Shaw Before His First Play

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In his final will, signed when he was a month short of ninety-three, Bernard Shaw conveyed to the British Museum what he described as “Such letters and documents as might be worth preserving in a public collection.” He had another destination in mind for his diaries. The first home of the London School of Economics and Political Science had been in an Adelphi Terrace house made available by Charlotte Shaw shortly before her marriage to G.B.S. Her rental of an upstairs floor of her London home, and a gift of £1,000 to its library, had assured the School’s survival. Now he offered the London School of Economics and Political Science “Old Diaries account books Bank passbooks paid cheques and their counterfoils expired agreements box office returns and other records of my business operations and personal and domestic expenditure, capable of being used by economic or legal historians or by biographers seeking documentary evidence as to prices and practices during the period covered by my lifetime.”

The 1885–1897 diaries, however, written largely in (Isaac) Pitman shorthand, cover far more than “prices and practices” of interest to economists, as they detail the day-to-day life of Bernard Shaw from his twenty-ninth year, when he was still a nobody, into the decade when he was one of the best-known men in England. Their interest exceeds Shaw’s pragmatic view of them. Consigning the diaries to economists and sociologists was an uncharacteristic act in a life not usually associated with shrinking modesty.

In his last years, Shaw’s long-time secretary, Blanche Patch, began a transliteration of what she called his “simple Pitman,” but it was not all that simple. After Shaw’s death in 1950, City University of New York professor Stanley Rypins, who had taught himself the script, worked at transliterating the Shavian shorthand. Neither the Patch nor the Rypins versions is close to being a complete text, and neither is completely accurate. Miss Patch ignored what bored her, baffled her, or left her uneasy, omitting all of Shaw’s listings of his expenditures, as
well as an entire year, and altering Shaw’s twenty-four-hour clock to a
conventional twelve-hour cycle, an obfuscation of his personality. Miss
Patch did not know of the 1892 diary she omitted and assumed it was
lost. For a while all the diaries were mislaid in one way or another, but
the 1892 volume was a special case. When G.B.S. married in 1898 and
moved, with most of his effects, to Charlotte Payne-Townshend’s well-
appointed flat at 10 Adelphi Terrace, overlooking the Victoria Embank-
ment, he left behind at Fitzroy Square piles of his presumably obsolete
papers, including the manuscripts of his unsuccessful early novels and
all his diaries. There they remained until 1907, when his mother, pack-
ing to vacate 29 Fitzroy Square (Virginia Woolf and her brother Adrian
would move in), summoned a bookseller to get rid of the “debris.” He
was Dan Rider, and he knew what treasures could be had taken away as
soon as he began examining them in his shop, for by 1907 G.B.S. was
an authentic Great Man. ¹

Realizing that the diary for 1892—the only diary in the alleged rub-
bish—was a special case, Rider respected Shaw’s privacy and sent it to
Adelphi Terrace, where it vanished among his books. A half century lat-
er, it was transferred under terms of Shaw’s will to the British Museum,
and when it was discovered to be a diary, to the London School of Eco-
nomics. But by then it had escaped Blanche Patch, who had already
made her selective transliteration. Other diaries had survived Lucinda
Elizabeth Shaw, turning up later in her daughter Lucy’s possession.
When Lucy died in 1920, her aunt (and G.B.S.’s), Arabella Gillmore,
inherited most of Lucy’s effects and occupied her house, Champion
Cottage, in the Denmark Hill section of southeast London. During
World War II the house was hit by a bomb probably intended for Wool-
wich Arsenal. What survived was transferred by Arabella’s daughter,
Georgina Musters, to a warehouse. After the war, when she was sorting
out what might be salvaged, she found the diaries and brought them
to Miss Patch, who was keeping a sort of office going for Shaw (who,
in his nineties, now spent most of his time at Ayot St. Lawrence) in his
London flat at Whitehall Court.

In her spare time Miss Patch worked on the diaries, apparently not
telling Shaw (lest he destroy them). In a postwar Britain famished for
paper she wrote her condensed version, omitting appointments and ex-
pense citations, and adding and subtracting words at will, in five hoard-
ed notebooks, one of them a dummy sample of Saint Joan containing
only three printed pages from Scene 1. Eventually she deposited them
for safekeeping with Otto Kyllmann, a director of Constable, Shaw’s
publisher for decades. When Shaw willed his “Diaries” to the London School of Economics and Political Science, he may not have known of the rescue of the volumes before and after 1892, since the words he used in reference to the school refer to appointment calendars, especially pocket-sized datebooks of the kind which Shaw kept efficiently for decades.

That the “real” diaries were unavailable to Shaw during the years in which he composed his memoir-rich prefaces and essays suggests their added importance as a contemporary document to which his later recollections—even inventions—can be compared. When Rypins began his own transliteration of the diaries he had the advantage of the recovery of the 1892 volume as well as the Patch transliterations as a place to begin. However, he made his own cuts as he went along, labeling what appeared to make no sense as illegible, and dropping as uninteresting and tedious almost every expenditure notation after the first few years. (Even at that he noted many more than had Miss Patch.) Rypins was still working on the diaries at his death in 1971.

After St. John Ervine’s centenary biography of Shaw in 1956 revealed the riches of the diaries (but from the Patch text), Shavians consulted first one and then the other transliteration, each as far as they went. Since both are incomplete and sometimes inaccurate, dependence on these unpublished yet attractive tools was chancy. Nevertheless, a great debt to both shorthand scholars remains, especially to Stanley Rypins, who over many years was tireless at the task. Given the primitive state of Shavian research when he began, his attempt at annotation as well as transliteration was courageous. Despite the guesswork, gaps, and interpolations, his version was a substantial accomplishment for its time. As since published in my edition of 1986, the text of the diaries uses the Rypins transliteration as its starting point; but nearly every day’s entry has been augmented, corrected and annotated further. We know much more now, although perhaps still not enough. Some identities remain unknown; a few unreadable words still elude us.

To help furnish a working context for the diaries, as I edited them I began with the assumption that Shaw’s London of the 1880s and 1890s (the gaslit, often fog-shrouded city that was also Sherlock Holmes’s) is not our own. Contemporary Londoners may need less assistance than other readers to find their way, but the diaries lead, nevertheless, into Shaw’s vanished late-Victorian world. What kind of “toad,” for example, would a vegetarian eat? Why would Shaw purchase “Silurian” cards? What are the omnipresent “Stores”? Where in London is (or
was) an “Orange Grove”? When possible, editorial annotations included identifications of obscure or obsolete products and brand names, and of shops or businesses that have ceased activity or undergone more than a century of change.

Shaw’s usually clear shorthand and longhand (most expenditures are in Pitman) are just short of microscopic: about the size of six-point type. He must have used a pen with a very fine nib. His abbreviations of proper names are for him largely regularized; however, one must determine from Shaw’s movements, interests and friends whether (for example) he means Aldgate or Aldersgate, Radford or Redford, Reid or Reade. Certain words become ambiguous—“Justice” can be a journal, as can “Socialist”—and there were dozens of splinter radical journals to which Shaw contributed, or that he purchased or read, which, if unitalicized, might suggest something else. On occasions where he recorded a name he only knew as spoken, the spelling assigned is that, where possible, of someone who could have been on the scene at the time. Even the most meticulous diaries are in a sense “shorthand.”

Several false starts at diary keeping resulted in some surviving Shavian longhand notes from the 1870s and early 1880s, and the beginnings of a scrappy longhand diary for 1880. (As he taught himself Pitman in the early 1880s, some of the longhand notes are interspersed with shorthand.) There were several earlier attempts that went nowhere. The first was an 1873 Dublin diary, a small, red-covered pocket appointment book with pages torn out through early April, suggesting that Shaw, then sixteen, was destroying a bit of his past. Fragmentary, although diary-like, was an 1877 attempt in an N. J. Powell and Company Shilling Diary for that year, black with gold stamping, 6¼" x 4". The terse 18 January 1877 entry, typical of the few others, is “[Haydn’s] Creation: Albert Hall.” A few other entries, all engagements, appear through June 4. The 1880 attempt was in a shilling Blackwood’s Desk Diary in black and green paper boards, 5¼" x 8". Here the entries, penned mainly during Shaw’s work with the Edison Telephone Company of London, run from February 14 intermittently through July 7 and concern his appointments and expenses, with few personal notes other than his voracious Saturday reading at the British Museum Reading Room.

For 1885 through 1887 Shaw used the Court Diary and Engagement Book, sold for three shillings by Griffith, Farrar & Co. Bound in blue-grey cloth, these are 9¼" x 7½" and provide seven days to a two-page opening. Intended as cash account books with Received and Paid columns, these have space for appointments and activities. At the top of
each week’s opening is a proverb; the entry for the first week in November 1885 is credited to Emerson: “Nature is upheld by antagonism. Passions, resistance, danger, are educators. We acquire the strength we have overcome.” Did G.B.S. pay any attention to these? At least once in the diaries he noted his objection to the weekly aphorism.

When the Court Diary was no longer available, Shaw turned for 1888 through 1892 to Lett’s Office Diary and Almanac, published by Cassell’s. An octavo (7½" x 4½"), it provided alternately (across both pages) three days (Monday to Wednesday) and four days (Thursday through Sunday) to an opening. The list price in black cloth, with red and gold stamping, was four shillings sixpence; however Shaw on 12 December 1887 records paying only 3/9 for one. There were still columns for expenses, but Shaw wrote across them, listing expenditures at the foot of each day’s entry. For 1893 through 1897, although his enthusiasm for diary keeping was waning, Shaw changed to a larger Lett’s Diary (No. 3B), a quarto with three-day and four-day openings, and priced in cloth at 8/-. As 1895 wore on, Shaw’s record of activities in relation to his accounts begins to get sketchier. The diary for the next year has many more blanks, and that for 1897 has more empty pages than inscribed ones. His hectic life had crowded out his attempts to record it.

Even so, Shaw at his sketchiest can record depths of feeling palpable to him alone and recoverable only via editorial detective work for which he provides tantalizing clues. A case in point is his single word—in German—for a day in November 1894 that pronounces the end of his intimacy with Florence Farr. The entire day’s entry is “Trennung”: parting. Shaw, who admired Brahms’s chamber pieces while deploring his big orchestral works as pseudo-Beethoven, must have known that in Brahms’s Lieder were two songs of that title, one of them almost an analysis (in German) of his feelings about Florence. “For the time when you loved me,” it concludes, “I thank you from the heart, and hope it will go better for you elsewhere.” Not writing for any future reader, it was enough for Shaw that he understood his own private musical reference—a sort of shorthand within his shorthand. The single word held within it four painful stanzas about parting from someone he could no longer love with the old passion.

When Shaw wrote for a larger audience than himself, his literary flair is evident. As diarist, paradoxically, he is often most useful to us when he is least “literary”—when he communicates the very texture of the life he lived, day-to-day, in 1880s and 1890s London. Names, places, even purchases and petty expenses—Shaw would itemize a ha’penny
to a street Arab, or for weighing himself at a coin machine—have their fascination in context. A ha’penny “lost under train” must have been thrown—erratically—to a newsboy. What may be startling to the reader of Shaw’s daily doings is the unliterary bareness of so much of it. From its inception through to its testamentary disposition, his diary was at no point conceived of as a “literary” journal that could take its place among the author’s published works. There are witty, colorful, striking—even moving—passages, but the diaries were seldom Shaw’s repository for literary analysis or rumination, for recording literary conversation or social gossip, or for capturing fleeting ideas and fragments of dialogue to be exploited later.

Between the lines as well as within them, however, one perceives Shaw exploring the interests that would dominate his life, maturing as a highly social phenomenon from the timid and tentative new arrival, spreading his capacious and powerful professional wings. The solitary young Irish émigré watching things happen is by the end of the diaries a tirelessly active Londoner so busy making things happen that the diaries lapse for lack of time to maintain them. Among other things, they are an index to radical intellectual life in the London of the 1880s and 1890s. We not only meet Shaw striving daily to make something of himself within the ethical constraints and professional ambitions he had set; we encounter the people on the fringes as well as within the vortex of radical politics in late-Victorian England.

Through Shaw the journalist and critic, successively, of books, art, music, and theater, we confront the writers and books; artists and art; composers, instrumentalists, singers, and conductors, and their music; plays, players, and playwrights of his time—a cross-section of late-Victorian culture. And in Shaw’s development from his unformed late twenties to his mature early forties, we see the radical intellectual in his milieu—in the Shelleyan vegetarian restaurants that were often their meeting places, and in which Shaw practiced the art of living cheaply. In his pages are the debating and discussion societies which were their informal Open University, as were the Hampstead and Hammersmith parlors which better-off socialists and liberals—often bankers, stockbrokers, barristers, and their like—opened to the less fortunate, less conscience-queasy, who nevertheless thought along the same lines. Most crucial to Shaw’s often empty purse was the domed and arc-lit British Museum Reading Room which, he recalled, had in a pre-socialist age “all the advantages of communal heating, lavatory accommoda-
tion and electric light [still a rarity in private homes], with a comfortable seat, unlimited books, and ink, and blotting paper all for nothing.”

That Shaw was writing from recent memory of deprivation, and had needed every means he could seize to stretch his finances, is made clear by the early diaries. Once he gave up his telephone company job in 1879—a position he took (so he told his employer frankly) only because he could not “live on air” while he sought a writing career—he had only rare and occasional earned income until 1885. In the first months of the continuing diaries (1885–1897) we see an unpromising yet ambitious Shaw in his twenty-ninth year, still living largely on an allowance from his mother and a dole from his father that expired shortly thereafter at his death. Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw’s earnings as voice teacher and her small family inheritance from Ireland supplemented her own modest check from the long-estranged George Carr Shaw in Dublin. She did not appear to mind having a mature, unemployed son about the house, where she was often absent, and there is no evidence that she discouraged his writing ambitions. Her support, however, was largely passive. She ignored him. G.B.S. had to prepare his own breakfast (usually oatmeal) and go to one of the many cheap vegetarian restaurants that dotted London for his lunches and dinners. Except for an occasional tea when a relative or family friend visited, mother and son led separate lives, in which they were joined now and then by daughter Lucy when at liberty from her light-opera roles. Occasionally on an evening at home in that era before radio and television, Shaw would accompany his mother on the piano while she sang, or join her at operatic duets. Occasionally, too, when he had critic’s passes to a concert or opera, he would take Mrs. Shaw to St. James’s Hall, the Albert Hall, or Covent Garden.

By 1885, however, the uncomplicated life of days writing at a desk in the British Museum (the Reading Room was practically an afternoon club for young writers), and evenings seeking intellectual or social stimulation, was fast ending. G.B.S. had become a compulsive joiner of societies and espouser of causes; his calendar (noted at the head of each diary day) became more and more crowded As his paid journalism burgeoned, his free time continued to diminish. And even the new turns his amorous life took in 1885 would begin to make unexpected, expanding demands as well as furnishing unforeseen “copy” for his pen. Shaw’s purchases of “french letters”—a requirement of his initiation into sex—are gingerly passed over by Patch, while Rypins evaded the qualitative code numbers for intimacies that follow each episode.
For the first several years, Shaw’s intimacies with his first mistress, the bosomy Mrs. Jane ("Jenny") Patterson, fifteen years his elder, were scored. (He was not alone among diarists of his time, including the composer of “Onward! Christian Soldiers,” Sir Arthur Sullivan.) Shaw would place a parenthetical numeral in the text after returning from Brompton Square—or in some cases after a visit from “JP” to Fitzroy Square. Use of the numerals would eventually cease—a belated effort at circumspection.

Such imprudence—these were Victorian decades—sometimes surprises us in the diaries. Shaw’s Pitman shorthand, after all, was not a Pepysian code. Married women pursue him openly, and spinster ladies volunteer themselves as intermediaries for unmarried young women. A widow—Mrs. Patterson—involves the Shaw family to her home. Mrs. Shaw and her daughter, aware that G.B.S. intends to spend some time between the sheets with Jenny Patterson, offer to leave early so that Bernard (he disliked being “Georged”) won’t have to make a late night of it. (Mrs. Shaw seems to have encouraged the relationship, which kept her son unmarried and home with her.) G.B.S.’s Fabian friend Hubert Bland has a live-in mistress, whose child is raised by his wife, Edith Nesbit (The Railway Children)—who then pursues Shaw. A journalist friend sits edgily with Shaw in Mrs. Patterson’s parlor, each eager to outstay the other for a tumble with Jenny; but Tighe Hopkins must catch the last Underground train home, while G.B.S. is willing to chance a long walk. He wins.

Shaw’s attraction to women much younger than the well-to-do and insatiable Jenny crops up at frequent intervals throughout the diaries, even his admission that he is “half in love” with one or another of them. Sometimes there are complications because several women think that they have simultaneous claims upon his affections. As he wrote to his French socialist friend Jules Magny he believed then that “opinion is divided between the people who regard me as a saint or a statue, and those who accuse me of being an Irish Don Juan who will eventually compromise Socialism by some outrageous scandal of the Parnell sort.” Both opinions were erroneous, he insisted. Rather, he had the habit of Irish “gallantry,” which in English circles was allegedly misread. Recalling such experiences not long past, he added: “When you are unknown, and shabby, and penniless, and awkward, and at the same time fastidious and proud, you shrink from attempting a role which requires at least some pocket money and a presentable hat.” It is exactly at that stage in his life that the 1885–1897 diaries open.
The contrast between the texture of Shaw’s life as he lived it and the persona he displayed to his London world emerges strikingly day by day. Even in the later 1880s he existed so hand-to-mouth that toward the end of one month he had to telegraph to his mother, who was away, for a ten-shilling postal order. He was too proud to borrow from his friends, except for the occasional coin when he had no change for tram fare. (He would lend small sums, however, or even give them away.) Such indignities were suffered silently, but for the diary. He notes William Archer arriving to go to dinner with him and finding that Shaw—clearly penniless—has already prepared his own dish of cheap macaroni (a word he often misspelled). And he confides going home on another day to a solitary meal of bread and apples because he has no money. There are many occasions, especially in the later 1880s, when Shaw is occupied with concocting and submitting any sort of hopefully publishable copy to such papers as the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Star*, and the *World*, chancing that they will pay him at their usual minuscule space rates per line. He confesses that “slipping” into paid journalism might “put a stop to my life’s work,” but he had to live while he struggled to become a serious writer.

The problem for Shaw was that such paragraphs for the *Star* to “keep the exchequer filled”—“some matter,” he diminishes it elsewhere in the diaries, in self-dismissal of his urgent works-for-hire—were often “contemptible stuff,” as were most of the potboiling pages of fiction he had to read by the yard in order to compose anonymous reviews he knew were not worth reading. Further, they robbed him of hours in which to write his way out of a life in which he might have, with reason, felt trapped. “Finished *World* article with much labor and waste of time,” he writes early in 1892, “not being in the vein, or much interested in the subject.” At the time he was struggling to finish his first play, which he had begun eight years earlier.

Meanwhile, the diary reflects his frustrations with the sleaziness of living in a few cluttered rooms and his mother having to take in less-than-pleasant lodgers to help pay the rent. “Am now alone in the house,” Shaw writes in early 1889—“except for the old woman downstairs, the drawing room lodger being away, and the young woman in the parlor having left yesterday.” Even worse, we see Shaw fighting for his battered pride with the election authorities, who have removed him from the rolls on grounds that he was his mother’s lodger and thus not head of a household. It would not be until November 1888, when he
was past thirty-two, that he was able in a School Board election to cast “the first vote I ever gave in my life.”

However ambitious and talented he was, his diary exhumes a succession of difficult and exasperating days, when he might well have felt condemned to a life of genteel poverty while turning out hack work for which he had little more than revulsion. As an art critic he welcomed Whistler, a few Englishmen, and the French Impressionists, but he saw, mostly, academic trash. As a music critic he hailed Wagner and learned to appreciate the showy Paderewski, but he listened often to mediocre and uninspired stuff rendered the more insufferable by slovenly execution. As theater critic he usually encountered bad performances of hackneyed works and good ones of worthless new pieces, once noting that a role interpreted so badly as to be “a masterpiece of failure” paradoxically did justice to the play. Even such regular columns were a happy improvement upon occasional writing for which the pay was chancy even after the work was done, or for which (as with the radical press) there was no compensation at all.

His writing life seemed to be leading nowhere, and while he took pride in his integrity as a critic, we find in the early years of the diaries and well into the 1890s attempts at stories, novels, and plays that end unfinished, frustrations he seldom voiced. To some of the reading public, nonetheless, Shaw was already a writer of unfailing wit and verve; to his political constituencies he was a speaker and organizer of awesome eloquence and energy. To his friends and colleagues the slender, pale, red-bearded Irishman was an engaging, outgoing personality. Women found it easy to fall in love with him; men found him easy to follow. They did not know, in the middle 1880s, when the 1885–1897 diaries have hardly begun, that his one and only new suit of clothes had come from the meager proceeds of his father’s life insurance policy, nor that his failure to carry to consummation every romantic attachment that suggested itself was because he could afford neither the courtship nor the consequences.

In the pseudobiography Marbot (1983), a clever novel by Wolfgang Hildesheimer, the alleged biographer claims a serious purpose behind the detail in his account of the life of Sir Andrew Marbot: “I want to emphasize an element which I have missed in most biographies, and not only in biographies but in diaries and travel journals: the description of everyday affairs, of matters unworthy of high-flown speech, or assumed to be already known and not worth communicating at the time, but whose importance as a contribution to the historical picture
increases as the years and above all as the centuries go by.” What he means can be understood each time Shaw the diarist notes paying a penny to “have a wash” at a public lavatory as he rushes between reviewing engagements, makes excuses for his oversleeping, or records brief encounters with people of little-known accomplishment whose names would be lost to history had Shaw not written them down in his painstaking Pitman curls and hooks. As Hildesheimer explains that dimension, “The daily round, is action illustrated by concrete things: the props for days of work and days of travel; the physical preparations for day and night, the care of the body which is always passed over in favour of the care of souls—for instance, who washed when, if at all?—the games of leisure hours, the food and wine at meals, the premises and [sanitary] conveniences, the furnishings; the countless unmentioned characters without whom those who are mentioned would have been unable to appear in their roles as leading actors, as commentators and partners of the diarists.”

Shaw leaves out little or nothing of the details of living his kind of life. We learn how he prepared and delivered his lectures, some in smoke-filled laborers’ halls or in beery meeting rooms in pubs, others on street corners and in public parks. We find him buying a chessboard and chessmen at the Army and Navy Stores for three shillings elevenpence “for staging a play”; we see thus how he learned to move his players about onstage. We see him writing his Star music column not only between the acts of an opera or at intervals of a concert, but in clattering trains and trams and “under a lamppost”—and he often wandered in the neighborhood of his 1890s residence in Fitzroy Square “scribbling and moving about even in the chill fog of November, rather than sit in a stuffy upstairs room or chance have friends or relatives drop by to interrupt him as deadline time approached.

Home, we discover from the diaries, was often a place from which, but to sleep, to keep one’s distance. As late as 1893 we find Shaw reading his freely accessible newspapers at the vegetarian Orange Grove restaurant, undertaking his ablutions at a nearby public lavatory, then strolling “about the Mall writing a play under the lamps until it was time to go to the theatre.” We discover what it costs to buy a newspaper, get a haircut, ride the Underground, secure a cheap dinner, wire a message, go to the opera, take a lady to tea, rent ice skates, attend a music hall, tip a lavatory attendant or a crossing sweeper, indulge a beggar, replace a typewriter ribbon, visit Madame Tussaud’s, use a coin machine for chocolates, black a pair of boots, mail a postcard, cross
the Channel, ascertain one’s weight, move a piano, give a Christmas present to one’s mistress’s maid, join the Fabian Society, subscribe to a magazine, reward the loser at a boxing match, lunch on bread and cheese, repair an umbrella, sit in the theater pit at Drury Lane, drink a shandygaff, and purchase an alarm clock.

We also learn about Shaw’s habits of going to bed late and rising reluctantly in the forenoon (often blaming his defenseless alarm clock), seizing catch-as-catch-can vegetarian meals in a variety of drab places with exotic names, and planning so many conflicting activities and appointments as to sometimes miss most if not all of them. He needed a wife if only to manage his life, and as the diary fades out he has begun to be interested in the woman who would become Mrs. Bernard Shaw.

The final collapse of Shaw’s diminishing loyalty to his diaries is fore-shadowed by a dozen breakdowns that have to be remedied by his patching together reconstructions of his days. On 22 June 1892 he writes, in a typical example: “I am afraid I must give up trying to remember this day as a bad job. It is now the 18th July.” (By then, fortunately, he had a pocket-sized engagement book to help eke out the bare details. In earlier years he was not so prepared.) Then on 22 March 1894 he stops recording his already hit-and-miss daily log of expenditures. “My diary keeping,” he admits, “has broken down decisively at last. As I am writing this on 30th April, rather having made no record all this time.”

He picks up the threads, however, and goes on, a little more sketchily as the crowded months pass, until 1897. The final entry appears on 4 April. All the 1897 entries are mere lists of appointments and reminders of professional obligations, the real diary having ceased the year before. But the authentic diaries had served their purposes. They had been his means of organizing an active, even frenetic, life; when necessary they had been his emotional safety valve; on most days they had chronicled enough to furnish to the future what he claimed in leaving them to the LSE—a record of what it was like to live in his place and time and milieu. Here, then, is not a major literary work by Bernard Shaw, but a major document nonetheless—a Shavian Baedeker to vanished late-Victorian London.