‘Shaw’s Hidden Qualities’

LADY ASTOR

From Lady Astor, ‘Shaw’s Hidden Qualities’, *Observer*, 5 November 1950.

GBS would not have called himself a Christian, but those who knew him most intimately could not have called him anything else. His purity, his patience, his great kindness and charity, his moral courage and his control of the carnal by the spiritual proved up till the end that he had the ‘peace that passeth all understanding’. His weapons, like St Paul’s, were never carnal, but ‘mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds’.

To write of GBS without writing of his wife, Charlotte, would really not be writing about the whole man. She, in her way, was just as remarkable as he was. No two people ever had a better understanding than those two, or a happier life. Her judgement about people was far better than his, but her faith in his vision was unshakable. She laughed at his weakness and vanities, but often said to me, ‘GBS is nearly always right’. He was tender and thoughtful as a husband, and although he wrote a lot of nonsense about women and matrimony, nobody ever kept the rules so sacredly and kindly as this playboy of the Western World.

It was only when she went that I fully realised what she meant in his life, both for his happiness and for the discriminating guidance which she often gave him. I don’t believe that alone he could have done what he did, and when he told me he wanted his ashes mingled with Charlotte’s, I realised that in purpose and outlook their lives had always been one.

GBS was a great actor, and he knew how to hide from most of the world two things – his deep spirituality and his complete happiness with Charlotte.