good sense of humour, and I think you had to have that to understand him. . . .

I remember once Mrs Bilton, Shaw's housekeeper at the time, came to me in the study saying: 'Don't you think Mr Shaw is such a *Christ-like* man?' On another occasion she asked Mr Shaw's advice on whether she should listen to a particular preacher at a church in London. Shaw – the alleged atheist – replied: 'Yes, of course, go ahead!' He always respected other people's convictions, if sincere and not humbug. . . .

Another incident I remember was during the First World War. Mrs Bilton came rushing up the stairs shouting, 'Mr Shaw would like you to come down immediately, Miss Elder.' I ran down the steps, rather alarmed – only to find that Mr Shaw didn't want me to miss the sight of the first daylight air raid on London. He was very excited and counted the planes: there were twenty-two bombers.

Table-talk

LADY GREGORY

From *Lady Gregory's Journals 1916–1930*, ed. Lennox Robinson (London: Putnam, 1946) pp. 199–200. Lady Gregory recalls some lunch-time conversation at Adelphi Terrace on 19 November 1916. Matthew Haffigan is mistaken here for Tim Haffigan, a character in *John Bull's Other Island* who in Act I passes himself off as a typical Irishman, but who is later discovered to have been born in Glasgow. Matthew Haffigan is his Rosscullen cousin.

There was some talk at lunch of Spiritualism. GBS said his mother had been very much given to table-turning, and that a spirit used to come who gave his name as Matthew Haffigan – a name he has used later in *John Bull*, and who was a most awful liar. They tried to verify some of his statements, and they were always false. His mother, however, went on quite happily. GBS himself became an adept at cheating at séances and gave no belief to anything in them.¹ He says his mother's real love was for gardens, that if he were run over by a dray she would say, 'Oh, poor fellow!' but if a beautiful rose had been crushed she would go out of her mind with grief!

NOTE

1. See above, pp. 411–13.