



The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness: A Complete Hand Book for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society

Florence Hartley

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“There is no branch of education called so universally into requisition as the art of letter writing; no station, high or low, where the necessity for correspondence is not felt; no person, young or old, who does not, at some time, write, cause to be written, and receive letters. From the President in his official capacity, with the busy pens of secretaries constantly employed in this branch of service, to the Irish laborer who, unable to guide a pen, writes, also by proxy, to his kinsfolks across the wide ocean; all, at some time, feel the desire to transmit some message, word of love, business, or sometimes enmity, by letter.”

Many believe that politeness is but a mask worn in the world to conceal bad passions and impulses, and to make a show of possessing virtues not really existing in the heart; thus, that politeness is merely hypocrisy and dissimulation. Do not believe this; be certain that those who profess such a doctrine are practising themselves the deceit they condemn so much. Such people scout politeness, because, to be truly a lady, one must carry the principles into every circumstance of life, into the family circle, the most intimate friendship, and never forget to extend the gentle courtesies of life to every one. This they find too much trouble, and so deride the idea of being polite and call it deceitfulness.

True politeness is the language of a good heart, and those possessing that heart will never, under any circumstances, be rude. They may not enter a crowded saloon gracefully; they may be entirely ignorant of the forms of good society; they may be awkward at table, ungrammatical in speech; but they will never be heard speaking so as to wound the feelings of another; they will never be seen making others uncomfortable by seeking solely for their own personal convenience; they will always endeavor to set every one around them at ease; they will be self-sacrificing, friendly, unselfish; truly in word and deed, polite. Give to such a woman the knowledge of the forms and customs of society, teach her how best to show the gentle courtesies of life, and you have a lady, created by God, only indebted for the outward polish to the world.

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