Last Rites

SYDNEY COCKERELL

From Wilfrid Blunt, *Cockerell* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964) p. 211. Shaw was cremated at the Golders Green Crematorium, London. He had specified in his will that there be no service which would suggest that he accepted the tenets of any established church or denomination. Cockerell made attempts to have Shaw's ashes placed in either Westminster Abbey or St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. But Shaw's request was that his ashes, mingled with those of Charlotte, should be inurned or scattered in the garden of the house at Ayot St Lawrence. The ashes were scattered by his doctor, Thomas C. Probyn, at a simple ceremony attended by the Public Trustee, F. Wyndham Hirst, and others.

There was no religious ceremony. The organist played Elgar's 'We are the Music Masters' (from the *Enigma Variations*)¹ and 'Libera me' from Verdi's *Requiem*, in accordance with a wish expressed by Shaw to Lady Astor, and between these performances I read (very badly) the final words of Mr Valiant for Truth from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a book greatly admired by GBS all his life, with the following passage ending 'and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side'.² I think nothing could be more appropriate for the occasion.

NOTES

1. The Elgar piece sung at the ceremony was one from his 'The Music Makers', a setting of an ode by Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy (1844–81), 'We are the Music Makers'.

2. The passage Cockerell read was that beginning with the words, 'My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage' (see Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century* [New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956] p. 877).

Shaw's Corner, 11 December 1950

HAROLD NICOLSON

From Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1945–1962*, ed. Nigel Nicolson (London: