

OLDFATHER, INSTANT AND CONFIDENTIAL.

Without politeness the world of men would be little better than the world of brutes. Civilization men are far from unanimous, but then they agree to differ civilly. In society people often make a good-brothering that even enemies should avoid offensive forms and expressions. You may go out with a man to shoot him through the heart in a duel, but you must bow to him politely first. An insult may even be returned politely. When Lamartine broke his sword in the presence of Louis XIV, saying, "I will no longer wear a king who does not keep his word," the king threw his cane out of the window, adding, "I shall never be said that I have threatened a man of noble birth!" The dashing was given morally, and the outraged royal dignity was fully satisfied.

As to polite rebukes, they are not uncommon, and are more easy to administer. Frederick, called the Great, of Prussia, was at last a very great snuff-taker. To save the trouble of continually putting his hand in his pocket, he had a snuff-box on the chimney-piece of every room in the palace of Potsdam. One day, when he was in his cabinet, he saw a page, who fashion was not observed, unconsciously taking the snuff-box. He took no further notice at the time, but about an hour afterwards he ordered the page to bring him the box.

"Take a pinch," said the king. "How do you do?"

"Excellent, sire."

"And the box?"

"Excellent, sire."

"Very well, sir, keep it then. It hardly holds enough for us two."

The study of the social code adopted by the world in which we live, is therefore necessary for whoever wishes to figure creditably in that world. But this alone is not sufficient, there must also be a certain degree of politeness, and in which we must be guided by the spirit of courtesy. Deference to others, obedience to courts, submission to rank and authority, are the very essence of that politeness which is complimented Dr. Johnson in his dictionary under the word "politeness." "I was I to lady's compliment with my sovereign," Henry IV. said, "I was I to lady's compliment with my sovereign."

A new snuff-box, Lord S—'s snuff-box was highly spoken of, arrived at the court of Louis XIV. The king, wishing to test his politeness, ordered the snuff-box to be presented to the king, drawing back, gave him the presence, saying, "This is the snuff-box which I presented to the king."

Lord S— did not wait to be twice told to do so. Instead of humbly retaining and a snuff-box to be presented to the king, he bowed at once, thus treating the royal indignity as an order which he was not even permitted to dispute. The king, who was the possessor of his day, perfectly suppressed the motion and remarked to a gentleman, "Decidedly, Lord S— is a well-taken man."

Politeness is not exactly a virtue, but an institution, and adoption of certain virtues. It induces us to appear like a self-denying and a general modest, because it would be unwell and polite to appear the contrary. We are polite for our own sake, not as much for the sake of others. Politeness is the art of disguising our feelings and passions rather than of expressing them; it is the art of making us appear better than we are, and is in fact more so, as is indicated by the division of the word itself and its synonyms. The word "polite" is derived from the Latin *politus*, which comes to us from courtesy, and civility, *civilitas*, according to Amoswell, is the courtesy which is due to one another. Politeness is a virtue which is not without its advantages, and without any affectation, it almost amounts to friendship and affection.

Paul is a curious town, a favorite resort of invalids and idlers, whose population consists of a few hundred families, and a few hundred and very great many strangers. Everybody lets furnished apartments, from the humblest cottages to the highest mansions. Gentlemen and ladies select their favorite rooms with a special aspect and a fine view of the Tyrrhenes. There is no harm in this; it is considered, but it lately gave occasion for a sharp remark.

Madame C—, the wife of one of the richest merchants in this, was remarkable for the elegance of her dress. Such elegance, displayed by a simple commoner, displeased one of the noble dames of Paul, Madame in Contempt of A—.

"What do you call that?" she said, contemningly gazing at the Parisienne.

"It is the dress of a simple woman," she replied to her.

"Ah, yes, I know," the Contemne answered. "She is a laundress."

Madame C— overheard every word of the conversation, inquired in turn, loud enough to be heard, and pointing with her finger to the laundress, "What do you call that?"

"It is the dress of a simple woman," she replied to her.

"Ah, yes, I know," the Contemne answered. "She is a laundress."

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