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wife and lucky friends who shared in that delightful nonsense! But this idea of a school for the cure of shyness was what many a kind woman might suggest, but what almost any other kind man would have dismissed as silly and impracticable.

Bernard Shaw, bless him, does not consider it silly and impracticable.

Who Suggested It?

I wonder when the Shaws first thought of it? Had that shyest of shy men, John Masefield, been in to tea? I am sure that it had nothing to do with their friend W. H. Davies tramp though he was, for I cannot imagine that impenitent hobo ever being shy. G.B.S. himself was once so sensitive, he tells us, that tears would fill his eyes at an unkind word from anyone. And does he not describe his early anxious perusal of books about etiquette, so that he would not do the wrong thing when invited out to dinner? He did not wish to embarrass his host nor to be a bad advertisement for his principles.

The Root Cause

But there was more to it than that. He saw that the root cause of nervousness lies in the fear that goes with false shame, and that it is unjust and unkind that people should be made to suffer uneasiness through their consciousness of defects and crudities for which social conditions, and not themselves, are to blame. Let them be ashamed of nothing but insincerity and unreality! Hear Jack Tanner in *Man and Superman*:—

"We are ashamed of everything that is real about us; ashamed of ourselves, of our accents, of our opinions . . . ashamed to walk, ashamed to hire a hansom instead of keeping a carriage, ashamed of keeping one horse instead of two. . . . Cultivate a little impudence, Ramsden, and you will become a remarkable man."

"This is all very well," I hear someone say, "but many otherwise estimable people are conventional and unimaginative in their views of behaviour, and how can I keep fearing their mis-judgments?" Where manners and customs are a fine art perfected by centuries of subtle usage, I think Shaw would say that if you are like him, you will be humble enough to conform. But you must never cease to profess and practise a philosophy that includes and allows for everyone, and this implies a recognition of the fundamental equality of all people. Even if success and position were the invariable and proportionate rewards of superiority, which they are far from being, Shaw sees it as odious egotism to harden the recognition of them into a ritual dominating all relationships with those who are less fortunate or successful.

Is Shyness Attractive?

Angela Thirkell seems to say that shyness is an added attraction, if you are well-bred. But if you are common, the great gulf remains!

Not so the Shaws! Give them even commonness if accompanied by sincerity and originality, rather than pruned and prismsed sameness and staleness. *Pygmalion* shows how superficial may be "the tricks and traits of gentility," and how easily acquired by imitative people shallowly aware of the social advantages of graces.

I am certain that the Shaws would not approve of a narrow application of their wishes. "Vulgarisms of speech" is a vague phrase, and I do not think they would wish to refine away from Mr. Semple, say, the Rabelaisian vividness

of his metaphors. Nor would they wish to hear the American Marines speaking standard English. And is there not charm in the awkwardness that so often goes with deep reserve and sensitiveness? I always relish the remark of an English lady in a novel by O. Douglas: "I always think Scotsmen so very reliable, perhaps because their manners are not very good."

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**Balance your diet and you'll be
better for eating less meat!**

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