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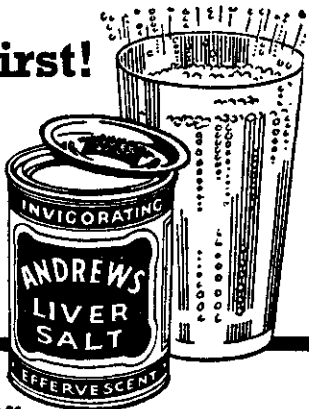
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# THE SHY SHAWS

## That Bequest To The Irish Was Not Unexpected

(Written for "The Listener" by N. F. H. MacLEOD)

[Mrs. Charlotte Frances Shaw, wife of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who died on September 22, left £154,967 gross and £150,976 net personality. After leaving £20,000 on trust for a niece and various small bequests, she left the residue on trust for her husband for life. On his death a large portion of the estate becomes a "fund from which grants will be made to conquer shyness among the people of her native Ireland, and to further the art of social intercourse among them."—Cable item.]

Bernard Shaw, commenting on his wife's bequest, said: "That part of the will does not come into operation till I am dead. A considerable number of people have already written to me from Ireland to get hold of it. They are not going to get it. What I have I hold. Mr. Churchill's attitude is my attitude."—Cable item.

THERE is no reason to suppose that Shaw's remarks about holding what he has, like Mr. Churchill, were spoken impromptu. He has had many years in which to anticipate the reaction of the uplifters to Mrs. Shaw's bequest for the conquering of shyness.

But the will itself! Will not the very wording of it, shed dews of healing and benediction upon millions of souls now inhibited and frustrated by shyness. To those who have seen Shaw always as an exhibitionist and a mountebank, how incredible that Mrs. Shaw should have lived so happily with him all these years, and while looking after this impudent man, keeping the house quiet for his work, meeting his famous friends, travelling to exciting places, and listening to the most brilliant talkers in the world—that she should all the time have had more compassion for the awkward and inarticulate than admiration for the easy and garrulous!

### Reception in Christchurch

But I am not surprised! I saw her once. It was when the Shaws visited Christchurch, and were given a reception in the Civic Theatre. It was packed with an audience whose facial expressions, if caught, would have been the



**THE LATE MRS. G. B. SHAW**  
*She habitually refused the limelight*

proverbial artist's fortune. Was it more in wonder than in pleasure? Or more in awe than understanding? I cannot tell. But when Shaw made a not particularly mirth-provoking or typically Shavian joke, they rocked and rocked with self-conscious and sycophantic laughter.

Shaw tried not to look irritated, but Mrs. Shaw, if I am not mistaken, looked sorry for us. There she sat, comely, kindly and silent, but not missing a shade of feeling or meaning. There were interviews with her husband in the papers, but no word about herself, for no publicity was allowed. Mrs. Shaw habitually refused the limelight and kept herself to herself.

### Two Forms of Shyness

The will mentions two manifestations of shyness, "awkwardness of manner," and "vulgarisms of speech." And Mrs. Shaw believed that "the most highly-instructed and capable persons" are very often those who are thus afflicted, and that these defects are curable and must be cured if the world is to benefit by their knowledge and skill.

No one who has learned to love Shaw for his life-long, untiring and ceaseless efforts to shock, jolt and jolly people into a more sympathetic understanding of one another, will doubt his complete sympathy with the objects of the bequest. We can imagine many discussions by the Shaws about the disposal of their separate and combined fortunes. What fascinating and facetious suggestions G.B.S. would make! Lucky

(Continued on next page)