

It show marks of
respect to our



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It is possible that politeness may be dissociated from general excellence of character, as in the case of Charles II., who exhibited his remarkable urbanity of manner even on his death-bed by apologising for being “ a most unconsconable time dying.” In certain cases there may even be a conflict between politeness and ordinary benevolence. For instance, a doctor may, by politely sacrificing his place in a conveyance to a lady, arrive late at a sickbed where his presence is urgently required. In such cases, of course, politeness should yield to the higher obligation.

The particular actions in which politeness is manifested differ according to circumstances and according to the customs of different countries. As long as society recognises distinctions in rank, politeness requires us to show marks of respect to our superiors, that are not expected in the presence of our equals and inferiors. Different rules of behaviour have to be observed, according as we are in the street or in the drawing-room, at home or at school, in the company of friends or of strangers. There is also to be considered the great diversity of social etiquette which distinguishes one country from another. A polite Frenchman in his own country raises his hat to a shop-girl when he enters a shop, but if he did so in England, he would be laughed at, and the object of his polite attention would probably resent his conduct.

The difference in these matters is so great between the East and the West, that it is very difficult for Europeans and Indians to meet in social intercourse without unintentionally offending one another. In such circumstances a more liberal interpretation of the rule of politeness requires a large amount of mutual indulgence. Politeness, besides being a duty that we owe to others, is

a valuable possession for ourselves. It costs nothing, and yet may in many cases bring much profit. The great advantage of this excellence of conduct was very clearly expressed by Dr.

Johnson, when he said that the difference between a well-bred and an ill-bred man is that one immediately attracts your liking, the other your aversion. “ You love the one,” he observes, “ till you find reason to hate him; you hate the other till you find reason to love him.” In this way, the well-bred man has in his politeness what is equivalent to a valuable letter of introduction, that recommends him to every one with whom he comes into contact.