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## Rord Rosebery on Englishmen's Manners.

The Social and Commercial Value of  
Manners in Public Life

"Lord Rosebery never speaks in public without saying something that is worth hearing, and his speech to the boys of Guildford Grammar School deserves to be pondered by an audience far larger than that which was immediately addressed," says the Morning Post.

"Lord Rosebery was concerned to impress on his youthful hearers the extreme importance in life of good manners. And it is difficult to dispute Lord Rosebery's conclusion that in the present age manners are deteriorating," adds the Morning Post.

"There was a politeness, not merely in the modish Eighteenth Century, but even in the material mid-Victorian age, which we are losing in an obedience to a devotion to what is supposed to be freedom and sincerity, but what is really lack of self-respect. It is not thought worth while to pay those little ceremonious observances by which consideration for others is shown, because it never occurs to us that we ought to receive them.

### Fine Courtness in Letters.

"No one can read the letters of George Meredith without being impressed by the fine courtness in which even the most casual or the most troublesome correspondent was addressed; and without feeling that the habit of mind which inspired that style is sadly lacking to-day. In particular, the manners of men to women in the present day show a regrettable deterioration. The instinctive deference to women which used to be the mark of the well-bred is no longer so evident. There is a tendency to take women as a matter of course, and to withhold what may be called the small-change of courtesy.

"Manners are the lubricant that enables the wheels of our complex relationships to revolve without intolerable friction—that make social contact pleasurable, or, at least, endurable.

### Manners a Social Obligation.

"Good manners are not a convention, but a social obligation—a something that everyone should be bound to contribute for the common weal. An acknowledgment of the claims of others to consideration. Yet we have become so self-conscious in this generation that we are afraid to be polite for fear of appearing affected or absurd, and where we would seem natural we are simply off-hand or almost rude. Perhaps Lord Rosebery's exhortation will fall on good ground and bear fruit, and for reformers we must look to the next generation. The present one is too old to change its ways, even when it most frankly confesses its faults," adds the Post.

### Boys and Parents.

"I wish to make it clear at the very beginning of what I have to say," said Lord Rosebery, "that I am addressing, as I was told to address, the boys, and not the parents. I will not say that boys and parents are permanently hostile bodies—I am a parent myself—but there is certainly a great difference of view on many questions to which I need not further allude, such as pocket-money, the amount of work that an able-bodied boy can do, and so forth.

"Now, the point I wish to labor for the moment is that of courtesy and good manners," added Lord Rosebery. "The necessity of them had been seen by one of the great sages of the 'educational' calendar, William of Wykeham, who is honored as the founder of Winchester College and New College, Oxford. It is well for us in this century to know the emphasis which was laid by your founders on courtesy and good manners. Why did these men of the early seventeenth century emphasize the importance of courtesy and good manners? I take it that it was for two reasons: first, that they were models of courtesy and good manners themselves—for the English-

men of the seventeenth century were the greatest breed of Englishmen that England has ever possessed—and also because they realized the enormous importance of courtesy and good manners in the common transactions of life.

### English and Scotch Manners.

"Now, we English people, and I

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am afraid we Scotch people—to mention the people of the country with which I am more immediately connected—have never been conspicuous for good manners. John Bull has been too apt to think that good manners were a device of the dancing, frog-eating Frenchmen, whom it was our duty to despise and defeat. But

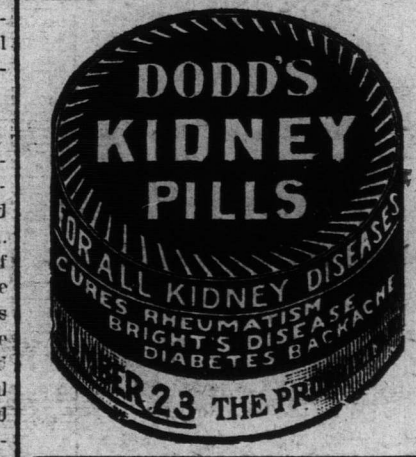
that was a false issue. Good manners are a sign of charity towards your fellow-men, of duty towards your neighbors, and also a sign of self-respect. A man who respects himself is always well-mannered to others. Now, I am going to say something which, if I knew this school familiarly, I should not say, because I might be thought to be speaking at you instead of speaking to you.

### Significance of Hat Tossing.

"It is that, I think, one may judge of the character of a school by the respect the boys show to the masters. If we go to a school and notice that the boys do not touch their hats to their masters, a poorer opinion of that school. What is it that we mean when we touch our hats to our masters? Do we not mean that he is the head of our community, and that as the head of our community we pay ourselves a tribute by exalting him? Take the case of the King. When the King goes through the streets, if we are fortunate enough to see him, we take off our hats to him. That is, of course, a mark of respect in the first place to the King, but it is also a mark of respect to ourselves, a mark of veneration for the community to which we belong, and, in that way, to ourselves.

### Manners in Public Life.

"I am sorry to say I think there has been in modern times a decay of manners in England, and not only in England but all over the world. You see it even on the Continent. It is a bad sign. I should like to appeal to the elders for a moment, and ask them whether they do not agree with what I am going to say. Manners have an enormous commercial value in life. I sometimes



wonder why they are not harped on more on these occasions, because no one can have lived as long as I have without noticing the weight and value of manners in life. In public life I have seen men by appearance and manners get such a start of their much abler fellows that they have been able to occupy places much higher than their abilities or services entitled them to.

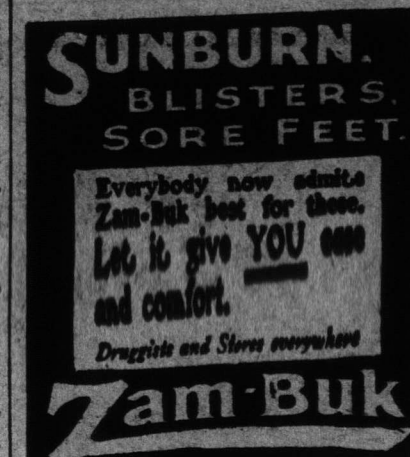
"Of course, we are not all going into public life, but we are all going into some business. I am quite sure there is not a man or a lady over thirty years old in this hall who has any practical knowledge of the affairs of life, who will not tell the boys of the enormous advantage of a good appearance and good manners. A good appearance, you may say, is not at our command; they are the gift of God, and are bestowed only on a small percentage of mankind. But a good appearance, a manly appearance, an appearance without self-consciousness, which is the most agreeable feature, perhaps, of appearance, is within the command of any boy.

### Commercial Value of Manners.

"But let us take manners, which are, I think, more important. Three boys; let us suppose, are applying for the same situation. One may be a monster of learning, with a Shakespearean forehead, and all the rest of it; the second boy may not be half so good a boy, but still an able boy; the

third may not have the abilities of either but if he has good manners and the others have not it is ten to one on him against the other two. I will not put my appeal for manners, which are not easily taught except by example, on higher considerations, such as that they are signs of a noble nature, expressing itself in outward form, although that is true enough; I will only put it to-day on the question of the commercial value of manners, and I ask every boy who hears me to-day, even if he forgets everything else I have had to say, to bear in mind the enormous value of manners all through his life. They will give him a value which he will never possess without them and will give him a start over those other boys who neither try to be, nor are, well-mannered."

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St. John's, August 13, 1913.

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