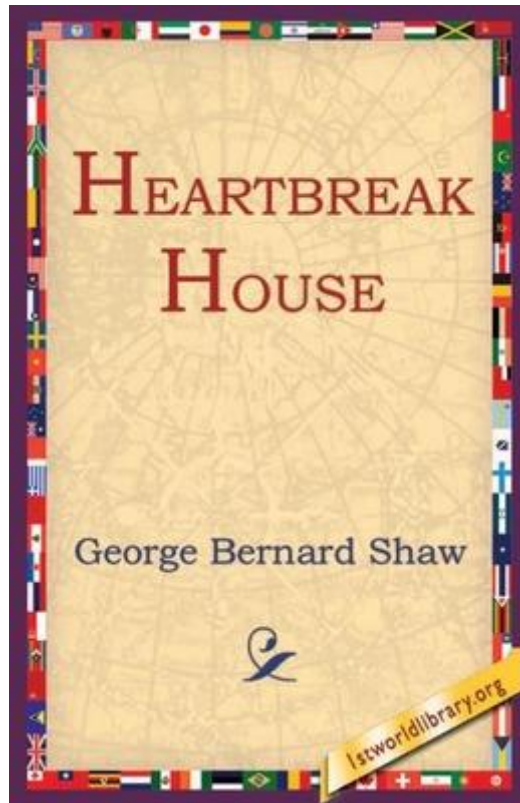


Heartbreak House - George Bernard Shaw



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Heartbreak House is not merely the name of the play which follows this preface. It is cultured, leisured Europe before the war. When the play was begun not a shot had been fired; and only the professional diplomatists and the very few amateurs whose hobby is foreign policy even knew that the guns were loaded. A Russian playwright, Tchekov, had produced four fascinating dramatic studies of Heartbreak House, of which three, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Seagull*, had been performed in England. Tolstoy, in his *Fruits of Enlightenment*, had shown us through it in his most ferociously contemptuous manner. Tolstoy did not waste any sympathy on it: it was to him the house in which Europe was stifling its soul; and he knew that our utter enervation and futilization in that overheated drawingroom atmosphere was delivering the world over to the control of ignorant and soulless cunning and energy, with the frightful consequences which have now overtaken it. Tolstoy was no pessimist: he was not disposed to leave the house standing if he could bring it down about the ears of its pretty and amiable voluptuaries; and he wielded the pickaxe with a will. He treated the case of the inmates as one of opium poisoning, to be dealt with by seizing the patients roughly and exercising them violently until they were broad awake.

Tchekov, more of a fatalist, had no faith in these charming people extricating themselves. They would, he thought, be sold up and sent adrift by the bailiffs; and he therefore had no scruple in exploiting and even flattering their charm. Author: Shaw, George Bernard Publisher: 1st World Library - Literary Society
Illustration: N Language: ENG Title: Heartbreak House Pages: 00212 (Encrypted PDF) On Sale:
2004-06-15 SKU-13/ISBN: 9781595402431 Category: Drama : English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh

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