloria and Crampton, united by their human vulnerability to emotion. Shaw touches only lightly on the potentially tragic passions involved, but makes their centrality with M'comas's formal speech in Crampton's
When a man makes an unsuitable marriage (nobody's fault, you know, but purely accidental incompatibility of tastes); when he is deprived by that misfortune of the domestic sympathy which, I take it, is what a man marries for; when in short, his wife is rather worse than no wife at all. (through no fault of her own, of course), is it to be wondered at if he makes matters worse at first by blaming her, and even, in his desperation, by occasionally drinking himself into a violent condition of seeking sympathy elsewhere?

His appeal therefore is:

Won't you make some allowance for his feelings? in common humanity.

The defence becomes more forceful when it is directed against all falsehood and pretentions sugarcoated and passed for love, affection etc.

Mrs. Clandon: believe me, there are men who have a good deal of feeling too, which they are not able to express. What you miss in Crampton is that mere Veneer of civilisation, the art of shewing worthless attentions and paying insincere compliments in a kindly charming way. If you lived in London, where the whole system is one of false good-fellowship, and you may know a man for twenty years without finding out that he hates you like poison, you would soon have your eyes opened. There we do unkind things in a kind way: we say bitter things in a sweet voice: we always give our friends chloroform when we tear them to pieces. But think of the other side of it! Think of the people who do kind things in an unkind way! people whose touch hurts, whose voices jar; whose tempers play them false, who wound and worry the people they love in the very act of trying to conciliate them, and who yet need affection as much as the rest of us. Crampton has an abominable temper, I admit. He has no manners, no tact, no grace. He'll never be able to gain anyone's affection unless they will take his desire for it on trust. Is he to have none? not even pity? from his own flesh and blood?

It is possible to believe that his children might maintain some friendly communication with Crampton, but Mrs. Clandon allows
him no more than a faltering moment of pity and the impersonal courtesy that social convention exacts. The husband and the wife remain apart in the play to its end as a permanent token of the fact that marriages can fail and fail tragically for both sexes; the marriage of Gloria and Valentine may not be like that, but the prospect has ceased to look idyllic when the final curtain falls. "You Never Can Tell": there is freedom in human life; but it would not be as precious as it is, if the odds against it, the odds against the future being happier and better than the past, were not so great.

The character of William the Waiter and his son Bohun give us a glimpse into another social aspect of the play e.g. the rise of the lower class people in social status. The success of the play in the theatre depends largely on the Waiter, a part which has attracted star actors from Cyril Madue to Sir Ralph Richardson. There is a good deal more to it than caricature: William's ambiguous social position, as the servant who simply does not choose to assert his equality with, or superiority over, his masters, is token of a latent power more considerable than any of the other characters can exert. (Barrie's Admirable Crichton and P.G. Wodehouse's paragon, Jeeves, are comparable types.) Although he may not seem to do anything very effective, in a sense the Waiter controls the play. His unassertive, undogmatic philosophy supplies the mood and tone within which the whole range of emotion, from unshadowed gaiety to disillusionment and despair, can be safely contained. William makes comic mistakes and trembles in the presence of his more obviously eminent son; but this behaviour is like a wilful disguise to his universal wisdom that gives the final answer to mere rational prudence, as he caps the summary,

It's unwise to be born, it's unwise to be married;
it's unwise to live; and it's wise to die.
with characteristic courtesy:

Then if I may respectfully put a word in, Sir, so much
the worse for wisdom!

And his final line does not so much close the play as throw it
open to the surprises, uncertainties and possibilities of life:

"You never can tell sir; you never can tell!"

The fact that Bohun is the son of William is a reminder that
by the end of the 19th Century the so-called lower class people
were gradually rising in their social rank or position. Like the
newly created middle class who flourished by developing trade and
industry, some people belonging to the lower-strata of society
had made themselves distinguished by education. The old order had
been changing yielding place to the new. Democracy had worked its
way in the national life of England and the diffusion of culture,
of 'sweetness and light' was almost complete. When William, the
Waiter, said that his son was at the Bar, the party at the hotel
misunderstood him and M'comas, himself a solicitor patronizingly
asked if he was a potman serving in a hotel. But William corrected
him by saying:

No, Sir: the other bar. Your profession, Sir. A. Q. C. Sir,
The attitude of William is that of a conservative father who does
not like his son's education and upbringing transcend the range
and means of a poor servant. Naturally, he wanted his son to become
a potman and be self-supporting at an early age, relieving his fa­
ther of the financial burden.

I have often wished he was a potman, Sir. would have been
off my hands ever so much sooner, Sir......Yes, Sir: had
to support him until he was thirtyseven, Sir. But doing
well now, Sir: very satisfactory indeed, Sir. Nothing less
than fifty guineas, Sir.

The company is somewhat overwhelmed by the eminence of the Waiter's
son and M'scomas attributes this to beneficial effects of democracy.

M'scomas. Democracy, Crampton! Modern democracy!

The change of attitude consequent upon the knowledge about respectable position of the Waiter's son is reflected in Valentine's question:

which of us dare give that man an order again?

The criticism of society that this play contains is conveyed indirectly during the course of the story instead of being hurled in truculent harangues across the foot-lights and in doing so Shaw fulfils the most important purpose of 'humanising the drama'.

In the Preface to *Plays Pleasant* he wrote:

Far from taking an unsympathetic view of the popular preference for fun, fashionable dresses; a little music and even an exhibition of eating and drinking by people with an expensive air, attended by an impossible-comic Waiter, I was more than willing to shew that the drama can humanize these things as easily as they, in the wrong hands, dehumanize the drama.

Humanizing the drama meant infusing into its conventions the truth of human experience. Shaw succeeds in conveying the 'truth of human experience' in *You Never Can Tell*.

- V -

If in the earlier plays the social criticism tended to be particularly directed at oppressive political system and romantic illusions and folly, in the *Three Plays for Puritans* it cuts a much wider path through the social world of the respectable middle classes. The emphasis has shifted from the crimes and follies of society to its moral, religions and judicial norms. *Captain Brassbound’s Convention*, one of the *Three Plays*, dramatises the idea of the futility of vengeance.
Shaw had hoped to interest Irving in this play, as well as Ellen Terry, who had already left their marks most distinctively in two famous roles of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: Shylock and Portia. Lady Cicely Wayneflete and Captain Brassbound, in relation to each other and the general dramatic context reflect those two Shakespearean characters and the play shares the theme of justice with *The Merchant*. Brassbound's wild justice of revenge like Shylock's opposes to the official law a caricature of itself. Though the American Kearney, the most dull figure in the play holds the seat of the judge, the verdict is determined by Lady Cicely as it is done by Portia and the plea in both cases is the same: for mercy tempering justice. It is the plea of New Testament Christianity exposing in each case the fraud of an officially Christian society.

The opening of the play with its presentation of Rankin, the Scots missionary, confronted by his sham convert, Drinkwater, the pirate, anticipates the main exposure the play moves towards. In place of Shakespeare's Jews, the counter religion and civilisation here is that of the Moors, among whom Rankin has not been able to make a single convert, though he has come to be known among them for his virtue as "the Christian who is not a thief". Like Rankin whose conversion of Savages to Christianity is the conversion of Christianity to savagery. Hallam represents the fraud of civilization, the justice dispensed by him being the other name of injustice. Like the slum-boy Drinkwater whose imagination is fed by pulp fiction, Brassbound whose imagination feeds on photographs and reports of his unhappy mother, represents the fraud of the primitive and the romantic, of the non-civilised. But Brassbound is not irreclaimable. His soul has not yet been strangled by the artificial system of morality.

Shaw's intentions in this play are made clearer if we see it in relation to the first two plays in the group. On the surface, the saturnine, rebellious Captain Brassbound is deceptively
akin to Richard Dudgeon. Like Dudgeon he is a dark, brooding
Byron figure, also the child, as we learn in the course of the
play, of a harsh, un-loving mother. To a certain extent too, Shaw
employs Brassbound in the same role of out-side critic. It is he
who makes most articulate the criticism of criminal punishment as
"the vengeance of society, disguised as justice by its passions" and Lady Cicely describes him as "one of the Idea-
lists-the Impossibilists". But the great advance in penetration
that this play achieves over The Devil's Disciple is that Shaw now
gets behind the posture of revolt itself and attacks its motives,
reveals it as, in this case, a pose. The critic-hero is himself
criticised as the Caesar-like instrument of this criticism, the
realist who penetrates the illusions and prejudices of the idea-
list, is here a woman, Lady Cicely, a character reminiscent both
of Voltaire's Candide and Shaw's own Candida. She is a much more
successful creation than Candida, however, in that we are shown
more convincing sources of power, in her astuteness, humour and
courage. (1)

The conversion of Captain Brassbound is a delicate process
occupying the whole length of the play. The brigand is made to turn
over a new leaf with his "manly power restored and righted". Lady
Cicely becomes the good mother through whom Brassbound is reborn.
Her character in the play reaffirms the truth of the saying "Love
conquers where force fails". From the very beginning she shows an
indulgent attitude to the brigands whom Sir Howard describes as
habitual thieves and murderers. She believes in the essential good-
ness of man. Like a true Christian she goes to find out the meaning
of creation: "If these people were not there for some good purpose,
they would not have been made". The artificial system of morality

1. Support is given to the suggestion that Lady Cicely's trustingly
benevolent character owes something to Candida by the fact that
Shaw mentions Voltaire in the opening stage direction of the
play. Candida's name was borrowed from an Italian Lady, Candida
Bartolucci, not as one might suppose, from Voltaire's hero.
(See letters ed. Laurence, P. 329-30).
dries up the foundation of tenderness in man and turns him into a savage. Her analysis of the causes of barbarism and brutality is significant.

Why do people get killed by savages? Because instead of being polite to them and saying Howdyedo? like me, people aim pistols at them. I've been among savages—cannibals and all sorts. Everybody said they'd kill me. But when I met them, I said Howdyedo? and they were quite nice. The Kings always wanted to marry me.

Love, sympathy and fellow-feeling are apt to win over the hearts of savages and turn them into almost servile obedience while the display of hatred or malice makes them rude and revengeful.

A reasonable consideration for the feelings and interests of others is the foundation of social conduct. Peace and order of society depends on how well men are drilled in the principle of give and take. A little act of kindness, a few kind words cost a man nothing. But they have a bracing effect on the minds of men like that of the mountain air on a sick body. They bespeak love and sympathy. The snobbery of the so-called rich and aristocratic people only offends and creates class-distinctions. However much nations of the world might feel proud of their culture and civilisation they are not free from the prejudice of wealth and aristocracy. The British judge, Sir Howard Hallam has nothing but disdain for the brigands, a few of whom had been formerly tried by him. And while passing judgements on them he never cared to consider that those men, favourably circumstanced, might not have committed ruffianism. In fact, he identifies Drinkwater as one tried before him on a charge of street ruffianism. But lady Cicely, the delegate of the dramatist speaks very kindly about the man and the bitterest banter on the administration of law comes out from her mouth;

You know, really Howard, all those poor people whom you try are more sinned against than sinning. If you would only talk to them in a friendly way, instead of passing
cruel sentences on them, you would find them quite nice to you. (Indignantly) I won't have this poor man trampled on merely because his mother brought him up as a Hooligan. I am sure nobody could be nicer than he was when he spoke to me.

The point Lady Cicely advocates is one of sympathy for the poor and down-trodden. It is a question of justice. She does not like to indulge in the folly of treating men with neglect and scorn simply because they happen to be poor or because once they committed a crime. Her creator Shaw did not approve of the age old snobbery of the higher class people. Nor could he lend passive support to the conventional mode of treating the criminals. With the zeal of a socialist reformer Shaw wanted to see the old barrier between classes abolished and administration of justice tempered with mercy. Standing on the sea-shore Shaw would like to throw a life-belt for a shipwrecked brother instead of simply enjoying 'Lucretian pleasure' to see him struggle in the sea. The world would be a far better and happier place to live in, if men could practise the basic principles of Christianity e.g. love and universal brotherhood.

At the end of the play Captain Brassbound is thoroughly changed. The realisation dawns upon him that he had taken life the wrong way, was led astray by vain and fond notions of vengeance. The right way of living a peaceful life is the way practised by Lady Cicely—the way that makes all difficulties easy for one.

You have taken the old meaning out of my life; but you have put no new meaning into it. I can see that you have some clue to the world that makes all its difficulties easy for you; but I'm not clever enough to seize it. You've lamed me by showing me that I take life the wrong way when I'm left to myself.

Captain Brassbound has ample opportunities to learn how Lady Cicely has been unbelievably calm, cheerful and elegant even in the face of his most harsh words and rude behaviour. Shaw has handled
such scenes with superb skill of a comic writer. The scene in which Lady Cicely imperturbably mends the torn jacket of the angry and revengeful Captain Brassbound and soothes him into a more rational state by a combination of stitchery and common sense, is as delightful as anything to be found in Shaw's plays and is undoubtedly a projection of that warm affection for Ellen Terry which is expressed in his letters to her.

Captain Brassbound's Conversion shows two distinct features in the Shawian Canon. No other play of Shaw leans so heavily upon a single character as this play does upon Lady Cicely. In spite of the attraction of the exotic setting in Morocco, inspite of the capture of the party by bandits and the revenge motive of Brassbound against Lady Cicely's brother, the judge who had dispossessed Brassbound's mother and is by the son held responsible for her death, the play flags when Lady Cicely is not dominating the stage. Secondly, Shaw's life-long interest in the London Cockney dialect, first shown in the attempt in Candida to render Burgess's speech phonetically and culminating in Pygmalion, appears also in Captain Brassbound's Conversion in the phonetic notation of Drinkwater's speeches and in the supplementary note on "English and American Dialects". As to Rankin, "I have made only the most perfunctory attempt to represent the dialect of the missionary", wrote Shaw at the end of the note. 'There is no literary notation for the grave music of good Scotch'.

In this Chapter I have discussed some plays of George Bernard Shaw only. A few other dramatists—chief of them A.W. Pinero and H.A. Jones—had been writing plays even before Shaw appeared on the scene. But as I have said in the Introduction, while dealing with big social and moral issues, their plays seldom rose above the level of well-made topical melodrama. It was Bernard Shaw who, for the first time, made his audience think in order "to bring them to a conviction of Sin" by handling real problems of life namely robbery, starvation, disease, crime, drink, marriage, politics etc.—the various systems and institutions through which society can enforce injustice on its ill-fated members.