

TACT.*

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TACT, discretion, aptness, adroitness, and many other words and phrases are used to express in other language the much abused term *common sense*. Every day we hear some such expression as the following:—"What great tact she has." "Oh! he never had any tact." "Tact is necessary in that business," etc., etc. How many, hearing these expressions, ever ask themselves the question, "what is tact?" Like the term common sense, it has been so much and so often used that were you to ask the one who uses the word every day, and many times during the day, to define tact, you would get an answer that would agree neither with your own idea of tact, nor with the opinion of anyone else. If I were to ask each one in the room to give a definition of the word, how many are there who would be able to tell what it really means?

The dictionary gives the meaning of the word "tact" as "peculiar skill or faculty," or "nice perception," from which the conclusion might be drawn that it is a natural faculty, not an acquired one.

While this to some extent is true, still there is a way in which people, naturally possessing very little tact, may, as I shall endeavour to show further on, become as skilful in the art of smoothing difficulties and avoiding snares, as those who—I had almost said from infancy—always say and do the right thing, in the right place, and at the right time.

This ability, faculty, art, or whatever it may be called, is a large ingredient in the success of any profession. The doctor, who by his pleasant and agreeable manner, by his *tact* in other words, makes his patients, suffering, it may be, under a very trifling ailment, think (we will hope with truth) that he feels as deep an interest in their complaints as it is possible for him to feel, is more apt to become a successful practitioner than one who with perhaps greater skill and medical attainments treats such cases as well as they very likely deserve to be treated, but in such a manner as leaves the patient mortified and angry. The candidate for parliamentary or even municipal honours finds this faculty in the highest degree necessary to him in his electioneering campaign. The candidate who has tact enough to enable him to overcome all objections raised against him and to bring his very enemies round to his side, and more difficult still, to interest those before indifferent, stands a very good chance, even against one, who, by his superior knowledge of the needs of the riding, is better qualified for the place, but who, by the absence of the necessary mother wit, fails to win the approbation of the people. Time would fail me were I to attempt to show how necessary tact is to the success of any profession, but observation will teach you much better than anything I can say on the subject, that it is so; and while this is true in all the different walks of life, in the teaching profes-

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