

## Men and Supermen.

**M**R. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S "Man and Superman" is a book that gave rise to considerable speculation. The work is distinctly modern which means, if anything, that it is in style like easter bonnets or this year's coats. To speak more correctly one may call it hypermodern or in next year's style, for it deals with the improved man of the future who cannot be said to represent the human race for the simple reason that the child unborn is not yet a man, and perhaps may never be. The superman idea should never have gained hold on Mr. Shaw who instead of peering into the future might have gone back to the past over whose wastes he would have found "thick as leaves in Vallombroso," the remains of the world's supermen---the men who were so modern that their day never came. He could have found Cola Rienzi and Stefano Porcaro, Rosseau and Rohespierre, Nietzsche and Tolstoy, and perhaps Spencer and Malthus, with others innumerable who held place among advanced thinkers, thought advanced thought and in the end "lay down to pleasant dreams" with the comfort that a great and good man was dying.

Men in the mass, sane every-day men, have their own ideas about thinkers in general and modern thinkers in particular and calmly do they leave vast volumes unread believing that the authors belong to the class called promising men: whereas all wholesome respect goes out to the performing men. The democracy is inclined to look on the modern thinker as a kind of intellectual stock-broker dealing in "shorts" and watered stock and in consequence distrusts the wares because wanting the excellence of the genuine article. Despite that distrust a certain number of the up-to-date devote their time to the inflated thought of startling philosophers, just as others squander their means purchasing inflated stock-paper.

For the past three or four hundred years we have been greatly under the sway of the supermen whom we have seen rise to a temporary greatness, attract the

unwary, defend their novel tenets and finally yield their places to more fashionable thinkers whose life and power were in turn blasted with the curse of briefness. For the past few years there has appeared a widespread distrust of much that once constituted modern thought and with it a reaction, a reversion to ideas that held place in older days. One may have to gather evidence from many quarters, examine words used in pulpit, press and after-dinner speeches, still taken together they constitute a severe indictment against a great deal of once fashionable thought.

*The Superman and the Supernatural.*—Most men have realized that for many years past we have been witnessing a disbelief in and contempt of anything and everything claiming to be a manifestation of the supernatural. The old-time belief in ghosts, fairies, etc., was classed in the same category as the sick man's dream and the person who admitted a belief in a spirit-world heard his theory of one class of the supernatural reduced to the same level as his faith in electric insoles or the magic of Mr. Sheldon, besides hearing his mental condition vividly described by the damaging word "superstitious." Now the word superstition should bear with it no contempt, for it means a standing over, a standing still, the amazement felt by one who is face to face with the supernatural, and all who have any belief in God should feel such a dread. The word superstition lived on into evil days and took on an evil meaning which was to class a healthy and beautiful belief with persuasions the most contemptible. Owing to the horrible power acquired by the word superstition, belief in a spirit-world seemed to grow weaker. The weakness was more apparent than real, the loss being among the "veri adepti"—the followers of the superman. The democracy believed as before and in sheer contempt of science traffickers in the occult, dealers in the supernatural, "began to call spirits from the vasty deep" and exhibit their workings in lecture hall and crowded drawing room. The professional spiritist and hypnotist came out openly and defied science till the affrighted scientists awoke and rubbed their eyes to find themselves face to face with the very class of phenomena they them



selves had executed and buried years before. It was a startling moment. The brave men girded their loins, donned their glasses and ventured boldly into the enemy's camp where they faced a strange fact, the permanent possibility of spirit beings. Soon we saw the Society of Psychical Research called into being to investigate the very things deemed unworthy of the passing notice of the sailor or peasant and now the scientists see nothing incongruous in the picture they present when seated in dimly lighted rooms they await the moving of a table or the migration of a bevy of dolls held in readiness to "trek" at the command of some well-paid medium. Difficulties were met by the benevolent scientists. They soon found that the medium in her anxiety to satisfy scientific curiosity could give exhibitions without any aid from the spirit region. Even yet it is somewhat uncertain whether Eusepia Palladino had any relation to the spirit world, or was by a marvellous dexterity of hand and foot able to "make things move" on earth. The fact is that since her detection and exposure by Professor Musterberg Eusepia has been quiescent, and most probably for some sufficient reason.

Sir Oliver Lodge and Mr. Stead have now gotten so far that they believe in the existence of something immaterial that can manifest itself to men. They claim that after making due allowance for deception there is sufficient proof of a spirit world the nature and genesis of these spirits however are still an unknown quantity. The sum total of their work is not extremely satisfying to the world however pleasing to themselves, for the ordinary man sees that we are now no more conversant with the nature of the supernatural than were our forefathers who always made allowances for extravaganzas like Tam O'Shanter and Kilmeny. The part that must trouble scientists most is that they are forced to the position held by Christianity all through its career for it has ever believed in the existence of spirits both good and evil who have power to influence life here below. The church went even further and taught that evil spirits might be harmful to men, might obsess them and torment them grievously and had in her ritual a form of prayer by means of

which obsession could be and was overcome. There has arisen lately among very clever students of spiritism the persuasion that many and perhaps all the phenomena observed in the seance are the work of evil spirits, a truth they might have learned years ago had they gone to the right source. We may soon expect to hear of Mr. Stead coining some of his strong language into a form of exorcism that will enable him to distinguish spirits of evil from spirits of good. Many students of this so-called science are now uttering the warnings heard in ages long past and we may hope to be, at some future time, as far ahead as were our benighted forefathers who lived and wrought in the middle ages.

*The Superman and the Censor.*—The supernatural is not the only field in which a right-about is observable. There is to-day a general movement towards that censorship which we have always been taught to recognize as the enemy of thought. The idea of censorship is not new; its advocacy however seems strange for we have for ages past heard the censor called the destroying angel of the thinker. The reason of such wholesale condemnation seems to be the following. In her heartfelt interest for her children the Church has always believed herself the judge of what they should read and see, hence she has for ages been in the habit of condemning everything destructive of faith and morals. Her claim does not seem so very unreasonable. The very same thing is done by every father and mother when they endeavor to choose reading matter and companions for their children. Very few parents have ever been so advanced as to advise their children to associate with the criminal class or peruse filthy books. Whatever be the lives of the parents themselves one generally observes some care, some anxiety about the ideas that find lodgment in the minds of their offspring. That universal practice makes it difficult for us to understand the attitude of the supermen who advocate the soul-inspiring fetish free-thought. With free-thought itself we have no special quarrel as long as we are left to think freely. The whole trouble comes when someone believes that his brand of free-thought should be yours and mine.



Any man is free to think the moon is made of green cheese, but when he wants me to think the same opposition is necessary. A superman may believe the Roman nose to be an adaptation from the Roman eagle, but all need not hold such belief. There has always been a very great interest in free-thinkers as evidenced by the fact that such men are supported in government institutions commonly called asylums for the insane. A male inmate of such an institution was seen a few years ago, who though over six feet in height, claimed to be Queen Victoria; his thinking was certainly free though not much respected. No ordinary man has any respect for free-thought on very commonplace matters and yet one finds people who advocate it in matters of the highest importance, in matters of faith and morals. That is the only field in which the thinker claims absolute freedom and it should certainly not be excepted if man has an immortal soul. Jones can think his neighbor a crocodile or an elephant, a Caesar or a superman, and people pity not the neighbor but poor Jones, "whose head is wrong" but the same Jones can make God and His laws appear as absurd and repellant as possible and is praised for his freedom of thought. Man is certainly a strange animal.

The Catholic Church has ever allowed a generous measure of free-thinking but applied to religion and morals the limits which sane men impose on thought about matters of every day concern. Then came days of freedom when thought became a bye-word, a shibboleth for the unwary who indulged "ad nauseam" in the thinking of strange things. Lately we have been seeing a return to the old ideal of the censor. The British public have witnessed the advent of Sir Censor and the American as well as the Canadian Government have yielded to the protest against free thought and refuse the use of their mails to people who think too freely and publish such thought. Our cities censor the "flickering films" of moving picture houses as well as the plays presented in their theatres. Some of the European governments have censorship of the press and frequently one sees issues as instructive as Hubbard's "Essay on Silence"

whose blank pages speak most eloquently. Within the past year Italy has begun a campaign against immoral books, magazines and pictures and has to its credit already many thousands of such works. This is a decided change from the days when Prodrecca could exhibit the blasphemous pictures of "L'Asino" on every news-stand in the country.

It must seem strange for the Italian Government to have taken up the work they always blamed the Pope for having done; another silent proof that the popes were the men while many of Italy's leaders were only the common supermen.

*The Supermen and the Churches.*—Another movement of the present day is suggestive of a return to a healthy ideal and an old one. For some years past we have been hearing a great deal about Church union, its possibility and its benefits. There seems to be considerable doubt as to the ground of union: it being certain that they cannot unite on points of difference they naturally advocate uniting on points of agreement and even here there is a slight difficulty. The agreement, will necessitate less insistence on some points and a greater insistence on others, and that very process of slackening and tightening may, in course of time, draw the uniting bodies away from their primitive teaching to which many will return by abandoning those who favor union. My intention is not the mere pointing out of difficulties but simply to note the return to the old ideal of one church. The united church was an idea very dear to Christianity for fifteen centuries and that union was attained by the teaching of one doctrine which all were obliged to hold. Then came a reaction, a breaking away from unity, by making each individual supreme judge in matters of faith. The new teaching was eagerly taken up and carried into practice by every man who felt called to think himself infallible. Luther was infallible Zwinglius felt himself impelled by the spirit and very few will deny that Knox was spirit-driven. Others who came after these leaders claimed the same privilege till a multiplicity of churches certainly suggested a multiple spirit of truth. Just now men advocate union. It may be simply to eliminate economic loss



or secure greater political weight, but such purposes seem unworthy of religious men. The mere outward aspect of the matter is that men have grown tired of the vagaries of the older superman and are now striving to attain a mediaeval ideal. The leaders in the move have not consulted their founders and one can imagine Calvin and Zwinglius making grim faces at their successors who advocate a turn to the ideals of that Mediaeval Church against which they worked out their lives, and fought their great battles--the supermen are being corrected by the men.

*The Supermen and the Secularist School.*—The supermen of education are now seeing their work undone by mere men. For long years past the grand contention was that religion and education should be kept distinct, that boys and girls should get their knowledge in the school and their religion in the home and the church. Numbers of old-fashioned people still retained their belief in religious education and supported their own schools. They of course heard themselves accused of lack of patriotic feeling, of intellectual narrowness, etc., but they did not desert their standard. They held the old and tried truth, waiting till the word education, as used by modernity, should have gained some specific meaning. In former days education meant giving the pupil something solid and definite---a foundation of fact and principle on which men and women could erect their own temples of knowledge. Then appeared the subtle idea that education meant not putting in but drawing out; meant developing special tendencies, drawing out latent faculties, for such leading forth the deemed suggested by the word "educere." That word however may have had some reference to the peripatetic who taught his pupils while walking in the groves of Greece. Varrus says that the nurse educates (nutrix educat) rears the child, educates him by giving him something solid and tangible (food for example), for no nurse ever believed that the child could live unless given food. The terrible fault of the drawing out process was that its advocates believed that man had no special tendency towards, no faculty receptive of religion. He might stand in need of having his faculty

for corner-loafing or safe-cracking drawn out, developed: but having no inclination towards religion there was no need of development in that direction. Despite all this talk man was religious long centuries before adopting such cultured accomplishments as picking-pockets or breaking safes. Then appeared the startling fact that secularist education was really educating sectaries; for the teacher who had no interest in religion was often against it, was in very fact an agnostic with strong atheistic tendencies and these leanings he endeavored to communicate to his pupils. Mr. Slossen's articles on the American Universities showed that secularism meant atheism, and at present one sees quite frequently where non-catholic clergymen of high standing defend and advocate religious schools and religious education. The purely secular school has been the work of the supermen and for coming years the men must labour to correct its wrong tendency, and undo the harm done and in fact return to the old belief that knowledge and religion are co-partners in the great work of education.

*Supermen and Workingmen.*--Recent years have witnessed a very creditable activity among the members of the working classes. The "hoary handed son of toil" has become a thoughtful man who now claims fair treatment from his "lily-handed" employer. It is a sad reflection on the mental and spiritual condition of the world that such claims had to be made and frequently insisted on with almost a noble vehemence. There should have been enough faith and religion in the world to make masters just and even generous to their servants. The very evident fact is that there was not a condition of affairs for which the supermen, the stylish thinkers were responsible. In the "days of old" the relations between the employer and the employed were regulated in a human, manly manner that deserves our honest admiration. The employed were closely associated to, identified with, their employers. The guilds were the means adopted to regulate the relations of the employers to one another as well as to their journeymen and apprentices. The guilds determined the class, quantity and quality of goods to



be manufactured and the prices at which such goods should be sold. In addition to this every employer was obliged to interest himself in his apprentices who, in almost every case, lived in the master's house and were treated as members of the family. That perfect relation between the employers themselves and between them and their workmen brought with it an identity of interest, a unity of action that made the working world of kin. The very fact of the master working side by side with his labourers evidenced an equality, a brotherhood which rendered labour disputes almost impossible.

Then came a change. The social revolution of the early 16th. century brought with it a general confiscation of property and wealth that afterwards passed into the hands of the supermen, the grafters of the day. Other supermen through "pull" obtained for themselves profitable monopolies and thus arose a new capitalist class whose god was gain. The commercial world entered upon a new phase that destroyed the guild and erected a wall between employer and employed; the old personal relation ceased to exist, the older "traditions of the crafts" were soon forgotten.

About the middle of the 18th. century the manufacturers in an attempt to reap greater profits, commenced centralizing their works as a means of eliminating chances of loss. The workmen were called from their houses in the country to work in cities where they found themselves reduced to a much more meagre living than they knew before. The manufacturer made a larger profit in his investment and soon learned the use of competition. Could he reduce the worker's wages or buy cheaper raw material or control a certain market, he felt justified in doing so. The workman who while in the country owned his own house and garden, had a decided advantage over his condition in the city where his only source of revenue was his wages. If wages were lowered his condition grew worse. The "laissez faire" economists then made public their trade theories which Carlyle summed up in the words: "Free competition and d---l take the hindmost." The manufacturer was free to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest

and he certainly watched the cheapest labour market. The "higher thought" of the day was certainly on the side of the manufacturer who grew in wealth as rapidly as his workmen grew in poverty. The instinct of self-defence drove the workers into unions intended to resist the employer's desire for gain. That resistance expressed itself in various ways, demanding shorter hours, better pay, more sanitary factory buildings and where treaty with the employers became impossible they resorted to the strike. This latter means brought with it such hardships that something had to be done for the public good and the very thing done was what no superman would ever suggest. The remedy proposed was to bring about closer relations between employer and employed, let them meet and talk the business over while enjoying a good dinner---a larger form of the master-worker and his apprentice eating at the one table. Then came further suggestions. Why not allow the workmen to have some share in the business? Why not give them some share in the profits? That is being done in some industries and we look forward to its becoming more general. We are simply trying to get back where the guilds were centuries ago and the men, the real men, are making the move. The unity of aim and friendly relations of the Middle Ages must be the purpose of future social workers.

What is true of the elder supermen will be true of the supermen of the present, who deal not with concrete man but with an abstract being, unknown and unknowable. The present advocacy of the science of eugenics, the simple life, the doctrine of heredity and environment and several other new social creeds, is modern, stylish thinking which will meet its Waterloo at some future date. The men must go on correcting and undoing till this earth becomes no fit abiding place for the supermen and their followers. We may not be rid of them till the Greek Kalends for it was said: "The poor you have always with you", and perhaps He included also the poor in thought, the supermen.

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S. D. C., May 19th.