Shaw’s first public lecture on socialist themes, entitled ‘Thieves’, was delivered at the Invicta Working Men’s Club, Woolwich on 4 May 1884. From then until a breakdown in health followed by his marriage in 1898, public lecturing, at venues ranging from street corner to drawing room, was a normal part of Shaw’s weekly activities. He continued to accept invitations to lecture and debate after his marriage, until his final retirement from public performances in 1941.

Shaw attended some of the early meetings of H. M. Hyndman’s Marxist Social Democratic Federation, and once applied for membership. But he withdrew his application on discovery of the Fabian Society (founded in 1883–4) to which he was elected on 5 September 1884. The ideological differences between the essentially middle-class Fabian Society, with its gradualist approach to social and political change, and the more proletarian, revolutionary and anarchist SDF, widened over the years and were the cause of frequent clashes.

Shaw declined several offers of nomination for parliamentary candidature, but served in local government as a St Pancras vestryman and borough councillor from 1897 to 1903, and stood unsuccessfully for the London County Council in 1904.

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 65.

‘Kindred Particles’

SYDNEY OLIVIER

From a letter by Lord Olivier to Archibald Henderson, 8 June 1931, in Henderson, Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet (London and New York: D. Appleton, 1932) pp. 144–5. Sydney Haldane Olivier, later Baron Olivier (1859–1943) entered the Colonial Office after graduation from Oxford, topping the entry competition (Sidney Webb was second). He subsequently held many important public service positions. He joined the Fabian Society with Webb on 1 May 1885, and was secretary from 1886 until 1890. Shaw wrote of him: ‘Olivier was an extraordinarily attractive figure, and in my experience unique; for I have never known anyone like him mentally or physically: he was distinguished enough to be unclassable. He was handsome and strongly sexed, looking like a Spanish grandee in any

I think it must have been in the autumn of 1883 that I first met Shaw. . . . The only assortment of young middle-class men who were at that time thinking intelligently, in England, about social and economic conditions, gravitated into close contact with one another, like kindred particles in a fluid, and consolidated into an association out of whose propaganda, later, originated the British Parliamentary Socialist Labour Party. Starting myself from the viewpoint of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte I became in 1882 friends with H. H. Champion, with whom I was associated in founding the Land Reform Union, specially inspired by Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. That society brought George to England subsequently for a lecturing tour.

Sidney Webb was a colleague and friend of mine in the Colonial Office: at that time an individualist Radical. I remember H. H. Champion, at a committee meeting of the Land Reform Union, speaking to us of an amazing chap he had met (I think at a meeting of the Zetetical Society, a sceptical association of which Sidney Webb was at that time a member), whom we must, he said, get hold of. This man was a Socialist (we were then publishing the monthly *Christian Socialist* - with very little intelligent Socialism in it) and appeared to combine all the appropriate eccentricities of a conscientious intellectual revolutionary: Atheism, vegetarianism, Jaegerism and malnutrition - having a dead-white complexion and orange patches of whisker about his cheek and chin (a face, as Champion described it, 'like an unskilfully poached egg'), but being extraordinarily witty and entertaining. Then I heard of this flaming phoenix from Webb to the like effect.

Thomas Davidson came to England, and at a meeting of Champion's house exhorted us to espouse the New Life, and to emigrate to Southern California (the then projected colony of Topolobampo was suggested) to found a new Colony to recreate the world. But we didn't: we formed the Fabian Society instead: and it was in the early days of that Society that I came to know Shaw well. He, Sidney Webb and I used to walk once a fortnight, evenings, all the way up to Hampstead Heath together and back again, for meetings of a discussion club, the Hampstead Historic Club, in which we and our friends overhauled the economic evolution of Europe and all its gospels of Social Reform, from Thomas More to Karl Marx, and practically elaborated the Fabian formulation of Socialism which took shape later in the Fabian Essays of 1889.

Needless to say we delighted in Shaw's society - his talk was a continual entertainment; and he regarded it, we tolerantly considered, as his duty to talk wittily, if only for practice. And the transparent