

similarly attempt to indulge the illusion of unbroken innocence. He who refused to put a mark of interrogation after 'What is God,' in defiance of his mother, because he knew, now has to restrain himself from putting one after everything he writes or thinks. 'Ma pauvre mère, si elle vivait, me dirait peut-être que maintenant j'en mets trop.' Yes, Anatole France is wise, and far removed from childish follies. And, perhaps, it is precisely because of his wisdom that he can so exactly discern the enchantment of his childhood. So few men grow up. The majority remain hobbledehoyes throughout life; all the disabilities and none of the unique capacities of childhood remain. There are a few who, in spite of all experience, retain both; they are the poets and the *grands esprits*. There are fewer still who learn utterly to renounce childish things; and they are the wise men.

I am quite another person from the child of whom I speak. We have no longer neither an atom of substance nor thought in common. Now that he has become a stranger to me, I can amuse myself in his company. I love him, I who neither love myself nor hate myself. It is sweet to live in thought the days which he lived and it is painful to me to breathe the air of to-day.

Not otherwise is it with us and Anatole France. We may have little in common with his thought — the community we often imagine comes of self-deception — but it is sweet for us to inhabit his mind for a while. His touch is potent to soothe our fitful fevers.

The Athenaeum

MR. SHAW AND THE PEACE*

THIS time last year many of us hardly dared to look at the morning paper, fearing to see a *communiqué* worse than that of the day before.

*Peace Conference Hints. By Bernard Shaw. Constable. 1s. 6d. net.

Usually it was worse. After the enemy had actually captured Bailleul, a gloomy group met in Fleet Street by chance, and considered the worst. We asked one who had not spoken what he thought. 'I think the enemy has got his head in the noose at last,' he said. It was not a good joke. We laughed bitterly. After the others had gone, this reviewer, knowing that the daring prophet had not spoken without some reason, demanded his evidence. He had seen much of the war, was a careful student of clues, and had shown he could be so far ahead of general emotions that his writings were quite unacceptable to newspapers whose readers, according to the best editorial opinion, were supposed to do well on plenty of plain, wash nicely sweetened.

He proved to be right again; in time. Though, without doubt, as he is one of those unfortunates classed as intellectual by those shrewd ones whose practical business acumen makes them victims of every charlatan and the sport of unexpected happenings, the others have forgotten how far wrong they were then, and have still no idea how far wrong they may be again, in matters where a little less emotion, and a little more steady thought in forgetfulness of the gallery, might easily put them almost right. Yet these are now the very critics, whose grave and passionate utterances on the war were the jests of the soldiers, whose present discussion of the peace is the most that the public, heaven help it, will ever hear about it, who, now they have this survey by Shaw of the world situation and its possibilities, will pretend they cannot see it is the best bit of wit and wisdom on the problem yet published.

There is a reason for that. The public, which can always be trusted to give a decent verdict in a good spirit on

matters that have not been tampered with, or which it is useless for the press to attempt tampering with, crowds any theatre that presents Shaw; and that public has even an inkling of the fact that peoples of other countries will listen with close attention to England speaking through Shaw, when they would not know the names of the majority of the men who are accepted by us as our spokesmen. Our public, then, is unaware there is a shyness concerning Shaw, shown by the London press to his character as a publicist, which in Ireland is called a boycott. It is usual for a London news-editor to regard a speech by Shaw as 'something the public does not want'; though American magazines will compete to secure that very speech verbatim, and sell out an English edition on the strength of it. In the same way, when, as the reviewer can testify, the visit of Shaw to the front caused more interest among young officers, and competition for his entertainment, than that of any other distinguished civilian who was invited out, there were London periodicals, as usual, composing elaborate jokes for the people at home about the soldiers' contempt for Shaw and his fear of shells.

Why is it? It is hard to say. But this may be guessed; it is certainly humiliating for men who are not always so confident as they seem, to be aware of the existence of a critic who knows their minds and his own so well that whenever he confronts them it affords free entertainment and enlightenment to onlookers; onlookers who, of course, are quite impartial, and do not care the beard of an onion for the holiness of political traditions and reputations, for that exemption from moral law known by patriots, diplomatists, and empire-mongers to

be divine, if not publicly acknowledged and for the dignity of the press. As an illustration: How far were readers of the Liberal press permitted to learn of the results of that loan to the Imperial Russian Government to secure against revolution a throne which even then was on three legs? Or that we lent the money under persuasion from the French chauvinists? What we chiefly know about it is that the Tsar was so favored here that when he honored us with a visit at the time, he preferred, probably under proper advice, not to land from his yacht in the Solent. But the Russian Imperialists, having thus embarrassed our Liberal Imperialists with a secret understanding, while at the same time taking care of our money, saw this deal also closed our official mouths if they should choose to do as they pleased in Persia; and they did as they pleased. The evidence of what pleased them in Persia was in the possession of every Liberal editor, as authentic as most Balkan atrocities by the Turks. Did they publish it? Did Sir Edward Grey protest? Will any Liberal, reviewing this book by Shaw, refer to that old black iniquity and political blunder, which is at the beginning of a chain of ruinous events that ended in a miscalculation of Russia as a factor in the war which bordered on the disastrous?

No apologist in this country has yet made a better case for our intervention in the war — a case that a reasonable foreigner would understand and approve — than Shaw. For home consumption, however, it is, unfortunately, free from cant. It is not gilded, but has the flavor of a plain dose administered without a mother's tender care. He shows that, for our part, the war was certainly inevitable, for the simple reason that the European situation, of which it was a logical consequence, had

developed because we, like the people on the Continent, and with them, had been content to leave the direction of our affairs, till too late, with men whose mind and character were what, measured by the standard of commercialism, would be excellent. And as you sow you must reap. The wages of sin is death. Certainly it did not need the virtuous indignation of British profitmongers and political tricksters to make manifest the immorality of Germany's case. She formed a plan of conquest, not in a hole-and-corner way, as in Africa, but, on the wholesale, educated her youth, organized her life and industry, and armed and trained her people, so that she could do to her great neighboring nations exactly what any sweating employer may do legally anywhere to those fellow countrymen of his who are unable to protect themselves. As generous men who were not Germans saw at once and instinctively, this was carrying free competition, the survival of the fittest, the devil take the hindmost, and the rest of it (sanctioned by science and the Church) much too far. The evil was recognized at last for just what it was. No doubt about it this time. They rose against it. That is why simple men, still acting instinctively, by native morality, are standing by President Wilson, determined there shall be no treachery to those graves in France which constantly admonish us in private. 'When war broke out,' says Shaw:

England was, up to the limit of her engagements, by far the best prepared of all the belligerents. Her programme was carried out with plenty to spare, and without a hitch. The navy was invincible. The military expedition, in greater numbers and in a shorter time than had been promised, was sent across the sea without the loss of a single man. After discounting all blunders and all reverses, and admitting that our engagements, and, consequently,

our preparation, fell far short of our real commitments and responsibilities, we can still claim that Germany was not only hopelessly blockaded, but outwitted, out-prepared, out-generaled, out-fought, out-gassed, out-tanked, out-raided, out-bombed, and, finally, brought to her knees at England's feet more abjectly than Philip, or Louis, or Napoleon, or any of the old rivals of the British lion. It has been an amazing and magnificent achievement, of which the English themselves will not become conscious until some eloquent historian, a century hence, tells them what to think about it.

Because of the usual shyness of a sensitive man concerning his God, fearing to be called self-righteous, in this book of Shaw's the hurried reader will fail to find any definite confession of faith. What does Shaw believe in himself? he will ask; failing to see that such prompt and unerring demolition of popular idols in the very presence of the priests is not the work of caprice, which never has the interest nor the courage to attack fundamental things; that it can be only the iconoclasm of one who has been energized past fear of consequences by the kind of light which occasionally startles a man with a revelation of the extremity of the peril of himself and his heedless fellows. Nobody who reads much could fail to see that the English of this book, as in that of *Gulliver's Travels* or in Bunyan, is the kind of rare and dynamic language, as straight as a ray of light, such as we get once or twice in a few centuries as the result of passionate morality that happens to be gifted with the complete control of full expression. The spectacle of the world as it is, which has stunned the minds of most, and left even intelligent men with nothing but a grim and cynical smile for the help of their fellows, seems but to have alarmed Shaw into a livelier sense of the essential things which ought to be done at once to save mankind, and into a more

plangent expression of them. Only a congregation of cheerful fools, smiling into the doom they fail to see but is obviously there, would treat this book but as another engaging display by our most gifted controversialist, 'who does not mean to be taken seriously.' Certainly, if we accept it as that, then the consequences will deal with us seriously enough, and the Winston Churchills, the Curzons, the Pichons, the Orlandos, the Lodges, and the rest, will work on in certain confidence that they can provide us with greater cemeteries than those we have just filled.

He has no doubt about 'the freedom of the seas' and the British Fleet. He is not like the sentimental Liberals who shut their eyes to the roseate cast of Mercator's projection of the world, and murmur, 'But the British Fleet has always been a guaranty of peace.' The Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, and the German sailors, have in turn learned how true this is, as they survey the peaceful waters which now submerge their ships and sea power. And it is not likely that the Americans, though our cousins, with those repeated lessons before them, are going to accept the assurances of British Nonconformists about our eighteen-inch guns and thirty knots being merely a dramatic background for the setting of the beautiful song, 'Hands Across the Sea.' The American Steel Trust and their shipyards will prefer to have 'a bit on both ways,' to use the genuine phraseology of the market-place, down to which this problem will go for settlement. 'Yet from the moment the U.S.A. lay down the first keel with that end in view the main business of every Secretary of State for War in England must be to do unto that fleet as England has already done to Germany's, unless the old order on

which M. Clemenceau pins his faith be superseded by a new one, as Mr. Wilson demands.'

'This abominable vision makes some arrangement imperative, league or no league.' The author, clearing himself of every trace of sentiment and illusion that he can lay hands on, and overcoming the usually over-mastering impulse to sing either songs to British victory, or hymns before an international Dove which is now merely in an egg not even laid yet, gives practical hints to the peace delegates and their onlookers, and points to the consequences of disregarding them. Events in Europe within even the past few days — there is Hungary, for example — ought to make it clear enough to the most hardened club-man in Pall Mall that unless he changes his accustomed seat it is likely that the attendants will have to waste time digging him out of the ruins. But for the general public, with this war no sooner over than the important men who took care to keep out of it are now busily preparing for the next, here is a problem as urgent as that of a spreading plague. 'The use of high explosives, poison gas, aircraft, and guns ranging up to seventy miles has made the possibilities of destruction and death so appalling, that the necessary precautions against them, even if effective, make life as intolerable for the civil population whom the armies formerly protected as for the soldiers themselves; indeed, more so; for the soldier has nothing to do but to deal and dodge death, while the civilians have to support the soldiers, support themselves, and take care of the children into the bargain under this terrible fire.' To say nothing of the certainty that the munition factories for the next war will be the chemical and bacteriological laboratories.

The Nation

GETTING OUT

'If you belong to any of the following classes,' said the Demobilization advertisement, 'do nothing.' So Lieut. William Smith did nothing.

After doing nothing for some weeks he met a friend who said, 'Hallo, are n't you out yet?'

'Not yet,' said William, looking at his spurs.

'Well, you ought to *do* something.'

So Lieut. William Smith decided to do something. He was a pivotal-man and a slip-man and a one-man-business and a twenty-eight-days-in-hospital man and a W.O. letter ZXY/999 man. Accordingly, he wrote to the War Office and told them so.

It was, of course, a little confusing for the authorities. Just as they began to see their way to getting him out as a pivotal man, somebody would decide that it was quicker to demobilize him as a one-man-business; and when this was nearly done, then somebody else would point out that it was really much neater to reinstate him as a slip-man. Whereupon a sub-section, just getting to work at W.O. letter ZXY/999, would beg to be allowed a little practice on William while he was still available, to the great disgust of the medical authorities, who had been hoping to study the symptoms of self-demobilization in Lieutenant Smith as evidenced after twenty-eight days in hospital.

Naturally, then, when another friend met William a month later and said, 'Hallo, are n't you out yet?' William could only look at his spurs again and say, 'Not yet.'

'Better go to the War Office and have a talk with somebody,' said his friend. 'Much the quickest.'

So William went to the War Office. First he had a talk with a policeman, and then he had a talk with a porter,

and then he had a talk with an attendant, and then he had a talk with a messenger girl, and so, finally, he came to the end of a long queue of officers who were waiting to have a talk with *somebody*.

'Not so many here to-day as yesterday,' said a friendly Captain in the Suffolks who was next to him.

'Oh!' said William. 'And we've got an army on the Rhine, too,' he murmured to himself, realizing for the first time the extent of England's effort.

At the end of an hour he calculated that he was within two or three hundred of the door. He had only lately come out of hospital and was beginning to feel rather weak.

'I shall have to give it up,' he said.

The Captain tried to encourage him with tales of gallantry. There was a Lieutenant in the Manchesters who had worked his way up on three occasions to within fifty of the door, at which point he had collapsed each time from exhaustion; whereupon two kindly policemen had carried him to the end of the queue again for air. He was still sticking to it.

'I suppose there's no chance of being carried to the *front* of the queue?' said William hopefully.

'No,' said the Captain firmly; 'we should see to that.'

'Then I shall have to go,' said William. 'See you to-morrow.' And as he left his place the queue behind him surged forward an inch and took new courage.

A week later William suddenly remembered Jones. Jones had been in the War Office a long time. It was said of him that you could take him to any room in the building and he could find his way out into Whitehall in less than twenty minutes. But then he was no mere 'temporary civil servant.' He had been the author of that famous