

Glenn Patrick Doherty and Amer Hamid (editors)

The Drudgery of a Dramatist:

George Bernard Shaw's Correspondence with Frederick Whelen (1896-1916)

Shelfmark

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

University Archives and Special Collections.

SC-79.

Dwight Strong Collection of George Bernard Shaw.

Document Box 3: Correspondence. Folder 3: Frederick Whelen.

November 8, 1896, to April 21, 1916.

Eight letters, four postcards, one drawing (numbered 1 to 13 below).

Introduction

The eight letters, four postcards, and one drawing edited here are part of the "Dwight Strong Collection of George Bernard Shaw," donated to California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), by the businessman and collector Dwight V. Strong (1916-2002). Consisting of manuscripts, first editions, and memorabilia (45 linear feet in volumes and boxes) pertaining to the famous Irish playwright and political activist Shaw (1856-1950), the collection was initially intended for Stanford University, Strong's alma-mater. However, feeling that it did not receive proper attention there, Strong reconsidered, so CSUF's Patrons of the Library procured it in 1981. Shortly thereafter, the Patrons sponsored a symposium with major Shaw scholars, moderated by Dr. Paulina June Pollak, professor of English (CSUF). The correspondence is in good condition. The color of the paper is manila to off-white; the ink color is usually black; and the type either black or blue.

All but two of Shaw's items edited here are addressed to London Stage Society founder Frederick Whelen (1867-1955). Correspondence 3 (April 2, 1903) is addressed to Audrey Smith, the secretary of the Stage Society, and Correspondence 9 (June 4, 1910) is written by Whelen himself in direct response to Shaw's Correspondence 8 (June 3, 1910). The items cover a wide range of subjects, including minor and major business ventures (Correspondence 1, 8, 9); the casting of Shaw's play *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (Correspondence 2); several matters pertaining to the Stage Society and its reincorporation (Correspondence 3, 5, 6, 10); Whelen's idea to open a bookshop in London, which Shaw welcomes and uses for a tirade on London's inadequacy in that regard, especially when compared to Italy (Correspondence 4); a delightful drawing of Shaw telling prominent politicians "what to do" (Correspondence 7); the plans for a National Shakespeare Theatre and the politics of censorship (Correspondence 11); the idea of writing a film based on Shaw's plays, which he sets aside due to his uncertainty that it would be worth his time (Correspondence 12); and the offer

to write a preface for a book on modern Russian theater, which he rejects, arguing that he has never been to Russia (Correspondence 13).

The correspondence shows one of the most famous modern playwrights successful, engaged, and active. It also shows him considering and conservatively rejecting new endeavors during that success. It suggests that Shaw's social critique and political activism stem from the views he develops as he manages his life as a playwright.

The transcriptions below preserve the spelling and capitalization of the original correspondence. Any additions are enclosed by square brackets.

Edition: Correspondence 1, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen, November 8, 1896 (postcard)

Front: [handwritten, black ink; red Queen Victoria halfpenny stamp, black postmark]

Frederick Whelen [Esq.]¹
59 Rossetti Mansions²
Chelsea
S.W.

Back: [handwritten, black ink]

29 Fitzroy Square W.³
8th. November 1896.

Dear Whelen

£30. That is my ordinary rate for magazine articles - £3 per thousand words, with £5 as a minimum.

How soon would the copy have to be delivered?

y[ou]rs

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw

Edition: Correspondence 2, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen, December 6, 1900 (letter)

Front: [handwritten, black ink; letterhead, printed: "10. ADELPHI TERRACE. W.C.;"⁴ left margin, handwritten, black ink, different hand: "Barker⁵ played the American and was one of the successes of the play."]

6th. Dec. 1900.

Dear Whelen

¹ Whelen's name in this and other correspondence is followed by a symbol that presumably represents "Esq." (Esquire); see below, Correspondence 8 (June 3, 1910).

² Address (Chelsea, southwest London); building (ca. 1890) still standing.

³ Address (central London); building (ca. 1790s) still standing; Shaw's residence 1887-1898.

⁴ Address (Westminster, London); building demolished in the 1930s; Shaw's residence (together with his wife, Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend) 1898-1906.

⁵ See below, note 7.

It seems to me useless to send out this program until the cast is settled. All that has happened today is its unsettling; for Thorpe⁶ did not turn up and I have just written to Granville Barker⁷ to tell him that if he plays the Captain⁸ he will disgrace himself (he cannot talk American) and that he had better stick to his original part of Redbrook.⁹ That shifts Bottomley¹⁰ to Marzo¹¹ - if he will stand being shifted, and if Barker agrees. The whole affair is in a devil of a mess; and if you must send out a program now, you had better leave out the names of the players; for Lord knows what the final selection will be.

By the way, had you not better send Clement Scott¹² a box.¹³ He has put a paragraph in the Free Lance¹⁴ clearly asking for one. As he is an editor and a man of letters now, and not a critic in his old sense, there is no reason why he should not enjoy this civility; and I think it would pay the S. S.¹⁵ because he

Back: [handwritten, black ink]

would undoubtedly write something about the performance, and a notice from him would make it much easier to get actors in future. At all events it is worth considering.

In haste

y[ou]rs ever

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw

Edition: Correspondence 3, George Bernard Shaw to Aubrey Smith, April 2, 1903 (letter)

Front (single-sided): [typewritten, black ribbon]

Copy.

Maybury Knoll,¹⁶

Woking.

2nd April, 1903.

Dear Aubrey Smith,¹⁷

⁶ Courtenay Thorpe (d. 1927), actor.

⁷ Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946), actor, director, writer, theater producer.

⁸ Character in Shaw's play *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900).

⁹ Character in Shaw's play *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900).

¹⁰ Roland Bottomley (1880-1947), actor.

¹¹ Character in Shaw's play *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900).

¹² (1841-1904), theater critic, writer.

¹³ Perhaps a reference to (tickets to) a theater box (i.e., preferred seating).

¹⁴ *The Free Lance: A Popular Society and Critical Journal*, founded by Clement Scott in 1900.

¹⁵ Stage Society: private/not censorable London play-production organization (1899-1948).

¹⁶ Address (cottage name, northwest Surrey, southwest of London); rented by the Shaws.

¹⁷ Secretary of the Stage Society, actor. See James Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition 1881-1914* (Beckenham: Croom Helm Letc., 1984), 61.

This is to explain my telegram. Please pass it on to the Committee.¹⁸

Bashville¹⁹ is all very well as a joke. It would do excellently as a tailpiece on the last night of the season after a three act play, or after two shorter pieces, of which the central one was of really serious interest. Even then the parts should be played by London critics, who should not be paid the customary two guineas,²⁰ and who, on their being called at the end, should be saluted with a shower of eggs, dead cats, nad [sic] gingerbeer bottles (property [sic] ones). A specially large and putrid cat should be reserved for the author.

But to put the piece up as the staple of a subscriber's night,²¹ with one piece too short to be anything but a curtain raiser, would be trifling with the Society. If I were an ordinary subscriber I should certainly complain that this was not what I paid my money for, and not what I put Mrs Shaw²² on the committee for. I should ask whether we were to have one of Mr Hankin's "Dramatic Sequels"²³ next.

I know what the committee say about Bashville being cheap. But its cheapness depends on its being done with curtains instead of scenery; and I think the committee overlooked the fact that other plays can be done with curtains too, and that curtains are good for serious plays and bad for burlesques. I am strongly in favor of trying curtains as an experiment - the right sort of curtains are not more than twice as expensive as second hand scenery. I have seen Browning's *Luria*²⁴ without scenery; and it did not suffer at all. One of Landor's²⁵ *Imaginary Conversations with Imaginary Scenery* might do. But anyhow once we decide to try curtains (which we could borrow from Miss Craig²⁶) the whole poetic drama is open to us. The one thing that would not justify curtains is a burlesque of any sort. If the thing were a success, you could do *Caesar and Cleopatra*²⁷ next year with curtains and wooden soldiers. Meanwhile we can either find a really suitable play for the experiment or else abandon the performance altogether and save it up to make a fifth performance certain next time.

Yours faithfully,

G[EORGE]. BERNARD SHAW.

¹⁸ Stage Society, committee of managers.

¹⁹ *The Admirable Bashville* (1901), play by Shaw.

²⁰ The subscription cost of being a member of the Stage Society was two guineas.

²¹ Stage Society members paid to meet on certain Sundays for private viewings of plays.

²² Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend (1857-1943), Irish activist, Shaw's wife since 1898.

²³ *Mr. Punch's Dramatic Sequels* (1901), collection by St. John Hankin (1869-1909).

²⁴ *Luria* (1846), play by Robert Browning (1812-1889).

²⁵ Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864), author of *Imaginary Conversations* (1824-1829).

²⁶ Edith Craig (1869-1947), producer, costume designer.

²⁷ *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1899), play by Shaw.

*Edition: Correspondence 4, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen,
April 18, 1903 (letter)*

Front (single-sided): [handwritten, black ink; letterhead, printed: Grand Hotel Brufani
** Perugia **²⁸]

18th. April 1903.

Dear Whelen

I think you may venture upon your Bookshop scheme without much misgiving, as you are a good organizer, and there can be no doubt of the width of the opening for such an enterprise. Nothing astonishes me more than the difficulty of buying books in London. My public business brings me eventually into the Borough of St Pancras,²⁹ with [a] quarter of a million inhabitants, with Tottenham Court Road³⁰ at one end and Highgate³¹ at the other. I know of no bookshop in it. There are stalls in the railway stations; and no doubt Shoolbred³² will sell books if customers ask for them; but there is nothing to let the passer-by know that. There is a shop where you can buy sextants and a shop where you can buy folding bedsteads, but no visible bookshop. Now I cannot believe that the demand for sextants in an inland borough like St Pancras is ~~less~~ greater than the demand for books. Yet the sextants are on sale and the books not. Here in Perugia,³³ with a population of one fourteenth that of St Pancras, there are bookshops which exhibit not only novels, but important historical, scientific, artistic + political books, which would no more be stocked by an ordinary suburban or provincial ~~bookshop~~ stationer-bookseller than a pound of radium by an ordinary oilshopkeeper.³⁴ You can buy books everywhere on the continent, whilst in England it is easier to buy motor cars. I believe there are more publishers in London than booksellers. In Henrietta St, Covent Garden,³⁵ there is a publisher in every house, a publisher on every floor, a publisher in every room, a publisher in every corner, and a literary agent in the middle of the floor; but their selling power is absurdly small relatively to our huge population, because there are no bookshops. It is nearly twenty years since my first published book³⁶ appeared; but I have never seen a book of mine in a shop yet, and never shall, unless your scheme goes forward. I have no doubt whatever of your success if you can get sufficient capital to do yourself justice. I can suggest nothing that you have not anticipated in your circular: all the economies of the business are there, soundly enough.

²⁸ Historic hotel (Piazza Italia 12, Perugia, Italy); established 1884; still operating (2020).

²⁹ Area (northern London, today part of the borough of Camden).

³⁰ Street name (central London).

³¹ Area (northern London, today part of the boroughs of Haringey, Camden, and Islington).

³² Store (Tottenham Court Road, London); established in the 1820s; closed 1931.

³³ City (capital of Umbria, central Italy).

³⁴ An oilshop is a traditional hardware store.

³⁵ Street name (Henrietta Street) and district name (Covent Garden; London, West End).

³⁶ *Cashel Byron's Profession* (1886).

yours sincerely,
G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw.

18th April 1903.
Grand Hôtel Brunani
Perugia

Dear Whelen

I think you may venture upon your Bookshop scheme without much misgiving, as you are a good organizer, and there can be no doubt of the width of the opening for such an enterprise. Nothing actuated me more than the difficulty of buying books in London. My public business brings me constantly into the Borough of St Pancras, with quarter of a million inhabitants, ~~at~~ Tottenham Court Road at one end and Highgate at the other. I know of no bookshop in it. There are stalls in the railway stations; and no doubt they would sell books if customers ask for them; but there is nothing to let the passer-by know that. There is a shop where you can buy sextants and a shop where you can buy folding bedsteads, but no visible bookshop. Now I cannot believe that the demand for sextants in an inland borough like St Pancras is ^{greater} ~~less~~ than the demand for books. Yet the sextants are on sale and the books not. Here in Perugia, with a population of one fourteenth that of St Pancras, there are bookshops which exhibit not only novels, but important historical, scientific, artistic & political books, which would no more be stocked by an ordinary suburban or provincial ^{stationer-bookseller} ~~bookseller~~ than a pound of radium by an ordinary oilshopkeeper. You can buy books everywhere on the continent, whilst in England it is easier to buy motor cars. I believe there are more publishers in London than booksellers. In Chancery Lane, Covent Garden, there is a publisher in every house, a publisher on every floor, a publisher in every room, a publisher in every corner and a literary agent in the middle of the floor; but their selling power is absurdly small relatively to our huge population, ^{because there are no bookshops.} It is nearly twenty years since my first published book appeared; but I have never seen a book of mine in a shop yet, and never shall, unless your scheme goes forward. I have no doubt whatever of your success if you can get sufficient capital to do yourself justice. I can suggest nothing that you have not anticipated in your circular: all the economies of the business are there, soundly enough. ^{yours sincerely} G. Bernard Shaw.

Figure 1: Correspondence 4, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen, April 18, 1903, Front (single-sided).

*Edition: Correspondence 5, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen,
April 12, 1904 (letter)*

Page 1 of 2: [typewritten, black ribbon; letterhead, printed: "ADDRESS TELEGRAMS TO "SOCIALIST LONDON"." / "10 ADELPHI TERRACE LONDON W.C.;" left margin, handwritten, pencil: "see also Page 14 no. 22"]

12 April 1904.

Dear Whelen

I have read through the Memorandum and Articles of the proposed Stage Society.³⁷ Here are the points which seem to me questionable.

Page 7-8, No 6. Have you considered the special case of a member belonging to a theatrical syndicate? I do not quite understand why you do not simply exempt joint stock shareholders chock-a-block, as on public authorities.

Page 8, No 8. I most vehemently object to charitable objects. I should ~~suggest~~ [...] ³⁸ substitute "then ~~for~~ to some enterprise for the promotion of the fine arts, provided that no payment be made which would have the effect of relieving the rates without adding to public activity in this direction." Page 17, No 37. I cannot see why the chairman should have a casting vote. A tie should be a dropped motion. A decent chairman, no matter how he feels personally, always has to vote as a matter of course against an innovation when the sides are equal; and the result is that a motion is put down as defeated, and is perhaps thereby prevented from coming up again for a stated period, when it has not really been defeated, but only slain by [...] ³⁹ one of its own supporters, bound by his chairmanship to vote for the status quo.

Page 17 No 40. This is perfectly awful. Just imagine Hankin the Pertinacious,⁴⁰ with two others of less staying power, committing the Society to a whole season of Browning⁴¹ -- taking the theatres for the season, making all the engagements, and pledging all Thomson's⁴² hard earned savings for a year to come. Or me, with two other infatuated Shavians,⁴³ arranging for a Shaw Festival. I strongly urge that this whole section should be revised in quite a contrary sense to its present bearing. The quorum of the Council should be increased to at least two thirds, especially as you provide for working by circulated minutes. One or two standing committees should have their functions defined; and all other sub-committees should be limited to the terms of the reference, subject to a general condition that in no case should a performance or the selection of a play for performance or the purchase of dramatic rights be delegated by the Council to a committee.

³⁷ While established in 1899, the Stage Society was preparing for new incorporation in 1904.

³⁸ Illegible deletion.

³⁹ Illegible deletion.

⁴⁰ St. John Hankin (1869-1909), essayist, playwright.

⁴¹ Robert Browning (1812-1889), poet, playwright.

⁴² W. Hector Thomson, honorary treasurer of the Stage Society.

⁴³ Followers/admirers of Shaw.

Page 19, No 6. This strikes me as a very large order. Have you considered what might happen if the Society elected a majority of wrong uns for a year to the Council. They might sell the whole concern, lock, stock & barrel, to any speculator who made it worth their while. Or they might not be wrong-uns, but simply hero worshippers -- say of Grein,⁴⁴ or Charrington,⁴⁵ or Charles Frohman.⁴⁶ By simply making their hero the trustee, they might make him a present of the whole affair and leave the Society howling. The clause looks as if it were expressly devised to make such a deal possible. What is the real notion of it? Surely No 11 is enough for all your purposes.

Page 2 of 2: [typewritten, black ribbon; name/signature at bottom: handwritten, black ink]

Page 22, No 62. This is absurd. It means that you are not to borrow more than £1,000 without the sanction of the Society; but that if you do borrow more, the Society will have to pay it all the same. You must omit the nevertheless.

The most important financial article is No 10 on page 13. It seems to me to be perfectly mad. The usual thing for a Society with a guinea subscription is to have a Life rate of ten guineas. But there is no sort of parallel between your case and theirs. You might as well expect an Insurance Company to give you a pension at 21 for ten years purchase. Just consider. In ordinary Societies electing Life Members, the use of the Society by the member is personal: that is, NON-TRANSFERABLE. In four years or less the member is tired of it and drops out, costing nothing but a few stamps or at most a copy of the Society's journal, if it has one. In most cases the Society dies in less than ten years. But in the Stage Society every member will cost the Society a ticket for each of five performances every year for the whole life of his natural life; for even when he gives up going himself he will still give the tickets to his children, or even sell them. Why, the Cyclist's Touring Club,⁴⁷ which does nothing directly for its members except send them a monthly copy of its Gazette, asks forty years purchase for Life membership. Of course if you insist on it, you shall have my fifteen guineas by return of post; and it may be that you are so desperately in want of capital that you think it worth while to issue your stock at a ruinously low figure.⁴⁸ But you will regret it later on. At least fix an age limit, and dont issue Life memberships to persons under sixty. I dont think there is anything else.

⁴⁴ Jacob Thomas Grein (1862-1935), event organizer, drama critic.

⁴⁵ Charles Charrington Martin (1854-1926), lawyer, actor, theater manager.

⁴⁶ Charles Frohman (1856-1915), theater producer.

⁴⁷ Membership organization; established 1878; still operating (2020).

⁴⁸ Lifetime membership was made available in 1904. Shaw and his wife were the first and only lifetime members at a rate of twenty guineas. See Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, 65.

I have just had a letter for Percy Anderson,⁴⁹ the costume designer, to say that he has been commissioned to design dresses for Forbes Robertson⁵⁰ and his wife for Caesar & Cleopatra. He wants to read the play. I enclose an order for Bookshops to send him a copy.

yours ever

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw.

*Edition: Correspondence 6, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen,
June 1, 1904 (postcard)*

Front: [handwritten, black ink; red Vittorio Emanuele III 10 cent stamp, black postmark: Roma * Ferrovia * 6-04 / 88?]

Frederick Whelen [Esq.]

13 Lancaster St⁵¹

London W.

L'Inghilterra.

Back: [handwritten, black ink]

Rome. 1st. June 1904.

[no salutation]

We start tomorrow on our way back, which will be perhaps devious, as we are not disposed to hurry. We shall make our first stop at Geneva.⁵²

I hope my telegram did not desolate the S. S. too much; but it would have taken at least a fortnight to complete the cast of the Superman⁵³ satisfactorily.

Barrie's⁵⁴ scheme assumes that an author of 50, who has travelled the commercial-popular path for 25 years, can shuddle⁵⁵ over to the other path (at the antipodes⁵⁶) at any moment because he might have shuck it at first. An error!

G[eorge]. B[ernard]. S[haw].

⁴⁹ (1851-1928), stage and costume designer; provided costume designs for the 1907 production of *Caesar and Cleopatra*. See John Peter Wearing, *The London Stage 1900-1909: A Calendar of Plays and Players* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1981), 380.

⁵⁰ Johnston Forbes-Robertson (1853-1937) and his wife Gertrude Elliot (1874-1950) played the title roles of Caesar and Cleopatra in 1907 at the New Amsterdam Theater in New York before playing in more shows in London. Shaw wrote the role of Caesar with him in mind. Source: See Johnston Forbes-Robertson, *A Player under Three Reigns* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1925), 268.

⁵¹ Address (Notting Hill, northwest London); same building presumably still standing.

⁵² City (southwest Switzerland).

⁵³ *Man and Superman* (1903), play by Shaw.

⁵⁴ James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937), playwright, author of *Peter Pan*, Stage Society manager.

⁵⁵ Read: shuttle. There is a horizontal bar across "shuddle,"

⁵⁶ Poetic phrase: the direct opposite.

Edition: Correspondence 7, Ink Drawing of George Bernard Shaw and Others, December 8, 1905 (drawing, signatures, menu)

Front: [handwritten/hand-drawn, black ink; at least three different hands; drawing of three men from the chest up, with George Bernard Shaw in the middle; caption, two signatures with dates]

G.B.S tells J.M.⁵⁷ and C.B.⁵⁸

what to do.

R. Wherry Anderson⁵⁹

Dec 8/05

Frederick Whelen

8.12.05

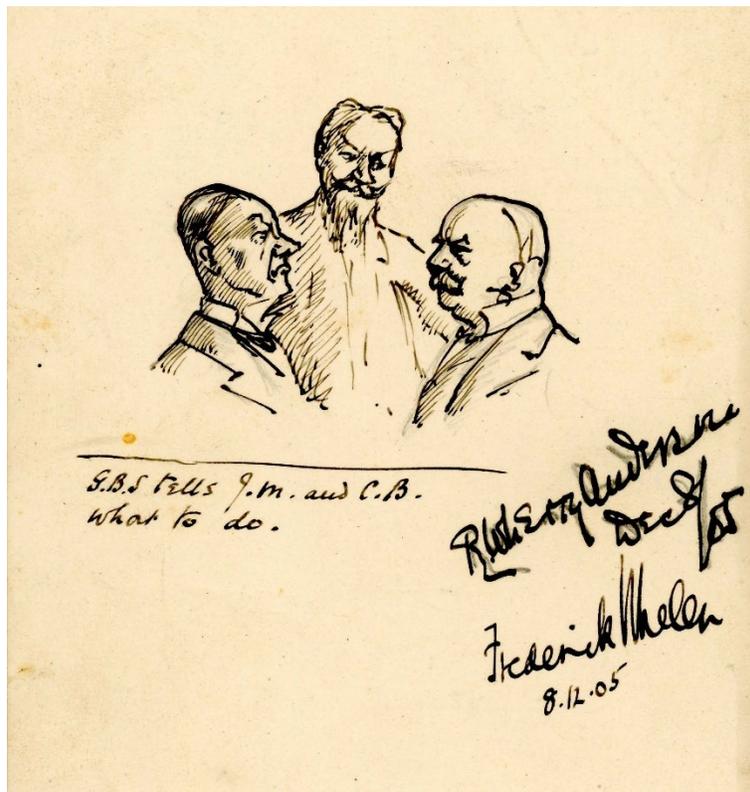


Figure 2: Correspondence 7, Ink Drawing of George Bernard Shaw and Others, December 8, 1905, Front.

Back: [printed: "Maison Jules;"⁶⁰ handwritten, blue ink: déjeuner/lunch menu in nine courses, dated "8 December 05;" used here as scrap paper for the drawing on front]

⁵⁷ Possibly John Morley (1838-1923), statesman, cabinet member (from December 10, 1905).

⁵⁸ Possibly Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836-1908), prime minister (from December 5, 1905).

⁵⁹ Robert Wherry Anderson (1864-1937), member of the socialist Fabian society (like Shaw).

⁶⁰ Historic restaurant (Jermyn Street, Westminster, London); no longer operating.

*Edition: Correspondence 8, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen,
June 3, 1910 (letter)*

Page 1 of 2: [typewritten, blue ribbon; letterhead, printed: "ADDRESS TELEGRAMS
TO "SOCIALIST LONDON"." / "10 ADELPHI TERRACE LONDON W.C."]

3rd June 1910.

Dear Whelen,

After all, the exact figures about this or that theatre do not come to very much. We know that we cannot put the rent at less than £4000 a year at the very lowest, and that unless we can specify some particular theatre at a lower figure, we must be prepared for £5000. But as at the present moment we are not within sight of five shillings, it seems to me that making all these enquiries bears the same relation to the enterprise as the buying of a dictionary does to the learning of a language. Do you see any serious prospect of getting such⁶¹ an endowment as would justify you in chucking your present job? Charles II⁶² said, whenever they wanted him to do anything rash, that he did not wish to resume his travels just then; and I presume you do not want to go back to King's Langley⁶³ for another period of slavery to your creditors. I am rather anxious about this, because it is extremely easy for me to talk: I do not intend to risk anything; and I am so full of work that I am really unable to take anything new very seriously; so do not depend on me in any way. Probably Barker⁶⁴ is not much more energetic in the matter, although of course he is not quite so much on velvet as I am financially. By the way, I may say here that I am very far from being as flush as I was a few years ago. I am living up to my income now, or rather my income is living

Page 2 of 2: [typewritten, blue ribbon; name/signature at bottom: handwritten, black ink; address at bottom: typewritten]

(2)

down to me; and I could not come to the rescue of any enterprise as I came to the rescue of Vedrenne⁶⁵ & Barker in the days when the Pactolian sands⁶⁶ of Man and Superman in America were still shining with gold. On the whole, with a general view to the interests of Elaine and Maeve,⁶⁷ I feel moved to remind you that the whole scheme is the merest moonshine up the present. When Mrs

⁶¹ Handwritten insertion (black ink): such.

⁶² (1630-1685), king of England (1660-1685), Scotland, and Ireland.

⁶³ Kings Langley (Hertfordshire, north of London), former royal palace with few to no remains today; in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (act 3, scene 4) the setting for learning bad news. Possibly a reference to avoiding one's creditors.

⁶⁴ See above, note 7.

⁶⁵ John Eugene Vedrenne (1867-1930), theater producer (with Harley Granville-Barker).

⁶⁶ An allusion to the Pactolus River sands in the ancient Greek myth of King Midas.

⁶⁷ Elaine Sandham, actress, Whelen's wife. Maeve was possibly their daughter.

Crackenthorpe⁶⁸ wrote to *The Times*⁶⁹ two or three days ago about the National Shakespear[e] Theatre,⁷⁰ Barker should have cut in and boldly demanded an endowment; but he was out of my reach just then, and I could not do it myself because I have another matter on which I want to make use of *The Times* presently. I still feel that the deliberate shelving of *The Madras House*⁷¹ and *Misalliance*⁷² ought to be exploited for the purpose of boldly demanding an endowment, not for Shakespear[e] or dramatic art or a repertory theatre⁷³ or anything of a general kind, but boldly and impudently for the purpose of keeping the plays of Shaw and Barker on the stage in London. I believe I am to see Barker today; but where and when and how has not been settled.

Yours ever,

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw..

Frederick Whelen, Esq.,

7 Chester Place,⁷⁴

Regent's Park,

N.W.

*Edition: Correspondence 9, Frederick Whelen to George Bernard Shaw,
June 4, 1910 (letter, draft)*

Front: [handwritten, black ink]

Copy

7 Chester Place

4th June 1910.

Dear Shaw.

I agree that the exact figures do not really help. But in seeing anyone who may be serviceable financially I needed some figures. These I now have. We cannot go back t[o] the Court⁷⁵ but the Kingsway⁷⁶ can be received at £57- per week i.e £2860⁷⁷ and the Royalty⁷⁸ probably for the same figure. The Court experiences show that it is not unreasonable to expect £500 weekly receipts. In one year at the

⁶⁸ Letter titled "The Shakespeare National Theatre," addressed to the editor of *The Times*, published May 31, 1910, and signed "The Woman in the Stalls." Shaw alludes here to the historical pseudonym, "The Female Tatler, by Mrs. Crackenthorpe, a Lady that knows every thing."

⁶⁹ Britain's oldest national daily newspaper; founded 1785; rebranded *The Times* in 1788.

⁷⁰ Plans were discussed at the time for a National Shakespeare Theatre.

⁷¹ *The Madras House* (1909), play by Harley Granville-Barker.

⁷² *Misalliance* (1909-1910), play by Shaw.

⁷³ A venue that presents limited runs (one play at a time).

⁷⁴ Address (northwest London, near Regent's Park); same building presumably still standing.

⁷⁵ Theatrical venue (Sloane Square, London); built 1870; rebuilt 1888; still operating (2020).

⁷⁶ Theatrical venue (Great Queen Street, London); built 1882; demolished 1959.

⁷⁷ Perhaps a miscalculation? The rate for 50 weeks would be £2850.

⁷⁸ Theatrical venue (Dean Street, Soho, London); built 1840; closed 1938; demolished 1953.

Court the loss was only £1310 in spite of playing through the summer months and the inclusion of actors salaries so high as Miss Ellen Terrys.⁷⁹ These are not unhopeful

Back: [handwritten, black ink, with multiple deletions and additions, first in the left and then in the right margins]

figures. ~~and~~ They show that Without endowment a theatre run as the Court has run but with a restriction on actor salaries could be ~~run~~ carried on without much loss and ~~one~~ with the possibility even of a profit.

As to myself I ~~know the wisdom am very conscious of the necessity of~~ don't want to "return to King's Langley"⁸⁰ but it is evident t[o] me that I must ~~make consider some other position than~~ consider some alternatives t[o] my present work. The Shakespeare Theatre matter⁸¹ has made me feel insecure. Tree⁸² knew I was approached, I ~~had~~ t[o] tell him so and Gellaney [?]⁸³ has written him also. He is quite friendly about it but I know his temperament. ~~he no longer feels that I am exclusively. I must~~⁸⁴ I went to So that my natural instinct to work for a theatre in which you and Barker, and other modern plays are produced. And this wish is not merely quixotic⁸⁵ I welcomed Barker's suggestion to work for a theatre in which your and his and other modern plays are produced. I am not entirely quixotic in the matter. The public demand for an endowment could come better from him or from you. I wish you had time for that report on the movement generally. I have now a long list of people t[o] see and shall know in a few days what are the possibilities. If you do not ask me t[o] refrain I shall also communicate with Sir Stephen Gatty.⁸⁶

Sm [?]⁸⁷

W[helen]

⁷⁹ (1847-1928), actress.

⁸⁰ See above, note 63.

⁸¹ The Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre General Committee (launched 1909) worked toward reviving classical English drama, as well as producing new and foreign plays of merit. Shaw was one of its twenty-three members, but the project was unsuccessful due to lack of funds. See See Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition*, 103-104.

⁸² Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917), actor, manager.

⁸³ Reference unclear.

⁸⁴ Here begins the left-margin insertion.

⁸⁵ Here begins the right-margin insertion.

⁸⁶ Stephen Herbert Gatty (1849-1922), former Chief Justice of Gibraltar.

⁸⁷ Possibly abbreviation for "signé manuellement" (signed by hand).

*Edition: Correspondence 10, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen,
August 1911 (postcard)*

Front: [black-and-white photograph: Festung Hohen-Salzburg/Hohensalzburg
Fortress, Austria]

Back: [handwritten, black ink; red Franz Josef I. 10 Heller stamp, black postmark; dated
in pencil: "August 1911"]

Frederick Whelen [Esq.]
7 Chester Place, Regents Park
London
England. N.W.

[no salutation]

George Moore⁸⁸ has, in collaboration with Lennox Robinson,⁸⁹ one of the
successful authors of the Irish (Abbey St) Theatre,⁹⁰ made a dramatic version of
Esther Waters,⁹¹ and he is willing to let the Stage Society have the first bite at it if
it likes. There would be a good deal of talk about such a performance, which would
do the S. S. good. What do you think?

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw.

*Edition: Correspondence 11, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen,
March 31, 1913 (postcard)*

Front: [handwritten, black ink; green King George V halfpenny stamp, black
postmark]

Frederick Whelen [Esq.]
7 Chester Place, Regents Park
London
N. W.

Back: [handwritten, black ink]

c[are]/o[f] The Right Hon[orable]. Sir Horace Plunkett.⁹²
Foxrock. Co[unty]. Dublin. 31st. March 1913.

[no salutation]

I know about the N. S. T.⁹³ motion, and am glad Mackinder⁹⁴ is doing it. He is the
right man for the job.

⁸⁸ George Augustus Moore (1852-1933), novelist, dramatist.

⁸⁹ Esmé Stuart Lennox Robinson (1886-1958), playwright, theater manager.

⁹⁰ Theatrical venue (Abbey Street, Dublin); opened 1904; rebuilt 1966; still operating (2020).

⁹¹ (1894), novel by George Augustus Moore.

⁹² Sir Horace Curzon Plunkett (1854-1932), agricultural reformer, writer, Irish senator.

⁹³ National Shakespeare Theatre.

⁹⁴ Halford John Mackinder (1861-1947), academic, MP, forwarded a motion on the creation of
a National Theater on April 23, 1913. See *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 168 (1913), 92.

As to Harcourt,⁹⁵ he regards that idiotic Joint Com[mit]tee. as his own particular bantling⁹⁶ (as it in fact was) and does not want to discredit it by throwing over its report. But if he wants us standing by its follies, we must make some sort of protest. He ought to stand by his own side, and frankly abandon the absurdities that were introduced to conciliate the enemy. John Palmer⁹⁷ of the Saturday Review,⁹⁸ who has written a very good book on the subject, wrote to me to say that after writing the book & thrashing the subject out for himself, he read my Blanco Posnet⁹⁹ preface and found that he had arrived at my conclusions. I hav[e]nt anything to add to that preface: it is the last word on the subject of which I am capable.

I shall be in London on the 14th. at latest, as I have to speak that evening in Gravesend.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile I shall hold on here as long as I can.

G. Bernard Shaw

Edition: Correspondence 12, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen, December 4, 1915 (letter)

Front (single-sided): [typewritten, blue ribbon; letterhead, printed: "10 ADELPHI TERRACE. W.C.;" stamp with handwritten date in pencil: "RECEIVED. 6.12.15;" name/signature at bottom: handwritten, black ink]

My dear Whelen

My drawing powers as a lecturer are naturally a standing temptation to Gerald Christy¹⁰¹ and the American lecture agents; but I have never delivered a commercial lecture in my life, or touched money in any way in respect of my public speaking. Possibly the war¹⁰² may reduce us all to making speeches on the pavement and passing round our hats for the support of our families; but it would take something like that to induce me to break my record; so I am afraid Christy will have to give it up.

With reference to your reminder about Gaumont,¹⁰³ I was not quite sure whether he was still interested in the matter, or in a position to go ahead with it; but if you think he is, I will bear it in mind. One of the Hepworth¹⁰⁴ people had an idea of forming a separate company for the exploitation of the Shaw drama on the film;

⁹⁵ Robert Venables Vernon Harcourt (1878-1962), MP, served on the Joint Committee on censorship 1908-1909.

⁹⁶ Little child.

⁹⁷ John Leslie Palmer (1885-1944), assistant editor of *The Saturday Review* (1910-1915).

⁹⁸ *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*, weekly newspaper in London, published 1855-1938.

⁹⁹ *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* (1909), play by Shaw.

¹⁰⁰ Town (northwest Kent, England).

¹⁰¹ Managing director of the "Lecture Agency, Limited" (London).

¹⁰² World War I.

¹⁰³ Film company; established 1895; parent company of Gaumont-British, established 1898.

¹⁰⁴ Hepworth Studios; established 1899; renamed 1926/1955; closed 1961.

and I went so far as to say that I might be induced to try ~~cinema production~~ a preliminary experiment with one of my plays, partly to see whether I could handle a cinema production, but mostly - for I have very little doubt of the former - to find out how much time it required, and consequently whether it would really pay me to meddle in the business at all. I made a sort of beginning with *The Devil's Disciple*.¹⁰⁵ But though I have devised about £50,000 worth of scenes, I have not yet got to the beginning of the play; and my general impression is that I could write at least two, and probably three new plays in the time it would take me to fool over a film.

For the moment, however, I am so overwhelmed with arrears of literary work that my cinema activity must be regarded as in a state of suspense.

Yours ever

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw

Edition: Correspondence 13, George Bernard Shaw to Frederick Whelen, April 21, 1916 (letter)

Front (single-sided): [typewritten, blue ribbon; letterhead, printed: "10 ADELPHI TERRACE. W.C.;" stamp with handwritten date in pencil: "RECEIVED. 24.4.16;" stamp: REPLIED without date; name/signature and P.S. at bottom: handwritten, black ink; note at top left, handwritten, black ink, different hand: "Re "The Modern Russian Theatre by Alexander Bakshy" ¹⁰⁶]

21st April 1916.

Dear Whelen

I have read the enclosed chapter. It reminds me a little of the intensely interesting conversation of the Moscow people whom I talked to here about the production of *Pygmalion*.¹⁰⁷ There is a certain childishness in its romantic magnification and transcendentalism of what is at best a very limited art; but it is none the worse for that.

But it is clearly out of the question that I, who have never been in Russia, should write a preface to a book dealing with the modern Russian stage. Of course such things can be done by the sort of people who review books without reading them and write notices of concerts which they have not attended. But it would never do for me to try that sort of game. It would let down my standard at once, and damage me very considerably even commercially. What I can do would be to make just such an examination of the English stage as Bakshy¹⁰⁸ has made of the Russian stage; but that would not be a preface: it would be a separate book. In fact, it would be such a long business that I could not afford to let it go otherwise than as part of my own regular output.

¹⁰⁵ *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), play by Shaw.

¹⁰⁶ (1885-1949?), drama and film critic, author of *The Path of the Modern Russian Stage* (1916).

¹⁰⁷ *Pygmalion* (1912), play by Shaw.

¹⁰⁸ See above, note 106.

I still think that Granville Barker, who has made a study of the Moscow theatre on the spot, and is himself our most noted producer, is obviously the proper man for the job, though the publisher ought to pay him for it, as he is hardly at present in a position to do a valuable stroke of work for nothing.

I shall read the rest of the book with great interest

Yours ever

G[eorge]. Bernard Shaw

PS Just off to Weymouth (Gloucester Hotel)¹⁰⁹ for Easter.¹¹⁰

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¹⁰⁹ Historic hotel (The Esplanade, Weymouth, Dorset); established 1790; still operating (2020).

¹¹⁰ Easter Sunday fell on April 23, 1916; the Irish Easter Rising commenced the following day.