

MANNERS AND MANNER.

SELF-RESTRAINT in the presence of those he fears or respects has always marked the first footsteps of man on the pathway of civilization. The artificial nature of the restraint drops off as he advances, and conformity to a more or less arbitrary code is gradually transformed into the semblance at least of unselfishness and delicate consideration for the susceptibilities of others.

As usual, the natural progress of the race is wont to repeat itself in the training and progress of the individual. The child's conventional greeting, the ceded place, the subdual of noise and rush and jostle, the suppressed manifestation of hunger or weariness—all these little initial sacrifices must be made to decency before anything deserving the name of good manners can be thought of.

Every good teacher knows how to make himself the barrier between the child and that loss of self-control which must issue in bad manners. But he knows, too, that the personal influence once withdrawn, there will be a relapse; that the child's language and demeanour will very likely become vulgarized. In certain strata of society we cannot but find a continual stumbling block between the manners we require in the school and those which pass muster with the world outside. And this will continue to be felt until the good manners are inspired by a feeling within rather than by a restraint without.

Then good breeding passes from the lower region of manners to that almost indefinable and much higher quality which we call *manner*.

Do we not all know the influence of a happy *manner*? The soothing of it; the absence of fidget and nerve worry; the lessening of friction in the inevitable world of wear-and-tear. How

is it we are less annoyed, as the old proverb says, "when one man steals a horse" than when another "only looks over a hedge"? The reason must lie in that difference of manner to which we are all susceptible, and which affects children so much more than their elders.

Good manners can be taught by precept, but manner is a much harder matter to reach. It can scarcely be taught, but it can be *caught*; and that is why a good manner is so important to a teacher. Not only does it make every task easier, but it communicates itself in a peculiar way to his pupils.

There are few things we ourselves remember in childhood more distinctly than the curious nervous discomfort that we knew in our minds as being "fidgetted" by some people's ways. Their admonitions were frightful things; their instruction too ghastly an experience; their good nature a thing to be fled from with every sense of alarm. And whence came all this unnecessary trouble? Simply from an annoying manner. Yes; the teacher needs a nice manner to supplement his "of course" good manners. It must be neither pompous, nor dull, nor low-spirited, nor irritable, nor patronizing, nor undignified. Calm, bright, sympathetic, elevating, winning, with an air of distinction, of dignity; this is the ideal manner, of which we can recall some notable examples, as we write. No weakness in that manner and no over-strenuousness—always in it a sense that more remained behind.

We once found the pupil of an almost *ideal* teacher in a curiously-impressed state after an apparently slight reproof.

"But he was not angry," we said.

"Angry! He was *displeased*—that