

## CHAPTER IX.

### MANNER—ART.

“We must be gentle, now we are gentlemen.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“Manners are not idle, but the fruit  
Of noble nature and of loyal mind.”—TENNYSON.

“A beautiful behavior is better than a beautiful form; it gives a higher pleasure than statues and pictures; it is the finest of the fine arts.”—EMERSON.

“Manners are often too much neglected; they are most important to men, no less than to women. . . . Life is too short to get over a bad manner; besides, manners are the shadows of virtues.”

REV. SYDNEY SMITH.

MANNER is one of the principal external graces of character. It is the ornament of action, and often makes the commonest offices beautiful by the way in which it performs them. It is a happy way of doing things, adorning even the smallest details of life, and contributing to render it, as a whole, agreeable and pleasant.

Manner is not so frivolous or unimportant as some may think it to be; for it tends greatly to facilitate the business of life, as well as to sweeten and soften social intercourse. “Virtue itself,” says Bishop Middleton, “offends, when coupled with a forbidding manner.

Manner has a good deal to do with the estimation in which men are held by the world; and it has often more influence

in the government of others than qualities of much greater depth and substance. A manner at once gracious and cordial is among the greatest aids to success, and many there are who fail for want of it;\* for a great deal depends upon first impressions; and these are usually favorable or otherwise according to a man's courteousness and civility.

While rudeness and gruffness bar doors and shut hearts, kindness and propriety of behavior, in which good manners consist, act as an “open sesame” everywhere. Doors unbar before them, and they are a passport to the hearts of every body, young and old.

There is a common saying that “Manners make the man;” but this is not so true as that “Man makes the manners.” A man may be gruff, and even rude, and yet be good at heart and of sterling character; yet he would doubtless be a much more agreeable, and probably a much more useful man, were he to exhibit that suavity of disposition and courtesy of manner which always gives a finish to the true gentleman.

Mrs. Hutchinson, in the noble portraiture of her husband to which we have already had occasion to refer, thus describes his manly courteousness and affability of disposition: “I can not say whether he were more truly magnanimous or less proud; he never disdained the meanest person, nor

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\* Locke thought it of greater importance that an educator of youth should be well-bred and well-tempered, than that he should be either a thorough classicist or man of science. Writing to Lord Peterborough as to his son's education, Locke said: “Your lordship would have your son's tutor a thorough scholar, and I think it not much matter whether he be any scholar or no; if he but understand Latin well, and have a general scheme of the sciences, I think that enough. But I would have him *well-bred* and *well-tempered*.”

flattered the greatest; he had a loving and sweet courtesy to the poorest, and would often employ many spare hours with the commonest soldiers and poorest laborers; but still so ordering his familiarity, that it never raised them to a contempt, but entertained still at the same time a reverence and love of him."\*

A man's manner, to a certain extent, indicates his character. It is the external exponent of his inner nature. It indicates his taste, his feelings, and his temper, as well as the society to which he has been accustomed. There is a conventional manner, which is of comparatively little importance; but the natural manner, the outcome of natural gifts, improved by careful self-culture, signifies a great deal.

Grace of manner is inspired by sentiment, which is a source of no slight enjoyment to a cultivated mind. Viewed in this light, sentiment is of almost as much importance as talents and acquirements, while it is even more influential in giving the direction to a man's tastes and character. Sympathy is the golden key that unlocks the hearts of others. It not only teaches politeness and courtesy, but gives insight and unfolds wisdom, and may almost be regarded as the crowning grace of humanity.

Artificial rules of politeness are of very little use. What passes by the name of "Etiquette" is often of the essence of unpoliteness and untruthfulness. It consists in a great measure of posture-making, and is easily seen through. Even at best, etiquette is but a substitute for good manners, though it is often but their mere counterfeit.

Good manners consist, for the most part, in courteousness

\* Mrs. Hutchinson's "Memoir of the Life of Lieutenant-colonel Hutchinson," p. 32.

and kindness. Politeness has been described as the art of showing, by external signs, the internal regard we have for others. But one may be perfectly polite to another without necessarily having a special regard for him. Good manners are neither more nor less than beautiful behavior. It has been well said that "a beautiful form is better than a beautiful face, and a beautiful behavior is better than a beautiful form; it gives a higher pleasure than statues or pictures—it is the finest of the fine arts."

The truest politeness comes of sincerity. It must be the outcome of the heart, or it will make no lasting impression; for no amount of polish can dispense with truthfulness. The natural character must be allowed to appear, freed of its angularities and asperities. Though politeness, in its best form, should (as St. Francis de Sales says) resemble water—"best when clearest, most simple, and without taste"—yet genius in a man will always cover many defects of manner, and much will be excused to the strong and the original. Without genuineness and individuality, human life would lose much of its interest and variety, as well as its manliness and robustness of character.

True courtesy is kind. It exhibits itself in the disposition to contribute to the happiness of others, and in refraining from all that may annoy them. It is grateful as well as kind, and readily acknowledges kind actions. Curiously enough, Captain Speke found this quality of character recognized even by the natives of Uganda, on the shores of Lake Nyanza, in the heart of Africa, where, he says, "Ingratitude, or neglecting to thank a person for a benefit conferred, is punishable."

True politeness especially exhibits itself in regard for the personality of others. A man will respect the individuality

of another if he wishes to be respected himself. He will have due regard for his views and opinions, even though they differ from his own. The well-mannered man pays a compliment to another, and sometimes even secures his respect, by patiently listening to him. He is simply tolerant and forbearant, and refrains from judging harshly; and harsh judgments of others will almost invariably provoke harsh judgments of ourselves.

The unpolite, impulsive man will, however, sometimes rather lose his friend than his joke. He may surely be pronounced a very foolish person who secures another's hatred at the price of a moment's gratification. It was a saying of Brunel the engineer—himself one of the kindest-natured of men—that “spite and ill-nature are among the most expensive luxuries in life.” Dr. Johnson once said: “Sir, a man has no more right to *say* an uncivil thing than to *act* one—no more right to say a rude thing to another than to knock him down.”

A sensible, polite person does not assume to be better or wiser or richer than his neighbor. He does not boast of his rank, or his birth, or his country; or look down upon others because they have not been born to like privileges with himself. He does not brag of his achievements or of his calling, or “talk shop” whenever he opens his mouth. On the contrary, in all that he says or does he will be modest, unpretentious, unassuming—exhibiting his true character in performing rather than in boasting, in doing rather than in talking.

Want of respect for the feelings of others usually originates in selfishness, and issues in hardness and repulsiveness of manner. It may not proceed from malignity so much as from want of sympathy and want of delicacy—a want of

that perception of, and attention to, those little and apparently trifling things by which pleasure is given or pain occasioned to others. Indeed, it may be said that in self-sacrificingness, so to speak, in the ordinary intercourse of life, mainly consists the difference between being well and ill bred.

Without some degree of self-restraint in society a man may be found almost insufferable. No one has pleasure in holding intercourse with such a person, and he is a constant source of annoyance to those about him. For want of self-restraint many men are engaged all their lives in fighting with difficulties of their own making, and rendering success impossible by their own cross-grained ungentleness; while others, it may be much less gifted, make their way and achieve success by simple patience, equanimity, and self-control.

It has been said that men succeed in life quite as much by their temper as by their talents. However this may be, it is certain that their happiness depends mainly on their temperament, especially upon their disposition to be cheerful; upon their complaisance, kindness of manner, and willingness to oblige others—details of conduct which are like the small change in the intercourse of life, and are always in request.

Men may show their disregard of others in various unpolite ways—as, for instance, by neglect of propriety in dress, by the absence of cleanliness, or by indulging in repulsive habits. The slovenly, dirty person, by rendering himself physically disagreeable, sets the tastes and feelings of others at defiance, and is rude and uncivil, only under another form.

David Ancillon, a Huguenot preacher of singular attractiveness, who studied and composed his sermons with the greatest care, was accustomed to say "that it was showing too little esteem for the public to take no pains in preparation, and that a man who should appear on a ceremonial-day in his night-cap and dressing gown could not commit a greater breach of civility."

The perfection of manner is ease—that it attracts no man's notice as such, but is natural and unaffected. Artifice is incompatible with courteous frankness of manner. Rochefoucauld has said that "nothing so much prevents our being natural, as the desire of appearing so." Thus we come round again to sincerity and truthfulness, which find their outward expression in graciousness, urbanity, kindness, and consideration for the feelings of others. The frank and cordial man sets those about him at their ease. He warms and elevates them by his presence, and wins all hearts. Thus manner, in its highest form, like character, becomes a genuine motive power.

"The love and admiration," says Canon Kingsley, "which that truly brave and loving man, Sir Sydney Smith, won from every one, rich and poor, with whom he came in contact, seems to have arisen from the one fact that, without, perhaps, having any such conscious intention, he treated rich and poor, his own servants and the noblemen, his guests, alike, and alike courteously, considerately, cheerfully, affectionately — so leaving a blessing, and reaping a blessing, wherever he went."

Good manners are usually supposed to be the peculiar characteristic of persons gently born and bred, and of persons moving in the higher rather than in the lower spheres of society. And this is no doubt to a great extent true,

because of the more favorable surroundings of the former in early life. But there is no reason why the poorest classes should not practice good manners towards each other as well as the richest.

Men who toil with their hands, equally with those who do not, may respect themselves, and respect one another; and it is by their demeanor to each other—in other words, by their manners—that self-respect as well as mutual respect are indicated. There is scarcely a moment in their lives the enjoyment of which might not be enhanced by kindness of this sort—in the workshop, in the street, or at home. The civil workman will exercise increased power among his class, and gradually induce them to imitate him by his persistent steadiness, civility, and kindness. Thus Benjamin Franklin, when a working-man is said to have reformed the habits of an entire workshop.

One may be polite and gentle with very little money in his purse. Politeness goes far, yet costs nothing. It is the cheapest of all commodities. It is the humblest of the fine arts, yet it is so useful and so pleasure-giving that it might almost be ranked among the humanities.

Every nation may learn something of others; and if there be one thing more than another that the English working-class might afford to copy with advantage from their Continental neighbors, it is their politeness. The French and Germans, of even the humblest classes, are gracious in manner, complaisant, cordial, and well-bred. The foreign workman lifts his cap and respectfully salutes his fellow-workman in passing. There is no sacrifice of manliness in this, but grace and dignity. Even the lowest poverty of the foreign work-people is not misery, simply because it is cheerful. Though not receiving one-half the

income which our working-classes do, they do not sink into wretchedness and drown their troubles in drink; but contrive to make the best of life, and to enjoy it even amidst poverty.

Good taste is a true economist. It may be practised on small means, and sweeten the lot of labor as well as of ease. It is all the more enjoyed, indeed, when associated with industry and the performance of duty. Even the lot of poverty is elevated by taste. It exhibits itself in the economies of the household. It gives brightness and grace to the humblest dwelling. It produces refinement, it engenders good-will, and creates an atmosphere of cheerfulness. Thus good taste, associated with kindness, sympathy, and intelligence, may elevate and adorn even the lowliest lot.

The first and best school of manners, as of character, is always the Home, where woman is the teacher. The manners of society at large are but the reflex of the manners of our collective homes, neither better nor worse. Yet, with all the disadvantages of ungenial homes, men may practise self-culture of manner as of intellect, and learn by good examples to cultivate a graceful and agreeable behavior towards others. Most men are like so many gems in the rough, which need polishing by contact with other and better natures, to bring out their full beauty and lustre. Some have but one side polished, sufficient only to show the delicate graining of the interior; but to bring out the full qualities of the gem needs the discipline of experience, and contact with the best examples of character in the intercourse of daily life.

A good deal of the success of manner consists in tact; and it is because women, on the whole, have greater tact than men, that they prove its most influential teachers.

They have more self-restraint than men, and are naturally more gracious and polite. They possess an intuitive quickness and readiness of action, have a keener insight into character, and exhibit greater discrimination and address. In matters of social detail aptness and dexterity come to them like nature; and hence well-mannered men usually receive their best culture by mixing in the society of gentle and adroit women.

Tact is an intuitive art of manner, which carries one through a difficulty better than either talent or knowledge. "Talent," says a public writer, "is power: tact is skill. Talent is weight: tact is momentum. Talent knows what to do: tact knows how to do it. Talent makes a man respectable: tact makes him respected. Talent is wealth: tact is ready-money."

The difference between a man of quick tact and of no tact whatever was exemplified in an interview which once took place between Lord Palmerston and Mr. Behnes, the sculptor. At the last sitting which Lord Palmerston gave him, Behnes opened the conversation with—"Any news, my lord, from France? How do we stand with Louis Napoleon?" The Foreign Secretary raised his eyebrows for an instant, and quietly replied: "Really, Mr. Behnes, I don't know: I have not seen the newspapers!" Poor Behnes, with many excellent qualities and much real talent, was one of the many men who entirely missed their way in life through want of tact.

Such is the power of manner, combined with tact, that Wilkes, one of the ugliest of men, used to say that, in winning the graces of a lady, there was not more than three days' difference between him and the handsomest man in England.

But this reference to Wilkes reminds us that too much importance must not be attached to manner, for it does not afford any genuine test of character. The well-mannered man may, like Wilkes, be merely acting a part, and that for an immoral purpose. Manner, like other fine arts, gives pleasure, and is exceedingly agreeable to look upon; but it may be assumed as a disguise, as men "assume a virtue though they have it not." It is but the exterior sign of good conduct, but may be no more than skin-deep. The most highly-polished person may be thoroughly depraved in heart; and his superfine manners may, after all, only consist in pleasing gestures and in fine phrases.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that some of the richest and most generous natures have been wanting in the graces of courtesy and politeness. As a rough rind sometimes covers the sweetest fruit, so a rough exterior often conceals a kindly and hearty nature. The blunt man may seem even rude in manner, and yet at heart be honest, kind, and gentle.

John Knox and Martin Luther were by no means distinguished for their urbanity. They had work to do which needed strong and determined rather than well-mannered men. Indeed, they were both thought to be unnecessarily harsh and violent in their manner. "And who art thou," said Mary Queen of Scots to Knox, "that presumest to school the nobles and sovereign of this realm?" "Madam," replied Knox, "a subject born within the same." It is said that his boldness, or roughness, more than once made Queen Mary weep. When Regent Morton heard of this, he said, "Well, 'tis better that women should weep than bearded men."

As Knox was retiring from the queen's presence on one occasion he overheard one of the royal attendants say to another, "He is not afraid!" Turning round upon them, he said: "And why should the pleasing face of a gentleman frighten me? I have looked on the faces of angry men, and yet have not been afraid beyond measure." When the Reformer, worn out by excess of labor and anxiety, was at length laid to his rest, the regent, looking down into the open grave, exclaimed, in words which made a strong impression from their aptness and truth—"There lies he who never feared the face of man!"

Luther also was thought by some to be a mere compound of violence and ruggedness. But, as in the case of Knox, the times in which he lived were rude and violent, and the work he had to do could scarcely have been accomplished with gentleness and suavity. To rouse Europe from its lethargy, he had to speak and to write with force, and even vehemence. Yet Luther's vehemence was only in words. His apparently rude exterior covered a warm heart. In private life he was gentle, loving, and affectionate. He was simple and homely, even to commonness. Fond of all common pleasures and enjoyments, he was any thing but an austere man or a bigot: for he was hearty, genial, and even "jolly." Luther was the common people's hero in his lifetime, and he remains so in Germany to this day.

Samuel Johnson was rude and often gruff in manner. But he had been brought up in a rough school. Poverty in early life had made him acquainted with strange companions. He had wandered in the streets with Savage for nights together, unable between them to raise money enough to pay for a bed. When his indomitable courage and industry at length secured for him a footing in society, he