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Opinions and Essays, the kind of thing you could dip into without becoming committed to go on by some teasing plot that made you wonder what would happen next. I opened it near the very end. Well, you know how your own name will catch your eye instantly if it's on a page in front of you. It wasn't my name, in this case. It was the word "anaesthetic." I read: "Then the effect of the anaesthetic passed away more and more; and in less than an hour I was an honest taxpayer again"

At once I turned back to the beginning of that essay, and what did I see there but the opening sentence beginning with a great big capital E like this:

"EUREKA! I have found it out at last. I now understand the British drama and the British actor"

How can I describe the profound emotions with which I read on? It turned out that Shaw had had an operation on his foot, and it was to the anaesthetic that he owed the discovery that made him cry Eureka! But in his case it was the process of recovering that was interesting.

"For then a very strange thing happened. My character did not all come back at once. Its artistic and sentimental side came first: its morality, its positive elements, its commonsense, its incorrigible Protestant respectability, did not return for a long time after. For the first time in my life I tasted the bliss of having no morals to restrain me from lying, and no sense of reality to restrain me from romancing. I overflown with what people call 'heart.' I acted and lied in the most touchingly sympathetic fashion; I felt prepared to receive unlimited kindness from everybody with the deepest, tenderest gratitude; and I was totally incapable of even conceiving the notion of rendering anyone a service myself I carefully composed little ravings, and repeated them, and then started again and let my voice die away, without an atom of shame Then the effect of the anaesthetic passed away more and more; and in less than an hour I was an honest taxpayer again, with my heart perfectly well in hand"

Reproducible Miracle

And so Shaw had discovered, in May, 1898, how to understand from their own point of view the life and world of those critics of his who said he had no heart, and of those other playwrights of that time:

"At last I can speak of it at first hand what is more, I know how to reproduce the miracle at will as certainly as if I possessed the wishing-cap of Siegfried. My wishing-cap is a bag of ether. With that, I can plunge into the darkness that existed before my birth and be simply nothing. Then I can come to life as an artist and a man of feeling—as everything I have been so bitterly reproached for not being. I can prolong that condition indefinitely by taking a whiff or two of ether whenever I feel the chill of a moral or intellectual impulse. I can write plays in it; I can act in it; I can gush in it and finally I can come back to full consciousness and criticise myself as I was in it."

Well, what are you going to do about it. I, for my part, am going to organise a league to urge that world leaders should undergo progressive courses of anaesthesia—with chloroform, not injections—in the belief that the law of averages will eventually disclose to them the Riddle of the Moment—what is to be done with the atomic bomb.

—NEMO.

Change of Mind

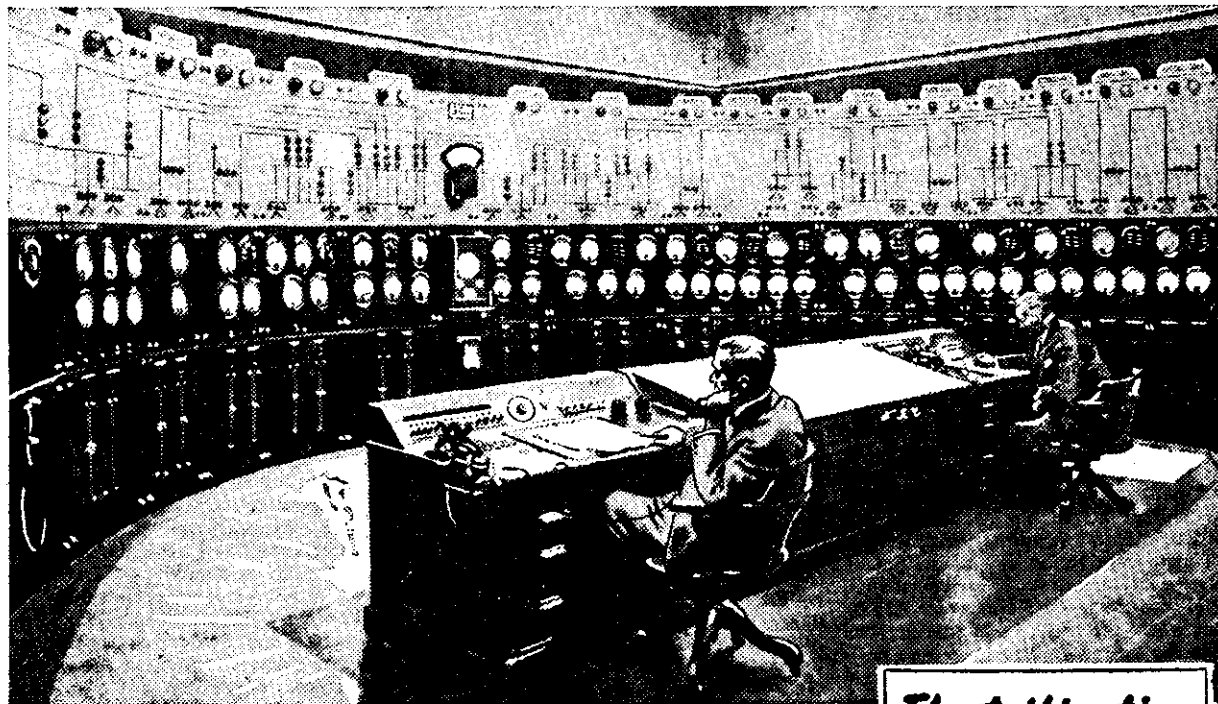
ARTURO TOSCANINI has taken back his vow never to return to Italy so long as Victor Emmanuel and his family had any power. The reason for changing his mind is that he now believes that Italy will soon become a republic. He agreed to conduct the opening at Milan's La Scala this season.

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