

# Sartorial Shaw

AUGUSTIN HAMON

From Augustin Hamon, *The Twentieth Century Molière*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916) pp. 88–90. Augustin Hamon (1862–1945) was a French socialist author who at Shaw's insistence became his French translator in 1904. *The Twentieth Century Molière*, a study of Shaw and his work, was first published in Paris in 1913. Here Hamon begins by describing Shaw's appearance when they met in 1894.

Twenty years ago, when I first made his acquaintance at the house of a mutual friend, a member of the Fabian Society, Shaw's pointed beard and his hair, parted in the middle, were of a light red colour. His deep-set eyes were blue, clear and merry, sometimes glinting like steel when he fixed his gaze upon you and seemed to search the bottom of your soul; his forehead was wide, lofty, straight; he had an almost persistent, sardonic smile; all this combined to give him a singularly mephistophelian expression. His face was pale, and since then has paled yet more, while his beard has become grey, softening the irony of his expression. His hand is long, with taper fingers, rather small for a man of his height.

In 1894 Shaw was no longer extremely poor; . . . He dressed . . . with an eye at once to comfort, hygiene and artistic considerations, as did his friends and rivals in Socialism and literature. He wore a soft shirt, unstarched, saying, 'I prefer this to a white breast-plate covered with a filthy layer of glazed starch'.

His necktie was usually of a soft green, brown or red. He wore a suit of brown tweeds of loose and easy cut, harmonising in tint with his shirt and necktie, with his broad-brimmed soft felt hat, also brown, and with his brown boots with massive soles, intended, he tells us, not for mountaineering, but 'for the hard floors of the London galleries' and for the London pavements, since he was a great walker. . . . In 1906, when he visited Paris to sit to Rodin for his bust, he wore a fine-spun golden brown suit. With his soft cream-coloured shirt and his dull-green tie, the effect was that of a symphony in brown, forming an artistic and agreeable contrast to the pallor of his face and the grizzled red of his hair and beard.