The Journalist's Quarry: IV

NEVILLE VEITCH

From Neville Veitch, memoir of Shaw in the *Newcastle Journal*, 3 November 1950. The encounter Veitch describes took place when Shaw visited Newcastle in April 1921 to see *Man and Superman* at the People's Theatre.

On his arrival the writer, as an awed youth, wormed his way into the presence with an equally young reporter from the *Newcastle Journal* who had begged the editor for this his first big assignment.

His first impression was of more than six feet of rough tweeds sitting on a bench in a gas-lit café drinking milk. On approaching for an interview, we were confronted with a jutting beard and a lowering stare.

'How much do you earn?' said a businesslike voice. The modest 1921 salary of a junior reporter was mentioned.

'How much space do you expect to fill?' We mumbled something about a possible half page.

'Well,' said the beard, 'I also am a professional writer, and if I wrote that I would get £50 for it.'

Here followed an accurate and detailed description of newspaper writing, its remuneration, its value as publicity, and its opportunities for propaganda.

'So I am sorry, gentlemen, it is economically impossible for me to give you an interview and the conversation is now at an end.'

We crept to the door to be hailed by a new voice – dare we say with a hint of blarney in it? 'Young man, how long have you been a reporter?'

'Three months.'

'Well,' with an outrageous twinkle and a quite undisguised brogue, 'I have been one forty years and in your place I would now have quite enough in the last half-hour to do half a page on Bernard Shaw.'

'And Bernard Shaw has no objection to your using everything he has said.'