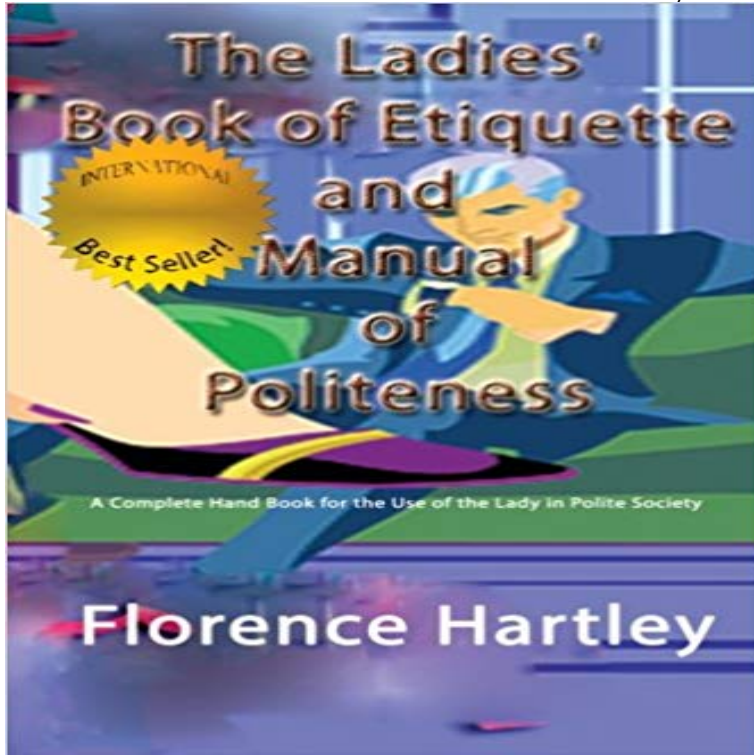


The Ladies Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness: A Complete Hand Book for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society



In preparing a book of etiquette for ladies, I would lay down as the first rule, Do unto others as you would others should do to you. You can never be rude if you bear the rule always in mind, for what lady likes to be treated rudely? True Christian politeness will always be the result of an unselfish regard for the feelings of others, and though you may err in the ceremonious points of etiquette, you will never be impolite. Politeness, founded upon such a rule, becomes the expression, in graceful manner, of social virtues. The spirit of politeness consists in a certain attention to forms and ceremonies, which are meant both to please others and ourselves, and to make others pleased with us; a still clearer definition may be given by saying that politeness is goodness of heart put into daily practice; there can be no true politeness without kindness, purity, singleness of heart, and sensibility. 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 practicing 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 everyone. 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 everyone 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. It is true that society demands this same unselfishness and courtesy, but when there is no heart in the work, the time is frittered away on the mere ceremonies, forms of etiquette, and customs of society, and this politeness seeks only its own ends; to be known as courteous, spoken of as lady-like, and not beloved as unselfish and womanly. Etiquette exists in some form in all countries, has existed and will exist in all ages. From the rudest savage who dares not approach his ignorant, barbarous ruler without certain forms and ceremonies, to the most polished courts in Europe, or the home circles of America, etiquette reigns. True politeness will be found, its basis in the human heart, the same in all these varied scenes and situations, but the outward forms of etiquette will vary everywhere. Even in the same scene, time will alter every form, and render the exquisite polish of last year, obsolete rudeness next year. Politeness, being based upon real kindness of heart, cannot exist where there is selfishness or brutality to warp its growth. It is founded upon love of the neighbor, and a desire to be beloved, and to show love. Thus, where such pure, noble feelings do not exist, the mere forms of politeness become hypocrisy and deceit. Rudeness will repel, where courtesy would attract friends.

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