

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and
Pollinger Limited. Copyright © Evensford Productions Limited, 1934.

Barnabas, from whom she has run away, proceeds to discourse at loose and at large about the cosmos.

The argumentative inconsequence and verbal dexterity with which Immenso supports the eternal verities, God, the peasant, and the Church, and re-establishes the fundamental moralities, marriage, the hearth and the home, I had always regarded as strictly inimitable until Shaw succeeded in making them ridiculous with a parody which is also a perfect imitation. The married enjoy "not a changeable address, but one hearthstone rooted in the solid earth of the motherland as a rock of ages; one certainty among all the uncertainties; one star among all the planets and meteors; one unshakable and unchangeable thing that is and was and ever shall be. You must have a root; and this matter of the root is also the root of the matter."

FRANKLYN: "Marriage is not one of the certainties. . . . Everything passes away; everything gets broken; we get tired of everything. Including marriages."

IMMENSO: "No. Nothing can pass unless it passes something. A bus passes Piccadilly Circus, but Piccadilly Circus remains."

Is not that the perfectly authentic note? And when Conrad Barnabas breaks out in exasperation at Immenso with, "It's a pathological case. There is a disease called echolalia. It sets stupid people gabbling rhymes: that is, words that echo each other. Immenso, here, being a clever chap, gabbles ideas that echo. He's by way of being a pundit, and is really only a punster." one is tempted to ask, Is not that the perfectly authentic criticism? The whole of this discarded Conversation is delicious. Here, in fact, is Shaw apparently consigning to the waste-paper basket a trifle which in point of vivacity, alertness, exuberance of ideas, wittiness of dialogue and sheer entertainment value puts most of his successors completely in the shade.

For the rest, the chief interest of the present volume consists in the opportunities it gives for detecting the embryos of ideas which were later to blossom into the full-blown Shavian philosophy.

The process of "debunking" is well under way from the start. In 1888, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Shaw is "debunking" the joys of the countryside. In "Cannon Fodder," written for the *Clarion* in 1902, he is already "debunking" the glamour of the Army. He is watching a British regiment on its way to South Africa—"they impress me unspeakably; for I have never seen a whole regiment of men intensely unhappy. They do not speak; they do not move." Later in a railway carriage the soldiers get drunk, bawl songs out of tune, make obscene jokes. . . . One of them—he must have been very drunk—actually puts his arms round Shaw's neck. Why? "(1) He wants to forget about his wife, from whom he has parted at Waterloo Station, without a notion of how she is going to live until his return (should he ever return); and (2) he wants to prevent himself from crying."

"The Emperor and the Little Girl," written for a Belgian war charity in 1916, which "debunks" Emperors, is a masterpiece. In "Don Giovanni Explains" (1887), Shaw is engaged in "debunking" the gospel of "the good time." As Don Juan descants on the boredom of seduction, the disillusion of debauchery and the joys of high thinking, we seem to be back in hell listening to the Don Juan of twenty years later lecturing Anna, the Devil and the Statue. "A Dressing Room Secret," which originally appeared in the programme for the first performance of *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, one of the liveliest pieces in the book, "debunks" Shakespearean idolatry by making Shakespeare confess through the mouth of his talking bust that he has failed to give Iago any character at all; that he has outraged his and everybody else's knowledge of human nature by allowing Desdemona, who should have been a "super-subtle and utterly corrupt Venetian lady," to turn innocent and amiable on his hands, and has first spoilt *Henry V* by letting Falstaff run away with the play and the plot and then in a fit of puritanical disgust for his own creation spoilt Falstaff by prematurely killing him off. This entertaining trifle introduces us to another well-known Shavian concept, the concept of the genius who is, nevertheless, a perfectly ordinary man in respect of nine-tenths of himself. We are invited to pity the predicament of Shakespeare who, "born about ten times as clever as anyone else," finds his natural and ordinary desire to like and to be liked by his fellows baffled by his intellectual contempt for their follies and illusions.

I have no space here in which to comment upon the celebrated *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*. It is so good that it leaves me once again at a loss to understand why it is that Shaw does not make as many converts to his philosophy as he does to his Fabian Socialism. Yet Creative Evolution has been a damp squib. Ignored by

professional philosophers, it has failed equally to attract the layman. The reason is, I suspect, that it provides no point or end to the purposeful cosmic process it asserts. We are asked to assist in the adventure of life, but to what end? That life in and through our efforts may rise in us to ever higher levels of consciousness. But why achieve more intense consciousness, unless there is something of surpassing value and excellence to be conscious of? Yet there are no values in Shaw's scheme save such as life itself evolves in the process of its own development. Now, for most of us, this is not enough. Most of us want our values, while the few who can dispense with them altogether are naturally impatient with Shaw's occasional lapses into mysticism, and demand a universe at once more scientific and more hard-boiled. Thus the Shavian philosophy falls between two stools. It admits neither God nor the machine.

C. E. M. JOAD

A VICTORIAN QUAKER

A Quaker Journal. By WILLIAM LUCAS OF HITCHIN. (Vol. II. 1843-1861.) Hutchinson. 18s.

The first volume of the journal of William Lucas, the Quaker brewer, so delightful and refreshing in the picture it gave us not only of Lucas's own life and of early Victorian country life in particular but of Victorian times in general, is now followed by a second, which goes straight on from the point at which the first broke off, that is from 1843 to within a fortnight of Lucas's death, towards the end of January in 1861. Lucas was then only fifty-seven. For almost a year before the end the diary grows thinner and thinner. The entries are confined to a sentence or two, and Lucas is a good deal preoccupied with the weather, which that year, even in the summer, was atrocious. "The weather continues cold and stormy. I have been a prisoner in the house for several days with a severe cold," he writes. And then again: "A very wet day. We have now had twenty-eight days rain in rather more than a month." And still later: "We have had a fortnight of unsettled weather in which no corn has been carried." There is a curious sense of foreboding and melancholy about it all. "To-day my brothers and sisters dined with us. It is a long time since we all met and very probably we may never meet again."

The earlier entries are fuller; the entries varying in fact according to the richness and fullness of Lucas's life. Thus, during the whole of August, 1854, there is scarcely an entry, but the omission is rich in significance, for Lucas begins again with, "We have this day finished the finest harvest I ever remember." He goes on from the harvest to the cholera, "which is declining in London," and from cholera to the news of the Crimea and some comment on it. He asks the eternal questions: "What are we fighting for? When will it end?" and records the burning of an effigy of John Bright, who condemned the war. There is a clear, but not violent, indication of his sympathies. "Too late, I fear, we shall all acknowledge the impolicy of these foreign alliances which oblige England to fight in any quarrel." He goes on from the war to the great frost of 1855: "The Thames has been for some time frozen over, and all navigation stopped." And from frost and war to more personal things: "This week I am compelled to dismiss our old gardener, Abbas, for his inveterate tendency to muddle himself with drink."

There is not much difference in this volume from the tone and temper and charm of the first. If there is nothing quite so vivid in it as the reminiscences of childhood and youth with which the first began, there is no falling off in the richness and variety of comment, the catholic breadth of taste, the soundness of the criticisms of life and politics and art and literature, the delight in the countryside, and in the coming and going of birds especially. He travels as much, perhaps more, for the railway has replaced the coach. He goes one year to France and to Paris, another to Scotland. At home he still attends the Quarterly meetings, a cricket match, the Royal Academy, a flower-show. His interest in these things does not lessen. Of other events and institutions he is less tolerant. He is a shrewder critic of literature. "Finished Macaulay's two volumes of History . . . a sour, detractory man, and a vehement partisan," and an even shrewder one of politicians. He is as faithful as ever to his religion, though as the Temperance campaigns increase he has less faith in his profession. "Makes one at times wish to be in some less objectionable line of trade." And perhaps, if anything, he has less faith in himself:

On looking over the past year and asking what progress has been made in things of highest importance, the retrospect is discouraging;

a wavering faith, an irritable temper, a loss of energy, a want of power . . . Alas! Alas! Sometimes there is nothing but gloom over the mind for days together. Oh! Lord, I earnestly beseech Thee through Thy grace in Christ Jesus, Our Lord, grant me this year a firmer faith, a filial tear, a trembling hope, a clearer light.

Those who discovered and edited the diary have done a service to literature. Few commentaries on a particular period and on life in general are as charming and rich as these two volumes, very few pencil sketches are as good as Samuel Lucas's, which adorn this second volume as they did the first, and still fewer men are as good as Lucas himself. The last words of his diary, written of someone else, "He was a general favourite and his death causes a blank in our circle which will never be filled up," seem extraordinarily appropriate to himself, too.

H. E. BATES

BEFORE DEMOCRACY

Democracy. By J. A. HOBSON. Twentieth Century Library. Lane. 2s. 6d.

Prophesying the approaching end of existing institutions, Mr. H. G. Wells wrote a book entitled *After Democracy*. Mr. Hobson's book dealing with the same problems might well be called *Before Democracy*. For it is of the essence of his analysis that the common-sense and co-operative capacities of ordinary men and women have not as yet been given a chance: we have had the formalities of representative government within the framework of economic and cultural institutions which have assured the dominance of one class. Therefore his study of democracy, admirably and persuasively written, takes him far beyond the study of these formal institutions and of the ideas of their founders. He is driven inevitably into a discussion of the economic foundations of present society, concluding that individual liberty cannot be a reality without substantial equality and that economic equality is impossible without a planned Socialist economy. He discusses the necessary restraints of planning, and finds in them a release, not a subjugation, of the individual, provided that a central geographically elected Parliament decides ultimate policy and preserves freedom of individual discussion. The Russian model is not Mr.

Hobson's. As for Fascist dictatorships, he blows up their pretence of obtaining national unity, and argues that they are condemned to collapse by the nature of their economic objective. Theoretically there are two ways in which for a short period they might succeed. They can live if they can find new markets for the surplus products they cannot dispose of at home and if they do not fight in seeking them. Actually, since capitalist dictatorships do not co-operate, "the struggle for markets conducted by businesses whose control of governments is expressed in 'national planning' must more and more assume a political character, involving diplomacy, armament and the menace of war." The alternative method would be the perpetual retention of the home market by a high wage policy at the expense of profits. Mr. Hobson argues convincingly that this conception is so antipathetic to the whole psychology and basis of capitalism that it must be regarded as only a theoretical possibility. When he comes to the future Mr. Hobson shows himself an unrepentant democrat. He is anxious to remodel existing institutions, and has much that is wise to say about suggested reforms. The final test of the democrat is whether or not he believes that men have within them the capacities for co-operation and for wisdom and for reasonable conduct. Mr. Hobson, who believes in their fundamental "common sense," is confident that the solution lies in the reform of education and of Parliamentary institutions. He still hopes for a world in which national States, retaining their individuality and providing within their borders the substance of liberty and equality, may learn to make use of the opportunities science now offers of world co-operation.

The new Twentieth Century Library has begun by setting itself a high standard. For Mr. Hobson's book is far more than the efficient résumé which is all we usually expect in small books on large subjects in popular series. It is constructive, alive and unafraid.

K. M.

THE OLD POOR LAW

The Treatment of Poverty in Cambridgeshire, 1597-1834.

By E. M. HAMPSON. Cambridge University Press. 15s.

The history of the Poor Law has been written by Mr. and Mrs.