

## CIVILITY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY, THOUGH MARRIED.

A QUAKER, who had made a large fortune as a merchant in Liverpool, was once asked how he had managed it. "By a single article," he answered, in which every one may deal who pleases—civility." Lord Burleigh was also aware of the financial value of the same commodity, for he used to say to Queen Elizabeth: "Win hearts, and you have people's purses at command." Now the surest way of winning hearts, is to form the habit of being civil in word and deed to everybody.

Not long ago, a story went the round of the papers, of a man who had put himself about to oblige a lady—a perfect stranger—and who, thirty years after, was surprised by receiving news that she had left him a legacy of fifteen thousand pounds. An even larger sum (£20,000) was left by an old lady to a gentleman for no other reason than because he once held her pew-door open. The famous Dr. Johnson has been described as "a bear who was privileged in rudeness," yet he was a loser by his incivility. When asked why he was not invited out to dine, as Garrick was, he answered, as if it were a triumph for him: "Because great lords and ladies don't like to have their mouths stopped."

Incivility is a losing game, and it is only the very rich who can afford it. A man said the other day, "It cost me just a thousand pounds to take that man's chair." He had taken a chair that was reserved for another man, and by doing so, had given so much offence, that the man would not do business with him, and in this way one special contract was lost, which would have brought in a thousand pounds.

A case of churlishness being fitly punished is thus described by one who observed it:

"I got into a first-class carriage at Ascot, in which was an elderly and irritable gentleman, who occupied one seat and placed his bag upon another. Just before we started a youth came running up and tried to jump in. 'This compartment is full, sir,' said the old gentleman; 'that seat is taken by a friend of mine, who has put his bag there.' The youth plumped down with the remark, 'All right, I'll stay till he comes,' and took the bag on his knees. In vain the old person looked daggers, the boy was imperturbable; the 'friend' did not appear, and the train presently moved off. As we glided down the platform, the interloper flung the bag through the window, with the quiet remark, 'Your friend's missed his train evidently; we mustn't let him lose his luggage into the bargain.' I shall never, to my dying day, forget the expression on the old gentleman's wrinkled countenance."

Lord Ellenborough punished himself for rudeness to his wife in a way somewhat similar. The lady wished once to accompany him on circuit, and the judge consented on condition that she did not tuck any handboxes into the carriage as she had too often done before. They both set out, but had not gone far, before the judge, stretching out his legs under the seat, kicked against one of the flimsy receptacles which he had prohibited. Down went the window with a bang, and out went the handbox into the ditch. The startled coachman pulled up, but was ordered to drive on and let the thing lie where it was. They reached the assize town in due course, and his lordship proceeded to robe for court. "And now, where's my wig?—where's my wig?" he demanded, when everything else had been donned. "Your wig, my lord," replied the servant, tremulously, "was in that handbox your lordship threw out of the window as we came along."

About fourteen hundred police in London can take care of about five million people. How is it done? Chiefly by moral force, and above all, by civility. The Chief Commissioner of the Force said on a certain occasion that it was by "strict attention to duty, by sobriety, and above all, by civility," that the police endeavoured to do their duty. "I lay great stress upon civility," said the Chief Commissioner, "for I think it is the great characteristic of the Metropolitan Police Force."

It is said that as many as fifteen hundred trains go out from Clapham Junction every day. Of course this is very confusing to passengers, and some old women of both sexes, if there is a wrong train to get into, are sure to enter it. Imagine then the questions that are asked the guards and porters at this and other large junctions in the excursion season. Yet these men nearly always reply most civilly and repeat their answers many times. Even the senseless way people crowd and scramble for tickets seldom provokes the clerks into rudeness. Once the writer remarked sympathetically to an official that he must be very much hurried, and he replied, "Indeed, sir, I have not time to be in a hurry." This reminds me of a reply that was made to a friend of mine at a crowded railway station in Paris, when he told the man who sold tickets that he wished him to serve him quickly, as he was in a hurry. "Every one is in a hurry," was the laconic answer, and my friend felt rebuked.

Here is an anecdote that goes far to explain how King Victor Emmanuel welded Italy into one state under the House of Saxony. After a battle, in which the carnage was terrible, he went to visit a field hospital. Speaking pleasantly, as his wont was, to a poor fellow who had lost both his legs, he asked him about his family, telling the aide-de-camp to make a note of their names, and promising to look after them. The mutilated invalid said, in a flush of grateful feeling, "May I be allowed to kiss the King's hand?" "My friend, I should much rather shake yours," said Victor Emmanuel, shaking the hand of the soldier.

Lord Chesterfield declared that it was his manner, irresistible either by man or woman, that made the fortune of the Duke of Marlborough. The great influence which the late Bishop of Manchester exercised upon all classes was gained by his great civility to every one, especially to the humblest and poorest. On one occasion, when he was leaving some place by train, his chaplain said "Thank you," to the porter who shut the door of the carriage. "That's right," said the Bishop, "I always like to hear people say 'thank you.'"

Civility is like an air-cushion; there's nothing in it, but it eases the joints wonderfully. A barrister who has an oily, insinuating manner, gets far more information from witnesses, and therefore more reputation for himself than another who tries to bully them. And for surgeons and physicians a good manner is by far the most important part of their stock-in-trade. On one occasion a "calamity of surgery" had taken place in the consulting room of the late Sir Morell Mackenzie. A patient had died after a slight operation; the man's brother called with the intention of giving the great surgeon a "bit of his mind" on the subject. Such, however, was the fascination of Mackenzie's manner, that the indignant brother submitted his own throat to examination, and paid the customary fee for the privilege without a murmur.

And if civility is a profitable investment in other places, it pays even better in our own homes. Courtesy to strangers may leave its mark in a cash account, and entitle us in other ways to be called successful people; but what is that compared with the reward to be met with in a happy home? It does not "pay" to be indifferent to the feelings of any one, but least of all to those of a life-partner. When people are tied for life, it is their mutual interest not to grow weary of one another, and the best possible safeguards they can adopt are kindness and civility. How the whole day is rendered dismal and disagreeable when there has been "a storm" in the breakfast "teacup" between husband and wife! As far as happiness goes, each must confess in the evening, "I have lost a day." Many a child goes astray, not because there is a want of prayer or virtue at home, but simply because home lacks sunshine. A child needs smiles as much as flowers need sunbeams. It has a right to common civility, and feels rudeness quite as much as grown-up people. Even dumb animals claim and can appreciate civility. "Treat a cow as if she were a lady," is the superscription over the cow-houses of a large dairy farmer in Cheshire. The farmer's milk of kindness is doubtless returned in real milk.

"The idea of calling this the Wild West!" exclaimed a lady traveling in Montana, to one of the old hands. "Why I never saw such politeness anywhere. The men here all treat each other like gentlemen in a drawing-room." "Yes, marm, it's safer," laconically replied the native with a glance at his six-shooter. "The greatest snob is polite when he knows that it is safer or more to his interest to be so"

The test, therefore, of true civility is, to behave well to the weak and those in a humbler position in life. The commanding-officer of a certain Hussar regiment felt this to be the case, for he used to say to the young officers when they joined: "You know, Mr. —, that every regiment has its 'side,' its 'swagger,' its 'good form.' Now that of the — Hussars is to have none; so as long as you are with us, you must treat the humblest in the land with as much civility as the highest."

Not long ago, at the London Guildhall, Sir Alfred Wills proved that he could be polite to a barrister pleading before him. The court even in the morning was so dark that his lordship had to have two candles by the side of his desk. A Q.C. was engaged in reading some correspondence, and noticing that the learned counsel had a difficulty in reading, the judge gave his candles to an officer of the court and had them placed upon the table before the reader, suffering temporary inconvenience until two more candles could be obtained for himself. The manner of doing it made the act even more graceful. About a fortnight after he was made judge, the same true gentleman was seen carrying a hod of coals upstairs for his charwoman, whom he had met struggling painfully with the load.

This reminds us of a man of whom Charles Lamb speaks. He would be outdone by no one in politeness. Not only would he give the wall to any ancient female beggar, but, reaching to a higher flight—

"E'en with his best umbrella would not scorn  
To shield from rain the poorest dame forlorn,"

though it were but an old market woman whose basket of fruit he would thus protect from damage.

Dr. Parke, who accompanied Stanley in his last expedition to Africa, must be a gentleman not merely in name but in reality, for he behaved towards women in the Dark Continent as he would towards his lady friends in London. An instance of this sort of politeness is related by Darwin in reference to the people of Chili amongst whom he was travelling. He was out one day with two of the natives when they were passed by a very fat, small negress, riding astride on a mule. She had such an enormous *goitre* that it was scarcely possible to avoid gazing at her; but his companions, as if in apology, immediately made the salute of the country by taking off their hats. "Where," asks Darwin, "would one of the lower or higher classes in Europe have shown such feeling politeness to a poor and miserable object of a degraded race?"

The mention of this negress makes me think of a story that is told of Sir William Jones who was Governor of Jamaica.

When he returned the salute of a negro he was told that he had done what was very unfashionable. In those days negroes were not supposed to have feelings. "Perhaps so," said Sir William; "but I would not be outdone in good manners by a negro." When Pope

Clement XIV. (Ganganelli) ascended the Papal chair, the ambassador of the several states represented at his court waited on him with their congratulations. When they were introduced, and bowed, he returned the compliment by bowing also ; on which the master of the ceremonies told his Highness that he should not have returned the salute. "Oh, I beg your pardon," said the Pontiff, "I have not been Pope long enough to forget good manners."

People forget that when they are rude to the poor, to subordinates or even to those who have been rude to them, they dishonour themselves. "My child," said a father to his daughter, "treat everybody with politeness, even though they are rude to you ; for remember that you show courtesy to others, not because they are ladies, but because you are one."

The most uncivil people are those who, not being sure of their position in society, think that they must always assert it. People who have risen from nothing cannot afford to be gracious. The following illustrates what we mean.

There is in London a very skilful American dentist who has had the pleasure (to him, at least) of extracting royal teeth. He was invited to a garden-party at Marlborough House, where he met about fifty of his patients. They all cut him. Soon after he found himself face to face with the Prince and Princess, and they at once gave him the most cordial reception, and shook him warmly by the hand. Immediately every one of the fifty patients pressed up to the dentist, and shook hands with equal warmth. If Napoleon Bonaparte had been royal by birth, he would not have gone about his Court, as he did, saying to the ladies, "How red your elbows are !" "What an ugly headdress you have on !" "Do you never change your gown ? I have seen you in that twenty times !"—and so on.

What is called good society is pleasant to live in because those who move in it have learned to control their tempers, are polite and forbearing to each other, and do not say things that grate upon the feelings. Still, we are far from saying or thinking that true courtesy or "the beauty of the heart" belongs to any one class of society. Here is an illustration of equal politeness being exhibited by the so-called upper and lower classes.

One day, in hastily turning the corner of a London street, a young lady ran against a ragged little beggar boy, and almost knocked him down. She turned round and said, "I beg your pardon, my little boy. I am very sorry that I ran against you." The "arab" was astonished. He looked at her for a moment, and then, taking off his cap, he made a low bow and said, while a broad smile spread itself all over his face : "You can hev my parding, miss, and welcome ; and the next time you run agin me you may knock me clean down, and I won't say a word." After the lady had passed on, he turned to his chum and remarked : "I say, Jim, it's the first time I ever had anybody ask my parding, and it's kind o' took me off my feet."

No less surprised at the first reception of common civility was a servant who has lately gone into the employment of a friend of mine. My friend said "Thank you" for some little service rendered. The girl seemed astonished, and explained that in her former situations she never was thanked for anything. She must have lived with savages.

We have heard of a family of Welsh colliers so celebrated for good manners that they were called "the civil family." The only education they received was at a Sunday-school provided for juveniles and adults by a lady of the neighbourhood. This was the explanation of their civility—they followed the teaching of the lady and her daughters, and learnt politeness from the Sacred Word.

A little anecdote, recorded of one of the boys of this "civil family," will illustrate this.

The lady aforesaid was on her way to visit the sick father. She met the lad as he was wading ankle-deep in mud through a lane. He turned with her, anxiously watching her steps. They came at last to a puddle that she could not cross. The little fellow advanced before her, took two steps in the mud, and leapt over the splash, leaving behind him his wooden shoes. The lady, glancing at his bare feet, said, "Little boy, you have left your shoes behind you." "They are for you to walk on," was the prompt reply.

A French lady, writing for girls on their behaviour in society, has summed up the matter in a terse and sensible sentence: "In order to be polite, be good." True politeness is more than "surface Christianity." If a man be a Christian gentleman, the fact will be known by his cat, his dog, his horse, his children, and every living being that comes in his way. To each and all he will display the gentler graces. Viewed in this light the highest kind of civility, means carrying into detail the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you."

