

BERNARD SHAW SHRINKS FROM HIS WIDE RENOWN

Finding Fame Has Its Penalties, British Dramatist Takes Out Monomark to Obtain Privacy Which Is Impossible to G. B. S.

By CLAIR PRICE.

London.

BERNARD SHAW has taken out a monomark, a new device for the identification of human beings and their belongings.

The College of Herald's identifies only a chosen few with medieval coats of arms blazoned in stately Norman French, but the monomark company identifies anybody with combinations of letters and figures, as automobiles are identified. This makes it possible by having mail addressed to a monomark to conceal one's identity from correspondents. Belongings may also be monomarked—laundry, umbrella, watch—so that if lost they can be returned to the monomark company, which will forward them to the owner. A monomark may even be tattooed on the wrist so that the metropolitan police force has only to deliver persons suffering from amnesia to the monomark people, who will instantly send the forgetful person home. All this—in the case of private monomarks as distinct from commercial monomarks—for five shillings a year—say \$1.25. But the monomark company does no tattooing itself. You have to arrange for that independently.

"My reason for taking out a private monomark," says Shaw, "is that I am what is called a celebrity. It is sometimes excessively inconvenient to be a celebrity because of the advertising value of a celebrated name.

"If the unfortunate victim of his own notoriety writes for a price list of the latest shock absorber, he does so at the risk of finding ten cars at his door next morning demanding that he shall instantly leave his work and have a trial run. Each car will be attended by a group of photographers, including one with a motion camera.

Money Lending Simplified.

"What would happen if he intimated that he desired advances of from £5 to £50,000 on his note of hand in the strictest secrecy (no business transacted with minors) I do not know, but I have no doubt that all Jermyn Street would be on his doorstep in no time with bulging pocket-books and cameras all complete.

"Life is impossible unless one can be an insignificant private individual occasionally. That's why I want a monomark."

So Shaw has taken out a monomark. What it is nobody knows but Shaw and the monomark company, for the company undertakes never to reveal the identity of a monomark holder. If it were not a secret, from Shaw's point of view, there would be no object in having it. As long as it is a secret, whenever Shaw desires advances of from £5 to £50,000, he is able to write to Jermyn Street, signing his letter "BM-YY77" or whatever his monomark happens to be.

The money lender then writes to "BM-YY77" asking his name, address, age, occupation, annual income, value of personal property and whether fully paid for, value of real property and particulars of outstanding mortgages, value of expectancies under wills or reversions and particulars of same, names of two guarantors, their addresses, occupations, ages, annual incomes, &c. This is dropped into an envelope and addressed to "BM-YY77, London, W. C. 1," and letters thus addressed are delivered by the postoffice to the monomark company. The company looks up BM-YY77 in its files, drops the letter unopened into a new envelope, and forwards it to George Bernard Shaw, Esq., 10 Adelphi Terrace, London, W. C. 2.

J. C. Squire, one of the foremost English critics, has also taken out a monomark. Mr. Squire sees new and large possibilities in monomarks:

Monomark Hero of Fiction.

"A novelist has only to call his characters BM-X01 or BM-412 to escape the danger of accidental libel which must be risked by the old-fashioned novelist in a country where genuine Winkles and Snodgrasses exist.

"Among other advantages, the absent-minded man who has his monomark tattooed on his arm need never fear that he may be misled if his memory utterly deserts him.

"My own chief reasons for taking a monomark are that it affords a pleasant simulacrum of seclusion in an age when the wireless is on us and television is imminent and also that when I now order anything from a tradesman or communicate with a stranger my name is invariably misspelt. This annoys me. If they misspell my monomark, I shall never get their letters, which will serve them right."

The fiction of the future, according to Mr. Squire's horrible vision, is to give us the stalwart figure of Mr. BM-X01 for a hero and the buxom

golden-haired Miss BM-412 for a heroine. Or shall we have no more love stories in our novels? Will the fiction of the future consist exclusively of exercises in the higher hieroglyphics?

Mr. Squire's monomark, like Mr. Shaw's, is a secret. It can only be said of it that its prefix consists of the letters BM, which stand for British monomark. This prefix is used with all private monomarks and the prefix BCM is used with all commercial monomarks.

Its Commercial Uses.

The commercial monomark, which at present costs £2 2s a year—say \$10—is intended principally for the use of companies which are opening new lines of business and prefer not to reveal their identity until the new lines have become well established. It is also for use in securing repeat orders by enabling purchasers to get into direct touch with manufacturers. If, for example, a man wishes to duplicate a small brooch he has bought, he will be able to get into direct touch with its source by consulting the maker's monomark on the inside of the brooch. The old-fashioned rubber stamp or even the ordinary trade-mark is held to be too large to be used on the inside of rings or the clasps of necklaces, the monomark company says, so that many manufacturers of very small articles lose repeat orders at present by not being able to stamp their addresses on their products.

Later it is planned to open subsidiary monomark companies in New York, Paris and Berlin, but the prefixes will differ in each country. In New York, the prefix for private monomarks is to be AM, for American monomark; in Paris FM for French monomark; in Berlin, GM for German monomark. Similarly, the prefix for commercial monomarks in New York is to be ACM, for American commercial monomark; in Paris, FCM, and in Berlin, GCM. Each of these prefixes, it is estimated, will have 24,000,000 available monomarks in four-character combinations. This has been worked out by arithmetical permutations. To begin with, the entire alphabet and the ten numerals from 0 to 9 have been taken. This gives a total of thirty-six separate characters. The figure 1 and the letter I have both been stricken out, lest one be mistaken for the other; the figure 2 and the letter Q have been omitted for a similar reason. The figure 0 and the letter O are similarly unusable. With these six characters deducted, a total of thirty remain for use in monomarks. According to the laws of permutations, it is said, thirty characters, used in four-character combinations, yield 24,000,000 combinations. With this bit of figuring in mind, the monomark company in London is erecting in its new building what it says will be the largest indexing system in the world.

By the year 2000, the company believes, monomarking a baby at birth will be as compulsory as registration. Babies will then wear their monomarks on identity disks and will continue to wear them throughout their lives. For monomarks, the company has decided, are 729 times more efficient than ordinary numbers; so the day when the human race will be numbered seems inevitable. How the ratio of 729 between the efficiency of ordinary numbers and the efficiency of monomarks is reached seems a little vague to the writer; but it is set down here exactly as the monomark company has announced it.

Identifying the Smiths.

Meanwhile, there are 530,000 Smiths in England alone, there are 30,000 J. W. Smiths and there are 5,000 John William Smiths. It is obvious to the monomark company that here is a serious breakdown in our inefficient method of naming people after their parents—that what the Smiths need to differentiate themselves are monomarks. There are 204,000 J. Smiths in England and 41,000 John Smiths. Can such a scandalous state of things continue?

There are 1,000,000 umbrellas and other articles lost every year in London, and very few of them are ever recovered, because, says the monomark company, the system of monomarks has only recently been launched. In the future, when all umbrellas are monomarked, lost ones will be promptly returned. For all finders of lost property would, under the new system, be honest enough to return their findings.

There are 500,000 British trade and brand marks in use; but in the future manufacturers will monomark their products, it is further asserted. It is easy to counterfeit a trade-mark and even genuine trade-marks frequently contain no clue to the address of the owner. But the stamp "Made in England BCM-H44S" is a combined trade-mark and address. It is the form

which the trade-mark of the future may take.

So we may all go back to the army days, except that, instead of plain numbers on our identity disks, we are to have monomarks which are 729 times more efficient than plain numbers. There used to be a company,

somewhere in England, which rented metal disks at a shilling a year. The disks were for attachment to keyrings, and in case you lost your keys your disk bore an inscription requesting the finder to return the keys to the company's address, where a five-shilling reward would be paid. The company then looked up the number on the disk and sent your keys back to you. This was a somewhat similar method of recovering one kind of lost property, and it may still be in existence somewhere in the provinces. But it was a small affair compared to the monomark project, for under the new monomark régime all of us and all we possess are to be monomarked.

Sir Sidney Skinner, Lord Weir, Lord Meston and Lord Glenconner, who are among the promoters of monomarks, have their eyes on the future. They are men of the highest standing and their plans are world wide. They are selling the alphabet to the human race.

DANDELION DAYS ARRIVING WITH FREE SALADS AND WINE

WITH Spring come the dandelions. With the dandelions come hosts of women and children to the green fields of suburban towns. They search old pastures, meadows and vacant lots for the tender young leaves of the plant which too many persons are inclined to class roughly as a weed. The first shoots of the dandelion make excellent salads. Cleansed of the dirt, grit and sand and prepared with olive oil, vinegar, a pinch of salt, they are preferred by many persons as a change from the more delicate lettuce. Later in the season the

leaves are used as a substitute for spinach, they are the "greens" of the West, South and New England. Still later from the flowers of the dandelion is distilled a delicious dandelion wine. The plant is traditionally credited with possessing medicinal properties of a high order. The foreign-born are particularly appreciative of it. The greater number of the women and children seeking the plant in the fields are of Italian, French, German or Scandinavian descent. They are ally to the excellence of the plant as a food.